

**T.C.
SAKARYA UNIVERSITY
INSITUTION OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION**

**THE ROLE OF THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS IN
THE DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS OF BULGARIA IN THE
PERIOD OF 1989- 2007**

Adnan MESTAN

PHD THESIS

Thesis Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Zeynel Abidin KILINÇ

JUNE - 2024

**T.C.
SAKARYA UNIVERSITY
SOCIAL SCIENCES INSTITUTE**

**THE ROLE OF THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL
FACTORS IN THE DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS OF
BULGARIA IN THE PERIOD OF 1989- 2007**

PHD THESIS

Adnan MESTAN

Department: Political Science and Public Administration

**“This thesis was defended online on 12/06/2024 and was unanimously accepted/not accepted
by the jury members whose names are listed below.”**

JURY MEMBER	APPROVAL
Prof. Dr. Zeynel Abidin KILINÇ	Başarılı
Prof. Dr. İrfan HAŞLAK	Başarılı
Prof. Dr. Tuba Kancı DOĞAN	Başarılı
Doç. Dr. Erkan DOĞAN	Başarılı
Doç. Dr. Rıdvan KALAYCI	Başarılı

ETHICS STATEMENT

According to the Similarity Report received by your institute within the framework of the Implementation Principles, the similarity rate of the thesis work, whose information is given above, does not contain any plagiarism; I declare that I accept all kinds of legal responsibility that may arise in a possible situation where the opposite is determined and that I have received the approval document if Ethics Committee Approval is required.

Is an ethics committee approval document needed?

Yes ☐

No ☒

(The studies that require the approval of the Ethics Committee are as follows:

- All kinds of research conducted with qualitative or quantitative approaches that require data collection from the participants by using survey, interview, focus group work, observation, experiment, interview techniques,
- The use of humans and animals (including material/data) for experimental or other scientific purposes,
- Clinical studies on humans,
- Research on animals,
- Retrospective studies in accordance with the personal data protection law.)

Adnan MESTAN

12/06/2024

TABLE OF CONTENT

ABBREVIATIONS.....	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vii
LIST OF GRAPHS.....	viii
ABSTRACT	ix
ÖZET	x
 INTRODUCTION	 1
CHAPTER 1: THEORIES OF DEMOCRATISATION AND THEIR BRIEF	
DISCUSSION.....	38
1.1. Introduction	38
1.2. Modernization Theory	40
1.3. Historical Sociology	45
1.4. Transition Theory	49
1.5. Conclusion.....	53
CHAPTER 2: THE ROAD TO BULGARIA'S DEMOCRATIZATION	
PROCESS.....	55
2.1. Historical Background of the Foundation of the Bulgarian State	55
2.2. Earlier Inspirations of Democracy.....	56
2.3. Bulgaria's Totalitarian Regime History	58
2.4. Opening Stage of Bulgarian Democratization.....	61
2.5. External Factors.....	65
2.5.1. Perestroika, Glasnost, Democracy.....	66
2.5.2. Politics of Mikhail Gorbachev.....	67
2.5.3. Gorbachev's “Perestroika and Glasnost” Movement.....	68
2.5.4. Results of the Reform Movement in the Soviets.....	71
2.5.5. Implementation of Perestroika and Glasnost in Bulgaria.....	73
2.6. Malta Summit 2 December 1989	77
2.6.1. Implementation of Malta Summit in Bulgaria.....	81
2.7. Internal Factors	83
2.7.1. The Dissident (Дисиденция)	83

2.7.1.1. The Dissident Groups in Bulgaria.....	84
2.7.1.2. Formation of the First Dissident Groups.....	88
2.7.1.3. French President François Mitterrand's Visit to Bulgaria.....	90
2.7.1.4. Contributions of Dissidents to the Democratization Process.....	92
2.7.2. The Role of the Turkish Society in the Transition period.....	93
2.7.2.1. The Assimilation Process Implemented by the Communist Regime against Minorities.....	95
2.7.2.2. Turks' Rebellion against the Oppressive Regime	98
2.7.2.3. The Role of Turkish Society in the Democratization Process	100
2.7.3. Internal Coup in Bulgarian Communist Party (BKP).....	103
CHAPTER 3: THE CHANGE OF THE COMMUNIST SYSTEM AND THE ESTABLISHMENT PERIOD OF DEMOCRACY IN BULGARIA BETWEEN 1990 AND 2001	107
3.1. The Formation Period of Bulgarian Democracy	107
3.2. Internal Factors.....	109
3.2.1. “Round Table Discussions” and the Loss of Legitimacy of the Communist Regime.....	110
3.2.1.1. Round Table Discussions.....	111
3.2.1.2. Results of the Round Table meetings	114
3.2.2. First Democratic Elections	116
3.2.3. Elections for the 7th Grand National Assembly June 10-17, 1990.....	117
3.2.4. Amending the Communist Constitution.....	124
3.2.5. Bulgarian National Assembly Election, 13 October 1991	128
3.2.6. Re-formation of parties in Bulgaria.....	131
3.2.6.1. Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP).....	132
3.2.6.2. The Union of Democratic Forces (UDF)	137
3.2.6.3. Movement of Rights and Freedoms (MRF).....	141
3.3. Conclusion.....	144
CHAPTER 4: BULGARIA'S DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS- THE ROAD TO THE NATO AND EUROPEAN UNION 2001- 2007	146
4.1. The Role of the NATO and European Union as an External Factors in the Democratization Process of Bulgaria	146

4.2. The role of NATO as an External Factor and the implications of Bulgaria's NATO Membership Process.....	148
4.2.1. UDF Period Bulgaria NATO Relations.....	150
4.2.2. The National Movement Simeon II Period Bulgaria NATO Relations	152
4.2.3. Bulgaria's NATO Integration	154
4.3. The role of EU as an External Factor and Bulgaria's Accession Process to the European Union.....	155
4.3.1. Bulgaria's EU Membership Process	158
4.3.2. Bulgaria's Entry into CEE	160
4.3.3. Parliamentary Elections in Bulgaria before EU Membership	163
4.3.4. The Impact of EU Membership on the Democratization Process in Bulgaria	165
4.3.5. De-politicization of the Army in Bulgaria.....	171
4.3.6. Impact of EU Membership on the Development of the Democratic System in Bulgaria	172
4.4. Conclusion.....	173
CONCLUSION	177
REFERENCES	187
CURRICULUM VITAE	206

ABBREVIATIONS

BANU	: The Bulgarian Agrarian National Union
BAPU	: The Bulgarian Agrarian People's Union
BBB	: The Bulgarian Business Bloc
BBT	: Bulgaria without Censorship
BCP	: The Bulgarian Communist Party
BEL	: The Bulgarian Euroleft
BNM	: Bulgarian National Movement
BNS	: The Bulgarian National Union
BSDP	: The Bulgarian Social Democratic Party
BSP	: The Bulgarian Socialist Party
CC	: Central Committee
CEDB	: The Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria
CEE	: Central and Eastern Europe
CEFTA	: The Central European Free Trade Agreement
CEI	: Central European Initiative
CMEA	: The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
CVM	: Cooperation and Verification Mechanism
DP	: Democratic Party
DPS	: The Movement for the Rights and Freedoms
DSB	: The Democrats for a Strong Bulgaria
DW	: Deutsche Welle
EU	: European Union
F	: The Liberal Forum
GERB	: Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria
GNA	: Grand National Assembly
IMF	: The International Monetary
INGOs	: International Non-Governmental Organizations
IPA	: The Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
IPAEI	: The Institute for Public Administration and European Integration
KE	: The Euro-Left Coalition
MRF	: The Movement for the Rights and Freedoms

NATO	: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDSV	: The National Movement Simeon II
NFSB	: The National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria
NGOs	: Non-Governmental Organizations
NMR	: National Movement of Russophiles
NMSII	: The National Movement Simeon II
NS	: The Bulgarian National Union
NV	: New Time
ODS	: The United Democratic Forces
ONS	: The Union for National Salvation
OSCE	: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OTs	: The Union for the Monarchy
PHARE	: Poland and Hungary: Assistance for Restructuring their Economies
PU	: The People's Union
SB	: Socialist Bloc
SDP	: The Social Democratic Party
SDS	: The Union of Democratic Forces
SEE	: Southeastern Europe
SP	: The Stability Pact
UDF	: The Union of the Democratic Forces
UK	: United Kingdom
UN	: United Nations
UNESCO	: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USA	: United States of America
USSR	: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UtdDF	: The United Democratic Forces
БЗНС	: The Union of Bulgarian Agricultural Peoples
БКП	: The Communist Party of Bulgaria
ДП	: The Democratic Party
СДП	: The Social Democratic Party

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: External and Internal Factors in the Democratization Process of Bulgaria	9
Table 2: Comparison of Narrow and Broader Definition of Democracy	27
Table 3: Division or the Political Process in Bulgaria by Years and Periods	63
Table 4: Killing of People Without any Legal Procedure or the Sentence Being Pronounced After Their Assassination	85
Table 5: Inhuman Treatment and Torture Especially in Concentration Camps, Prisons and Detention Centers and Especially Against Political Prisoners and Detainees	85
Table 6: Violation of the Right of Ethnic Self-Identification and Involuntary Displacement of People on Ethnic Grounds.....	96
Table 7: The Turkish Resistance Movement in the 1980s	97
Table 8: Round Table Negotiations and National Elections in CEE.....	111
Table 9: Results of the Elections for the Bulgarian GNA on 10 - 17 June 1990.....	118
Table 10: Parliaments and Cabinets Formed in Bulgaria from the Beginning of the Democratization Process to European Union Membership, 1990-2007	119
Table 11: Parliamentary Elections in Bulgaria between 1990 and 2005.....	123
Table 12: Results of the Bulgarian National Assembly Elections on 13 October 1991	129
Table 13: Participation and Number of Political Parties in Bulgaria According to Parliamentary Election Years	131
Table 14: The leadership of the BCP from its founding in 1990 until it accedes to the European Union in 2007	135
Table 15: Results of the Bulgarian National Elections on 18 December 1994	136
Table 16: Associations, civil society groups and parties united under the umbrella of the UDF	139
Table 17: Results of the Bulgarian National Assembly Elections on April 19, 1997 .	140
Table 18: Results of the parliamentary elections held on 17 June 2001	153
Table 19: The EU Enlargement Policy and Conditionality for Central-East Europe..	161
Table 20: Results of the Bulgarian Parliamentary Elections on 25 June 2005.....	164

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: The scope of democratization according to Huntington	31
Figure 2: Modernization Theory according to Lipset.....	43
Figure 3: Democratization Model according to Dankwart Rustow.....	51
Figure 4: Constitutional Form of Government and Political Organization of the Republic of Bulgaria.....	126
Figure 5: The Role of Internal and External Factors According to the Phases of the Democratization Process in Bulgaria.....	179



LIST OF GRAPHS

Graph 1: Results of the Referendum for Rename the BCP to the BSP	134
---	-----



ABSTRACT	
Title of Thesis: The Role of the Internal and External Factors in the Democratization Process of Bulgaria in the Period of 1989- 2007	
Author of Thesis: Adnan MESTAN	
Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Zeynel Abidin KILINÇ	
Accepted Date: 12/06/2024	Number of Pages: x (pre text) + 206 (main body)
Following the collapse of the Berlin Wall, a series of significant shifts occurred on the global political landscape. The fall of the Berlin Wall represented the demise of the Communist system across the globe. The dissolution of the Soviet Union marked the conclusion of the Cold War and the end of the bipolar international system, a clear victory for liberal democracy. In the wake of these transformative changes, the newly independent states emerging from the former communist regimes faced the urgent need to implement profound political reforms in order to be accepted by the Western democratic world. Bulgaria was one of the countries that initiated its democratisation process during that period. Bulgaria has undergone a lengthy and successful democratisation process. It is important to note that such a process is influenced by a range of factors. Following the conclusion of the Cold War, Bulgaria was spared the type of intense conflicts that afflicted other countries in the Balkans. As a country that underwent a "soft transition" to democracy, Bulgaria's transformation story differs from that of other countries in the region. This soft transition is hidden under the influence of internal and external factors. In accordance with the subject's title, the thesis examines the role of internal and external factors in the democratisation process of Bulgaria. Bulgaria has demonstrated a notable example among Eastern European countries by adopting a peaceful approach to democratic reform and subsequently aligning itself with Western democratic institutions. The success of this process is attributed to a complex interplay between internal and external factors. The thesis delves into the influence of these factors on the democratization process and Bulgaria's integration into the Western democratic community. Transition theory serves as the analytical lens, providing insights into Bulgaria's transition to democracy and its aftermath.	
Keywords: Bulgaria, Democratization, Internal and External Factors	

ÖZET	
Başlık: 1989-2007 Döneminde Bulgaristan'ın Demokratikleşme Sürecinde İç ve Dış Faktörlerin Rolü	
Yazar: Adnan MESTAN	
Danışman: Prof. Dr. Zeynel Abidin KILINÇ	
Kabul Tarihi: 12/06/2024	Sayfa Sayısı: x (ön kısım) + 206 (ana kısım)
Berlin Duvarı'nın yıkılmasından bu yana küresel siyasi manzarada bir dizi önemli değişiklik meydana gelmiştir. Berlin Duvarı'nın yıkılması dünya çapında komünist sistemin sonunu temsil etmiştir. Sovyetler Birliği'nin çöküşü, Soğuk Savaş'ın ve iki kutuplu uluslararası sistemin sonunun işareti olurken; liberal demokrasi için ise açık bir zafere dönüşmüştür. Bu dönüştürücü değişikliklerin bir sonucu olarak, eski komünist rejimlerin etkisinden kurtulan yeni bağımsız devletler, Batı demokratik dünyası tarafından kabul edilmesi için derin siyasi reformları acilen uygulama ihtiyacıyla karşı karşıya kalmışlardır. Bulgaristan bu dönemde demokratikleşme sürecine giren ülkelerden biri olmuştur. Bulgaristan uzun ve başarılı bir demokratikleşme sürecinden geçmiştir. Bu sürecin birçok faktörden etkilendiğini belirtmek önemlidir. Soğuk Savaş'ın sona ermesinin ardından Bulgaristan, Balkanlar'daki diğer ülkeleri etkileyen yoğun çatışmalar yaşamamıştır. Demokrasiye "yumuşak geçiş" yaşayan bir ülke olan Bulgaristan'ın dönüşüm öyküsü, bölgedeki diğer ülkelerden farklılık gösterir. Bu yumuşak geçiş iç ve dış faktörlerin etkisi altında gizlidir. Konu başlığına uygun olarak bu tez, Bulgaristan'ın demokratikleşme sürecinde iç ve dış faktörlerin rolünü incelemektedir. Bulgaristan, demokratik reformlara barışçıl bir yaklaşım benimseyerek ve ardından kendisini Batılı demokratik kurumlarla aynı hizaya getirerek Doğu Avrupa ülkeleri arasında dikkate değer bir örnek sergilemiştir. Bu sürecin başarısı, iç ve dış faktörler arasındaki karmaşık etkileşime bağlanmaktadır. Tez, bu faktörlerin demokratikleşme süreci ve Bulgaristan'ın Batı demokratik topluluğuna entegrasyonu üzerindeki etkisini araştırmıştır. Geçiş teorisi analitik bir mercek görevi görmüş ve Bulgaristan'ın demokrasiye geçişi ve sonrasına dair öngörü sağlamıştır.	
Anahtar Kelimeler: Bulgaristan, Demokratikleşme, İç ve Dış Faktörler	

INTRODUCTION

The last decades of the 20th century were marked by turbulent changes on the international political and economic level. However, it was not "the end of history", as Francis Fukuyama (1989) wrote, rather it was a new world order and a new competition between superpowers and regional players; in other words, it was the beginning of recent history. The end of the Cold War occurred after the breakdown of the Soviet Union, along with its military and collective defence agreement, the Warsaw Pact. Additionally, the emergence of newly independent states in Europe and Asia marked a noteworthy success for the liberal democratic system, under the leadership of the United States and NATO. As Western Europe and the United States represented democracy, they took on the task of spreading democracy and represent the external factor in the transition of many countries from totalitarian and authoritarian regimes to democratic regimes. After the destruction of the Berlin Wall, many countries in Central and Southern Europe began the process of democratization and a change of orientation in international politics.

Every political process resembles a puzzle, with various interdependent factors leading to its current state. Both internal and external elements play a significant role in the regime's transition. 1989 was the year of the dynamic process of globalisation and the global destruction of communism, the dissolution of the USSR and, ultimately, the end of the tension between USSR and USA. As a result, all countries under the shadow of communist totalitarian regimes began changes, willingly or not.

The Soviet Union downfall was merely an external factor in the beginning of the process of democratisation in the countries that were under its influence. As Искра mentions in her article "Two Decades of Bulgarian Transition - Assumptions, Problems, Balance Sheet"¹ that:

“At the end of the transition from socialism to capitalism comes the time for balance on the road. The great upheavals experienced by Bulgaria in the second part of the twentieth century enable historians to compare the two transitions - the one made after World War II and the one that began after the end of the Cold War. Both The transitions are not specifically Bulgarian but are the result of global processes and ideologies - the first is a consequence of the triumph of the Soviet

¹ “Две Десетилетия Български Преход - Предпоставки, Проблеми, Равносметка”

Union in World War II and Marxism, and the second, the defeat of the USSR in the Cold War and liberalism, declared a little hastily in the early 90s for the ultimate winner in the world struggle of ideas'' (Искра, 2011, p. 334).

As the author emphasizes, Bulgaria's transition to democracy was not as easy. In the Bulgarian case, a country experienced a long and uncomfortable transition to democracy, and external factors played the leading role in this process. However, internal factors had their influence too. Consequently, this thesis aims to research of internal and external factors in the democratization process of Bulgaria profoundly.

Since the fall of the totalitarian communist regime in 1989, Bulgaria has experienced a transition to a democratic political system and an open market economy. This transition has been bloodless and peaceful. The initial focus of governments in this process was on improving the economy, combating corruption and bribery, and enhancing the standard of living. Certainly, not every process proceeds as planned, and sometimes there are some hindrances along the way. As Bulgaria has naturally entered a process of rapid change, it has faced challenges in the consolidation of democracy.

Bulgaria's relationship with Russia is significant in comprehending the country's historical events that took place throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. Firstly, Bulgaria acquired its independence with Russia's assistance, leading to the majority of the population adopting pro-Russian sentiments. Secondly, the ideology of communism continued long after the First World War, attaining governance after the Second World War.

These two important elements have had an impact on the democratization process in Bulgaria. The populace's ideology did not swiftly alter, and the process of democratization progressed gradually over an extended period. However, as the public underwent political and ideological changes over time, the pace of democratization in domestic politics accelerated. When pro-democracy groups gained power in domestic politics, this time the path was taken towards EU and NATO membership. With the emphasis on fulfilling the membership requirements of the EU and NATO, the democratization process has reached certain results with the interaction of internal and external factors.

It is crucial to address the political events preceding the democratization process in Bulgaria to fully comprehend the subject matter. Therefore, the introductory section will delve into the various political stages that Bulgaria underwent after gaining

independence from the Ottoman Empire and establishing itself as a modern nation-state until the most recent democratization process that commenced in 1989 with the annihilation of the communist regime.

Theoretical-Methodological Framework

Research Subject

After the break of the Berlin Wall, many changes took place on the world political stage. The fall of the Wall of Shame² was the symbol of the fall of the Communist system worldwide. The dissolution of the Soviet Union marked the end of the Cold War and the bipolar global order, representing a decisive triumph for liberal democracy. Subsequently, the newly independent states that emerged from the communist regime were obligated to institute several political transformations to gain recognition from the Western democratic nations.

Samuel Huntington has dubbed the post-1974 period the 'third wave' of global democratic expansion in his book titled “The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late 20th Century”. According to him, the democratization process is “the phenomenon of group transitions from non-democratic regimes to democratic systems, which occur with greater frequency than transitions in the opposite direction during a specific period of time” (Huntington, 1993). Bulgaria was among the countries that embarked on the democratization process during that period. After the collapse of the communist regime, Bulgaria underwent a prolonged democratization process. The full consolidation of democracy necessitates a lengthy process. The state and its people collectively embrace this system and oppose its alteration at any cost. It should be emphasized especially that such a process takes place under the combination and influence of different factors.

Following the end of the Cold War, Bulgaria did not experience any significant conflicts, unlike other Balkan countries. As a country that made a “soft transition” to democracy, Bulgaria has a different transformation story compared to other countries in the region. This “soft transition” was influenced by variety internal and external factors, which should be considered and presented. Following the title of the subject, this thesis

² Wall of Shame popularized by Willy Brandt is another name for the Berlin Wall. The original name in German is “Schandmauer” and later it got version in English. Today, the Wall of Shame, in addition to Berlin, represents the Israeli West Bank Wall as well the Mexico–United States wire barrier, the Egypt–Gaza steel barrier and the Moroccan Western Sahara Berm.

aims to address the role of external and internal factors in the democratization process of Bulgaria.

Various scholarly approaches exist in the study of democratic processes in Bulgaria. However, no comprehensive study has been conducted to examine the crucial role of both internal and external factors in the process of democratization. This broad coverage is ambitious to fill a gap in the political literature, particularly in the influence of internal and external factors on democratization. This research covers the period between 1989 and 2007. Regarding this year's intervals, in 1989, the collapse of Bulgaria's former communist regime initiated the transition towards democracy. The primary objective during this democratization period was identified as the integration into the European Union, which ultimately occurred in 2007.

Both primary and secondary sources were used in collecting data for this research. As primary sources, political archives, newspapers published during the time period under investigation, speeches, manuscripts, letters and records were utilised. Additionally, secondary sources, including literature on the subject in printed and online resources, such as academic journals, books, articles, reports and papers, were examined. Relevant information was then evaluated.

Significance of the Study

Numerous books and articles have been written on the democratization of Bulgaria and the transitional period. There are different approaches that have been taken both in Bulgaria and around the world to understand this complex process. However, when the studies are examined, the noticed issue is that there are still areas to be studied and investigated. The importance of this thesis can be explained by some factors. Namely, there is a lack of clear and concise articles or books addressing the specific influence of internal and external factors in the democratization process of Bulgaria. Upon review of existing literature, a noticeable gap becomes apparent. Therefore, the thesis explores the impact of internal and external factors on the democratization process in Bulgaria, thereby enhancing understanding of the process.

Examining internal and external factors in Bulgaria's democratization process and the lack of a comprehensive thesis on this subject claims to fill a gap in the literature on this subject. The prosperous incorporation of Bulgaria into the European Union during the

democratization process serves as a valuable case study for other Balkan countries that remain unable to join the union. Here, when the democratization process of Bulgaria and the role of internal and external factors in this context are examined, it is possible to exemplify other countries' successful experiences in accelerating democratization and paving the way towards European Union membership.

Transitions from one regime to another have always faced different difficulties. The regime carries the political, social and economic changes together. Bulgaria faced the same challenges in this regard. However, it has overcome its difficulties in the democratization process, since it successfully balanced the interaction of internal and external factors. Therefore, when the roles and interactions of internal and external factors are exposed, the democratization model will emerge spontaneously, which is one of the main aims of this thesis.

Research Methodology

The research methods in this study were intended to be created following the envisaged goals and objectives. Therefore, a qualitative research method is preferably adopted in this study. According to Creswell, "Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The research process involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data" (Creswell, 2014, p. 32). The qualitative research approach is considered a helpful solution when a researcher does not know the variable exactly. The components of qualitative methods involve study design, sample discussion, presentation and interpretation of data; it also includes comments on the researcher's role and study strategy. The general characteristics of the qualitative method are natural settings, the researcher as a critical "instrument, multiple sources of data, inductive and deductive data analysis, participants meaning", emergent design, reflexivity, and holistic account (Creswell, 2014, pp. 234 - 235). The qualitative method approaches include narrative, grounded theory, ethnography, phenomenology and case study.

A single case study approach as a method is used in the thesis. The case study approach examines a specific social event through a single example (Babbie, 2010, p. 309). A

case study is a research strategy that involves investigating an empirical topic through predetermined procedures, similar to other research methods (Yin, 2003, p. 15). A case study is a thorough and detailed analysis of a single case or a small number of cases that aims to provide insight into the larger population through observational data (Gerring, 2017, p. 28). It is a method in which the researcher looks for meaning in the characteristics of a bounded system (time or activity), and it is defined as the interpretation of events that are limited in space and time (Levy, 2008, p. 2). Therefore, a case study is a detailed explanation of a chosen historical event for analysis, rather than the event itself (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 38). The case study method focuses on the process that helps reveal the development of an issue, how a conflict arises, or how a social relationship occurs (Neuman, 2014, p. 179).

The unit of analysis is an organization, group, individual or critical incident. Case studies are conducted on different sources of information: sites and historical documents. The result of the case study is an interpretation and description of the case, which depends on the context of the case- social, economic, cultural, geographical and historical settings (Vanderstop and Johnston, 2009, p. 201, 210). Specifically, cases refer to a country (George and Bennett, 2005; Klotz and Prakash, 2008, p. 43). In case study research, the researcher does not deliberately manipulate the causal factor, and instead relies on observation rather than experimentation (Gerring, 2017, p. 29). The main goal of using the case study method is that the researchers hope to get or gain an in-depth understanding of the single case and its meaning for those involved (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006, p. 11). In a case study, a researcher examines a specific event or example, analyses it and tries to explain the central question or questions accordingly. The incident subject to analysis should be limited to a particular time and place. In the case study research design, the given country is going to be searched in-depth. Evidence must be gathered for the concept from that country. The main idea is to use that example to the support general hypothesis.

There has been little research on Bulgaria's transition from a communist system to a democracy and the role of internal and external factors in this process. The purpose of this thesis is to fill the gap in the literature regarding Bulgaria's transition from a communist system to democracy. The democratization process of Bulgaria at the

country level is examined using the case study method. The period of in-depth research is between 1989 and 2007.

Method of Collecting Data

The qualitative method was used as a technique to collect data for the thesis. Extensive research has been conducted on democratization and the post-communist transition, making these areas widely studied subjects in the field of political science. This is particularly true following the fall of the communist system. The data relating to the thesis were collected from sources written in different languages such as reports, reviews, analyses, archives, newspapers and books and journals devoted to the subject. At the same time, the biographies and discourses of the leaders were used during the writing of the thesis. The data collected from different sources were analysed, and the thesis writing was concluded.

Research Question and Hypothesis

The hypothesis of the thesis is:

“The success of Bulgaria's democratisation process was due to the harmonious combination of internal and external factors at that time, which directed the process towards success”.

Concerning the hypothesis of the thesis, it may be posited that Bulgaria's democratisation process was ultimately successful due to the harmonious interplay between internal and external factors at that time, with the result being that the process as a whole was directed towards success.

This research analyses “The Role of the Internal and External Factors in the Democratization Process of Bulgaria in the Period of 1989- 2007” by providing answers to the following questions:

1. What are the internal factors and what role have they played in the democratization process of Bulgaria?
2. What are the external factors and how have they played a role in the democratization process of Bulgaria?
3. What is the relationship between the roles of the elite in Bulgaria's democratisation process and the broader democratisation process itself?

4. What impact did the formation of the democratic opposition and the role of Turkish society in the transition period have on the process?
5. What challenges did the democratization process face?
6. What changes occurred within the internal political dynamics of Bulgaria during the process of democratisation?
7. In which period did the forces of internal and external dynamics unite in the path of democratization?
8. What were the principal factors contributing to Bulgaria's successful integration into the Western democratic society?

Objectives of the Study

The principal objective of this thesis is to examine the interplay between internal and external factors during Bulgaria's democratization period, and to assess the impact of these factors on the process. The democratisation process in Bulgaria has been a highly complex phenomenon. The communist regime was internationally isolated as a consequence of its assimilation policies against minorities in the country, which gave rise to ethnic tensions. It was only a matter of time before a civil war broke out. Concurrently, the pro-democratic opposition in Bulgaria was established only two years prior to the collapse of the communist regime and was not adequately prepared for the transition period. Despite the aforementioned challenges, Bulgaria has successfully transitioned from a communist to a democratic system. This has resulted in the country becoming a member of NATO and the EU, and its integration into the Western democratic society has been achieved.

Transitioning from one political system to an entirely new one is inherently challenging and frequently disrupted, resulting in incomplete processes. The transition from the communist system and the formation of the democratic political system in Bulgaria has reached its conclusion due to the influence exerted by specific factors.

The end of the old communist system in Bulgaria and the beginning of the democratization process took place thanks to the combination of internal and external factors. The internal factors that played an essential role in the democratization process in Bulgaria are:

- a) The Formation of The Anti-Communist Opposition

- b) The Role Played by The Turkish Community
- c) The Creation of a Round Table
- d) The First Democratic Elections (for Grand National Assembly and the First General Elections)
- e) The Transition to The Multi-Party System
- f) The Establishment of New Parties
- g) The Creation of A New Constitution

As for the external factors in the democratization process of Bulgaria, the following ones should be mentioned:

- a) The Effect of the Collapse of the Soviet Union after Gorbachev Perestroika and Glasnost Reform Movement
- b) The Malta Summit
- c) The Role of the NATO
- d) The Role of European Union

The examination of internal and external factors was limited to a specific period of time, and the factors that had the most impact on the process were analysed. This study offered an opportunity for a more in-depth examination of the factors involved, allowing their contribution and impact on the process to be more easily determined.

The following table illustrates the influence of internal and external factors on the democratic process across defined historical periods.

Factors	Transition Period 1989- 1990	Period of Establishment of Democracy 1990-2001	Consolidation Period 2001-2007
External factors	The Effect of Gorbachev Perestroika and Glasnost Reform Movement		The Role of the NATO
	The Malta Summit		The Role of European Union
Internal factors	The Formation of The Anti-Communist Opposition	The Creation of a Round Table	
	The Role Played by The Turkish Community	The First Democratic Elections	
		The Transition to The Multi-Party System	
		The Establishment of New Parties	
		The Creation of A New Constitution	

Table 1: External and Internal Factors in the Democratization Process of Bulgaria

Source: The table is prepared by the researcher.

With regard to the objective of the study, it can be stated that:

1. To determine the internal factors that played a crucial role in the democratization process of Bulgaria.
2. To define the external factors and their role during democratization process of Bulgaria.
3. To explore the success of the Bulgarian democratic transition and its acceptance to the NATO and European Union.

Literature Review

Following the downfall of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, numerous post-communist regimes gained sovereignty from communist governance. During this period, there was a swift process of democratisation that garnered the attention of the academic community. Rapid changes took place in Bulgaria, and with the disappearance of the totalitarian regime, it left its position to the new system, and the democratization process started. Compared to other Balkan countries, this process took place in Bulgaria with a smooth transition, which caused many researchers to focus on this country. There is much literature on the democratization process in Central and Eastern Europe. This section is devoted to the literature review, particularly about the democratization process taking place in Bulgaria.

Daskalov (1999), in his study “The Emerging Order Bulgarian Experiences with Democracy” provides an overview of the transition period without delving into excessive detail. The author argues that Bulgaria's transition from a totalitarian regime to a democracy was largely unsuccessful. Daskalov presents the current state of affairs and approaches the issue from a socio-political context. The author analyses cultural, international, internal political, psychological, and demographic factors that contribute to the issue. From a political perspective, the author identifies several reasons for the deadlock of democracy, including equal power held by communists and anti-communists, political polarization, weak opposition, lack of strategies, and societal division. The lack of a pro-democracy solid opposition before the transition period is claimed to be the main reason for the problems of democracy in Bulgaria. The author discusses two crucial issues in the democratization process: the unhealthy development of the economy and the unresolved ethnic issues. In conclusion, the author suggests that

the new democratic system is still grappling with the remnants of the old system, which presents a challenge to the transition to full democracy.

Dimitrova (2004) in her study “Bulgaria” on the democratization process in Bulgaria provides a critical perspective. The author argues that Bulgaria's transition to democracy differed significantly from that of other Central European countries. According to Dimitrova, there are three key points to consider. Firstly, the opposition before the transition to democracy was weak and unprepared to manage the new system. Secondly, Bulgaria owes Russia for gaining its freedom from the Ottoman Empire, which has led to a pro-Russian sentiment among most of the population. Thirdly, the elites in Bulgaria do not tolerate any criticism of Russia. The author argues that the Bulgarian transition was primarily led by the elites, with only a small number of civil protests³. The author argues that the protests intensified following the removal of the communist leader Todor Zhivkov from power, which she sees as evidence of an elite-led transition or 'revolution from above'. Additionally, the author highlights Bulgaria's struggles in managing the economy during the transition process, hindering its ability to overcome crises. Between 1991 and 1997, Bulgaria faced significant political and economic challenges. This situation resulted in the disruption of Bulgaria's membership in the European Union and NATO during that period.

In his book 'The Transition That Never Happened: At Least Not the Way That Was Recommended', author Lakov (2014) presents an alternative perspective on the democratization process of Bulgaria. Lakov draws attention to the significant economic challenges that existed before the transition began. He argues that if Bulgaria had implemented the Rahn-Utt economic development plan⁴, it would have had a more stable economy and navigated the political crises of 1996 and 1997 more effectively. According to Lakov (2014, p. 103), Bulgaria would have been better prepared for EU membership and would not have lagged behind other Central European countries. The author highlights that the collapse of the communist regime began with the renaming of the Turks of Bulgaria and the formation of opposition or dissident groups. This

³ The author suggests that the process was influenced by the elites of the old regime. Although the democratic opposition protests in the streets were aimed at promoting democracy, they inadvertently strengthened the position of the elites.

⁴ Following Bulgaria's transition to a democratic system, President Zhelyu Zhelev requested assistance from the United States in regards to economic development. As a result, American experts and economists were sent to the country to prepare an economic development plan. This plan, known as the Rahn Utt plan, was unfortunately never implemented in Bulgaria.

provided a platform for the West to introduce its democratic rules, norms, and values. The author acknowledges the influence of the anti-communist opposition, which included scientists, writers, and reporters of the period.

Spirova (2010) argues in her study "Bulgaria since 1989", that Bulgaria underwent a peaceful transition from communist one-party rule to a multi-party political system. Currently, Bulgaria is a member of the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. However, the country has encountered challenges in adapting to the free market economy. The author suggests that the difficulties experienced by Bulgaria may be linked to its historical economic ties with the Soviet Union and non-democratic countries. Bulgaria had a centralized financial system, but during the transition to democracy, it struggled to adapt and move towards a free market economy. Despite economic difficulties, Bulgaria has faced political and social challenges due to the firmly established communist ideology by the political elite and society⁵. However, Bulgaria has made significant progress in three areas: replacing the one-party system with a multi-party system, adopting a free-market economy, and embracing European norms and values.

Bideleux and Jeffries (2007), in their book "The Balkans a Post-Communist History", state that the protest in Bulgaria⁶ organized by the opposition group, Ecoglastnost⁷ were very efficient in organizing people against the communist system and after the suppression of the protest by police repression; was the incident which started the end of Todor Zhivkov rule. The authors emphasize that the collapse of the communist regime in Bulgaria, and the transition to democracy started with the coup⁸ within the communist party. The authors claim that one of the most significant achievements of the democratization process in Bulgaria is the gathering of anti-communist opposition under one roof⁹ and the political success of Zhelju Zhelev¹⁰. The authors are also arguing a

⁵ Public awareness and acceptance of the existence of a system is crucial to systemic change in a country. A system that is approved by both the public and the elites will be durable and robust.

⁶ The protest was organized on October 26 1989.

⁷ "The first democratic opposition in Bulgaria emerged in 1988, and was generally organised as environmental and human rights groups" (Synovitz, 1999).

⁸ "While opposition dissidents spearheaded the mass demonstrations in Poland and Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria's "revolution" was a coup within the Communist Party itself. The primary point of contention within the party was the question of whether to implement perestroika-style reforms" (Synovitz, 1999).

⁹The Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) is the most comprehensive anti-communist opposition political party.

critical point: On December 29, 1989, the rights and freedoms of Turks were restored, and they were entitled to take back their old assets¹¹. However, it was not accepted by the guardians of the old regime, so extreme nationalists protested about this issue in Sofia. After a week-long period, this time, the Turks held an anti-protest. Situation and escalations feared that civil disobedience would prevail in the country with the formation of such polarization, which meant that the communists and the UDF (Union of Democratic Forces) agreed at the round table to reconcile¹². The authors emphasize that the democratization process in Bulgaria was a long-lasting process followed by various difficulties.

In his book “The Party System in Bulgaria¹³” Karasimeonov (Карасимеонов) (2006) examines the transition of Bulgaria from a totalitarian regime to a democratic system through the lens of political parties. The emergence of a large number of political parties in Bulgaria after 1989 is seen as a symbol of the country's nascent democracy. The author argues that opposition structures that emerged during the final stages of the communist regime in Bulgaria played a crucial role in the democratization process, ultimately transforming into new political parties. The author also notes that the establishment of political parties, clubs, and associations led to an increased demand for democratization among the populace. During the transition period, the opposition suppressed the solid communist structure¹⁴ that still existed and made progress in accepting and implementing democratic and human rights and freedoms, similar to liberal democracies. The author attributes the crises faced by Bulgaria during the democratization process mainly to the weakness and strategic unpreparedness of the opposition parties.

¹⁰ He became the first democratically elected president of Bulgaria, with the elections held in 1992. Despite the political and economic crises in his period, he contributed to Bulgaria's democratic reforms and approach to democratic countries (Nova TV, 2015)

¹¹ In 1989, nearly half-million Bulgarian Turks were repelled from their lands to Turkey, and the state took over the properties they left behind. This event was recorded as a "Big Excursion" in the history of Bulgaria.

¹² The potentially hazardous situation was managed through decisions made during round table discussions aimed at preventing civil unrest by implementing a system change from communism to democracy. One of the significant changes during the transition to democracy was the restoration of the rights that had been taken away from the Turks.

¹³ “Партийната Система в България”

¹⁴ In Bulgaria, the communist leader Todor Zhivkov was first removed from power by his own close circle. Subsequently, the communist system collapsed, and the democratization process began.

Linz and Stepan (1996) argue in their work 'Democratic Transition and Consolidation Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe' that the former post-totalitarian regime in Bulgaria maintained control over the transition process. They even won the majority in the first elections, with new government leaders coming from their ranks. The authors attribute the communists' success during this transition period to the weakness of the pro-democracy opposition. The authors concur with others that the most significant pro-democratic opposition was Ecoglasnost, founded in February 1989. According to the authors, Bulgaria has undergone a distinct transition from other South and Central European countries. The country has had a blatant communist regime, and the opposition has been heavily suppressed, resulting in imprisonment, surveillance, and prevention. In mid-1989, the opposition in Bulgaria organized independently and played a significant role in initiating the democratization process.

Raychev and Stoychev (2008) wrote a book titled "What Happened? A Story about the Transition in Bulgaria and Shortly after it 1989-2004¹⁵". The authors approach to the democratisation of Bulgaria from a sociological perspective and discuss the issue from two different angles. Firstly, the revolutions were initially influenced by the events unfolding on the world political stage during that period. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and its communist ideology, the satellite states began their transition to democracy. Secondly, the authors analysed the role of elites in this revolution. In Bulgaria, the new government's responsibility was determined by the Roundtable Meetings in the early 1990s, which were modelled after similar discussions in Poland. By comparing the revolution in these two countries, the authors highlighted significant differences. During the Polish transition negotiations, one side of the table was occupied by the communists, while the other side was taken by the anti-communist group. In contrast, the situation in Bulgaria was different. The agreement saw reform-oriented communists seated on one side of the table, while the other side was occupied by an anti-communist opposition¹⁶ that formed within a short period of weeks. According to the authors, Bulgaria has undergone a prolonged period of instability during its democratization process. The instability was caused by the revolution led by reformist

¹⁵ "Какво се случи? Разказ за прехода в България и малко след него 1989-2004"

¹⁶ The democratic opposition that emerged during the final stages of the communist period comprised ideas and goals from various segments. To confront the communist regime, they united under one umbrella organization- The United Democratic Forces UDF. However, during Bulgaria's transition to a democratic system, issues arose within this organization, leading to splits at various times.

communists, rather than the pro-democracy opposition. For a significant period, the situation remained under their control.

According to Petrovic (2013) in his book 'The Democratic Transition of Post-Communist Europe in the Shadow of Communist Differences and Uneven Europeanisation', Bulgaria was the first Balkan state to overthrow communist rule. The author argues that the rule of Zhivkov and Ceausescu, which lasted several decades, came to an end primarily due to developments in the ECE¹⁷ communist states, rather than domestic factors or an organized anti-communist opposition. Petrovic (2013) states that anti-communist opposition groups in Balkan countries, particularly in Bulgaria, did not pose a threat to the regime. The writer notes that the groups lacked organization and public recognition. In agreement with other intellectuals, the writer identifies the inter-party coup in Bulgarian Communist Party as the first sign of change in Bulgaria during the last days of the communist regime. The democratization process began to take place rapidly following Zhivkov's abdication from power. The author suggests that Bulgaria has not been able to achieve full democracy, even with the establishment of a multi-party system and a new constitution. The author claims that Bulgaria had a transitioning to an illiberal democracy. According to Petrovic (2013, p. 109), illiberal democracy is a form of democracy that is based on democratic institutions, but where the political opposition and civil liberties are obstructed to such an extent that they are unable to win elections. The authors suggest that leaders in the transition from totalitarianism to democracy must change their mind-set if they still hold communist beliefs. They should work towards promoting democracy, despite the complexity of the situation.

In his book 'A Concise History of Bulgaria', Crampton (2005) argues that the fall of Bulgaria's communist leader, Todor Zhivkov, was not a revolution but rather an interparty or palace coup. According to Crampton, ordinary people had little influence on the changes in leadership during the transition period. During Bulgaria's transition to democracy, a crucial step was the separation of the communist party from the state. This process began with a request to amend the first article of the constitution¹⁸. Bulgaria existed under a single-party communist system for an extended period, and the term 'party' was used interchangeably with 'state'. During the democratization process, a

¹⁷ East Central Europe

¹⁸ Following the transition to a democratic system in Bulgaria, the first step was to create a new constitution. This involved abolishing the articles that protected the superiority of the communist party.

multi-party system was established, and a new government was elected, which was considered a significant achievement for democracy. As a result, other communist institutions and organizations either dissolved or changed their names, internalizing the new democratic condition. Crampton states that Bulgaria experienced political and economic crises until 1997, which interrupted the democratization process. The instability was caused, in part, by the establishment of short-term governments. As a result, Bulgaria was unable to pursue its desired foreign policy objectives while addressing internal issues. These developments have created public discontent and distrust, which profoundly affected the state.

The aim of this literature review is to identify the challenges faced by Bulgaria during its transition to democracy. The literature on Bulgaria's transition from a totalitarian regime to a democracy has primarily been analysed from an economic, historical, cultural and sociological perspectives. The literature review also aimed to assess the extent of previous research on the topic and identify any gaps. The results of the review indicate that previous cases did not comprehensively identify the internal and external factors involved.

This study aims to examine the influence of internal and external factors on Bulgaria's transition to democracy and integration with the EU. The political literature lacks a direct study on this context, making this research an important contribution to the field. As a result of this study, it is a step to present an exemplary case study to understand the impact of internal and external factors in the democratization process of different countries.

Definition of the Terms

As the main topic of the thesis is the process of democratization in Bulgaria, some essential concepts will be explained in this section. This section will explain the terms such as:

- a) Democracy
- b) Liberal democracy and its components
- c) The minimalist vs. maximalist democracy approach
- d) Democratization

Since the idea of democracy has been a highly debated subject in recent years, many different definitions of democracy have emerged. Even totalitarian and authoritarian regimes have had claims to being democracies¹⁹. Therefore, it would be wrong to talk about a single concept. For this reason, it is necessary to explain the idea of democracy adequately.

However, despite all this complexity, democracy has consistently maintained the involvement of citizens and society, both within and outside of government institutions. Our point of view in this thesis will be based on the minimalist democracy approach, while also exploring other approaches to democracy. Some essential concepts should be clarified in the context of the subject or the topic.

In this part of the thesis, some terms such as liberal democracy, democratization will be defined. In this context, the idea that needs to be explained first is democracy.

Liberal Democracy and Components of a Liberal Democratic System

In the current world order, the most desirable political system is democracy. In different countries, the democratic system is implemented in different ways. According to the subject of the thesis, the liberal democratic system will be explained in this section. Firstly, what exactly is a democracy, and the characteristics of democracy will be mentioned, secondly the liberal democratic system will be evaluated.

In fundamental aspects, there are several different forms of democracy have been developed across the world in different time periods and locations. These models include direct and indirect democracy, as well as social and pluralist democracy, among others (Heywood, 2004, p. 220). Although the history of democracy dates back to two thousand and five hundred years ago, its noble popularity and determination as the ideal system to be reached took place in the twentieth century (Dursun, 2008, p. 163). Until the end of the nineteenth century, democracy was the subject of philosophers' discussion like any other political issue. Therefore, the etymological meaning of democracy is straightforward, which means people's rule or power (Sartori, 1987, p. 21). Heywood defines democracy as follows:

“The term democracy and the classical conception of democratic rule are firmly rooted in Ancient Greece. As with other words derived from the Greek word *kratos*, such as autocracy, aristocracy and bureaucracy, the term democracy is

¹⁹ Such as Russia and China (Dahl, 1998, pp. 1,2)

derived from the ancient Greek word *kratos*, which means "power" or "rule". Consequently, democracy may be defined as "rule by the demos," where "demos" denotes "the many" or "the people" (Heywood, 2004, p. 220).

While democracy highlights human rights, the most crucial among them could be argued to be a system that grants individuals the right to vote for their leaders and aspire to hold a position of authority. In the course of the historical development of the concept of democracy, the main uses of the term have gone through different semantic phases and have finally been reduced to two different political terms.

The first is the direct participation of the people in the state administration. In this context, direct democracy was founded, and an example can be given in the political system of Ancient Greece. "The concept of direct democracy, which may be referred to as classical, participatory, or radical democracy, is based on the direct, unmediated, and continuous participation of citizens in the tasks of government" (Heywood, 2013, p. 92). Direct democracy has been applied in regions with a less settled population and in this administrative system; a certain part of the people²⁰ has been directly involved in the government.

However, today's democratic system has been qualitatively moved to a completely different dimension from the old Athenian administrative system, and in this way, the modern liberal democratic system has been formed.

While the classical democracy is understood as a kind of self-government of the people, according to today's understanding of modern democracy, the people elect their own representatives and those rulers rule the people. Democracy, which is practiced in Europe today, is a governance system by the representatives chosen by the people (Karpat, 2017, p.17; Powell, 1982, p. 3). A comprehensive definition claims that: Modern political democracy is a system of governance in which citizens hold rulers accountable for their actions in the public realm. This accountability is achieved indirectly through the competition and collaboration of their elected representatives (Schmitter & Karl, 1991, p. 2). According to Rueschemeyer, Huber Stephens & Stephens:

²⁰ Women, slaves, and foreigners were excluded from participating in direct democracy. This has been cited as evidence in critiques of democracy, which argue that, despite safeguarding individual rights and laws, it still favours particular groups.

“The concept of democracy entails, first, regular, free and fair elections of representatives, with universal and equal suffrage, second, the responsibility of the state apparatus: to the elected parliament (possibly complemented by direct election of the head; of the executive), and third, the freedoms of expression and association as well as the protection of individual rights against arbitrary state action” (Rueschemeyer, Huber Stephens & Stephens, 1992, p.43).

Although democracy has many different forms (liberal, radical, social, pluralist, economic, etc.), we will focus on and examine liberal democracy which is relevant to the topic.

In that sense, the globally accepted and most widespread model of democracy is liberal democracy. From one perspective, liberal democracy emerges as a fusion of liberal ideology and democratic system. In a liberal democratic system, the liberal approach defines the type of political government that should exist, while the democratic aspect determines who should govern based on certain principles.

In the ideology of liberalism, the emphasis is on human rights and freedoms, whereas in a democratic system, these rights are implemented through the citizens' ability to participate in political elections. In liberal democratic systems, rights and freedoms occupy one of the most critical places and must be applied equally to all citizens and not to just one group. Since individual rights come to the fore in liberal ideology, the dominance and power of the state over individuals are restricted.

Liberal democracy is a representative and indirect form of democracy where the political office comes to power through regular elections which are based on formal political equality (Heywood, 2013, p. 99). In a liberal democracy, elections play a vital role by preventing dictatorship on one hand, and enabling citizens to choose their leaders according to their own preferences on the other. Therefore, competitive and on-going elections represent a crucial component of liberal democracy.

There are four indicators for a measurement of the liberal democratic systems and these are:

1. The elections should be fair,
2. The chief executive to be elected,
3. The legislature to be elected and,
4. The legislature should be effective (Bollen, 1980, p. 376).

Liberal democracy is a system that tries to guarantee the rights of the people, and in this respect it contains some important components to limit the power of the state. In the following section, the components of the liberal democratic system are listed and explained one by one.

Components of Liberal Democracy

While the liberal-democratic system limits the power of the state, it also seeks to expand the freedom of society. For a system to qualify as a liberal democratic system, it must possess certain essential components. Once the basic components are carefully implemented in a state, the system of that state will reach the level of a liberal democratic system. These essential components include the constitution, the rule of law, the separation of political powers, the holding of regular and fair competitive elections, the existence of a multiparty system, popular political participation and the creation of a civil society.

a) The Constitution

A key feature of the liberal democratic system is a constitutional or limited form of government. The Constitution plays an important role in this context. To implement this limitation, the state's power has been established by the constitution, with the principle of the rule of law serving as the fundamental tenet. Liberal democracy is commonly referred to as constitutional democracy, because of the constitutional limits that are placed on the political system. In a way, the Constitution shapes not only the structure of government and its limits but also safeguards the rights of citizens.

b) The Rule of Law

However, for the constitution to come into force, the rule of law must be upheld within a country. The concept of the rule of law holds a crucial place in a liberal democracy. The rule of law requires that society is governed according to legal principles, rather than at the discretion of those in power. In contemporary liberal democratic countries, the principle of the rule of law holds a significant position and guarantees equality in the application of societal regulations. Regarding the principles of the rule of law, they are as follows:

- First, the principle of the rule of law assumes that all individuals accept the laws of a country and that everyone is equal before the law.

- Second, the principle of the rule of law expresses the obligation to act within the framework of the law, as no administrator or institution can be above the law.
- Third, the rule of law makes citizens equal before the law and ensures that politicians act within and in accordance with the law.

In countries where the rule of law exists, individuals have the opportunity to protect their fundamental rights and freedoms against the state. The rights of the individual are an essential aspect of liberal democracy. The obligation of the state to uphold the law is a sophisticated principle that prioritises the protection of individuals over the state itself. In conclusion, the rule of law is one of the fundamental principles of a free and fair society.

c) Separation of the Political Power

In a liberal democratic system, a checks and balances framework is in place to prevent the concentration and misuse of power by a single authority. The checks and balances system serves the important purpose of regulating the actions and power of the state. Multiple institutions exist to function as checks and balances. To ensure the system of checks and balances, there are separate branches of state power, which include the executive, the legislative and the judiciary. The division of the political administration system into distinct branches facilitated the practical application of the separation of powers principle.

d) Competitive Elections

The electoral process plays an important role in liberal democracy. In this system, the environment in which political elections take place is more important than the results of the elections. Free and fair elections allow individuals to vote for their preferred political representatives, granting a mandate to the elected executive to govern for a predetermined period. This democratic process enables accountability and ensures that leaders are chosen by the will of the people (Dursun, 2008, p. 175). In regular elections, the votes of all those entitled to vote must be counted as valid. Elections must be carried out openly, fairly and continuously. Competition and electoral choice based on political pluralism is tolerance for contending beliefs and the existence of opposite parties and political movements (Heywood, 2013, p. 99). The opposition should be considered in the possibility of winning the elections.

e) Multi-Party System

Establishing a multi-party system within a state is a fundamental element of liberal democracy. This democratic system is also referred to as the principle of majority rule. Nonetheless, in a liberal system with multiple parties, minorities have the possibility to engage to political parties and advocate for their rights based on their own perspectives and ideas. Concurrently, the multi-party system is also referred to as a contestant system. The multi-party liberal democratic system prevents the dominance of a single idea and ideology in a country where it is implemented. Additionally, the multi-party system implements the check and balance factor that makes the ruling party fear that it will lose the next election if it does not fully perform its duties.

f) Popular Political Participation

Political participation is one of the crucial components of liberal democracy. It is imperative to ensure the rights to assembly, organization, thought, and free expression. This facilitates the society to come together under various entities such as foundations and organizations, to scrutiny the state, and exert political pressure when required. It encompasses more than just participating in elections and also involves actions that enable the civilian population to influence the government without the use of force.

g) Creation of Civil Society

Another component of liberal democracy is the formation of civil society, which means the existence of autonomous groups (Heywood, 2013, p. 99), which plays a critical role between the community and the state. Non-governmental civil organisations have become an indispensable component of democratic systems, acting as intermediaries between the system and society (Gill, 2000, p. 7-8). Civil societies are the associations or trade groups created by individuals of their own will in the community or society. These organizations are outside of the direct intervention of the state. They can create and orient public opinion by creating some pressure groups such as interest and lobby groups to force the state to take some critical actions. Civil societies are Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are usually referred to as “non-state, non-profit orientated groups who pursue purposes of public interest” (Fischer, 2006, p. 3), or some special interest groups mostly faith-based (Paffenholz, 2015, p.138). Civil society organizations in the peace-building or transition process can play a significant role (Paffenholz, 2009, p. 2) and push society to accept agreements. “The term "civil society" is generally understood to refer to the arena of voluntary, collective actions of

an institutional nature around shared interests, purposes, and values that are distinct from those of the state and family “(Paffenholz, 2015, p.138). A robust civil society ensures democracy while disciplining the state to be serious about the interests of the community (Carothers, 2000, p. 21).

As previously mentioned, democracy originated as the governance by the people during ancient Greece and has given rise to a broad concept known as liberal democracy. Certainly, beyond these two notions of democracy, there exist further types of democracy and democratic systems. In the rest of the section, will be examine two distinct approaches: a narrow, minimalist interpretation of democracy and a broad, maximalist interpretation. We will analyse and discuss these concepts in detail.

Minimalist and Maximalist Approach of the Democracy

Political scientists have analysed democracy and identified specific principles that a system must adhere to be considered democratic. Although there are many different approaches in this context, in the present part the approaches that will be explained are the minimal and maximal definitions of democracy.

Minimalist Approach

Minimalist democracy is a system designed to facilitate political decision-making and regulations. In this system, political leaders need the support of the electorate in order to govern. This means that they are competing with other individual candidates in the elections.

a) Schumpeter Minimalist Democracy Approach

The electoral or minimalist approach was initially proposed by Joseph Alois Schumpeter, an Austrian economist and political scientist, although it did not receive significant attention during his era.

Schumpeter's theory of democracy draws inspiration from the neoclassical concept of price competition. He posits that just as companies compete within a market, political leaders also compete for the favour of society. Therefore, the democratic system can be viewed as an institutionalised race for power (Shapiro & Cordon, 1999, p. 4). Schumpeter defines: “The democratic method is an institutional arrangement for the formation of political decisions. It is based on the principle that individuals gain the

authority to make decisions through a competitive struggle for the popular vote” (Schumpeter, 1976, p. 269). Democracy is not merely a system of representation; it is also a marketplace where goods are sold: the exchange of votes for governmental output. (Shapiro & Cordon, 1999, p. 4). Those who lose in the electoral race do not attempt to seize power through rebellion but rather accept their defeat, while continuously preparing for the next elections. In this manner, the democratic system inherently facilitates a peaceful transfer of power.

According to Schumpeter, the fundamental criteria for a country to be considered a democracy are the following: the existence of a multi-party system in the country, the holding of continuous elections, and the fact that the citizens of the country possess the dual right to run as candidates in elections and to cast their votes simultaneously. “Schumpeter defines democracy specifically as a due process of institutions or a method for making political decisions in which the people participate in the election and removal of political leaders” (Schmidt, 2002, p. 129). In the minimalist democracy approach, with periodic political elections, citizens and pressure groups control political leaders (Held, 2006, p. 177). In fact, the ability to keep the political rulers and power under control is an indispensable element of democracy.

b) Huntington Minimalist Democracy Approach

Samuel Phillips Huntington is another political scientist who explains democratization based on minimalist or electoral democracy. According to Huntington, who supports the minimalist perspective on democracy, the crucial aspect in determining whether a system is democratic or not is the method by which leaders acquire political power. “In other governmental systems, individuals ascend to leadership positions through a variety of means, including birth, lot, wealth, violence, co-optation, learning, appointment, or examination. The fundamental process of democracy is the selection of leaders through competitive elections by the people, who are then responsible for governing” (Huntington, 1991, p. 6). Huntington's understanding of democracy is compatible with the understanding of minimalist democracy, and according to him, the essence of democracy is the election of political decision-makers through regularly political elections (Munroe, 1994, p. 207). Huntington, on the one hand, agrees with

Schumpeter's view of democracy, on the other hand, he adopts Robert Dahl's²¹ approach to democracy (polyarchy²²): "political system as democratic to the extent that its most powerful collective decision makers are selected through fair, honest, and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote" (Huntington, 1991, p.7). Huntington contends that a system can only be deemed democratic if the political election process is conducted continually and fairly, and if every individual in the country takes part in elections and elects the political executive staff (Huntington, 2011, p. 19).

According to Huntington, while elections are stated as an indispensable part of democracy, another important fact is that the political opposition can act freely and that the entire society has the right to elect without exception indicates the existence of a democratic system in a country. When these factors exist in a country, that country is deemed to be a democratic country, and according to these features, it gives the opportunity to measure the proximity and distance of countries to democratic political systems. Considering these measures of democracy, if a part of the population in a country does not have the right to vote if the opposition parties do not have a chance to come to power and if the opposition media is censored, the democratic system of that country is called into question (Huntington, 2011, p. 20). Huntington cites elections as the essence of democracy and adds:

"It is possible for governments that come to power through elections to be corrupt, inefficient, narrow-minded, acting in line with private interests, and at the same time, incapable of adopting the policies and political decisions required for the public good. These characteristics may be undesirable, but they do not make these governments undemocratic" (Huntington, 1991, p.10).

In summary, the minimum conditions for a system to be considered a democracy according to Schumpeter and Huntington are the following:

- Having constant elections in a country

²¹ Robert Alan Dahl, an American political scientist and theorist, introduced the concept of maximalist democracy. In accordance with this approach, he identified key features, which made it easier to recognise democratic systems and countries.

²² Polyarchy is a political concept developed by Robert Dahl which signifies the formation and management of a political system by the majority of the citizens. Even though the term 'democracy' generally invokes thoughts of elections and electoral representation, polyarchy puts emphasis on the importance of granting the opposition extensive rights to establish a truly ideal democratic society. In a democratic system, the political opposition's ability to organise and utilise the media freely is a crucial element, and it is this type of system which polyarchy ultimately defines.

- Governments coming to power with elections and getting away from the administration with elections.

According to the minimalist approach to democracy, the presence of on-going, competitive elections in a country is regarded as an indication of democratic existence in that country. Although the minimalist approach to democracy appears to be widely accepted by political scholars like Robert Dahl, it has been elaborated by incorporating additional elements, leading to the development of the maximalist approach to democracy.

Maximalist Approach

Another democracy approach is maximalist or broad democracy. According to this approach it has been emphasised that some rights and freedoms should be included alongside elections. Robert Dahl has been one of the main proponents of this point of view.

Robert Alan Dahl, who gained fame with his work in the field of democracy by adding a few important points to Joseph Schumpeter's and Huntington's approach to democracy and expanding that approach a little more, was one of the thinkers who defended the maximalist understanding of democracy. Compared to Schumpeter's and Huntington's understanding of democracy, Robert Dahl's approach to democracy is much broader. According to Robert Dahl, democracy does not only consist of electing a leader in elections but also encompasses a wider range of rights. According to his democratic approach, all the members of a state have equal political rights.

While Robert Dahl endorses Schumpeter's conception of democracy and acknowledges that elections are a fundamental aspect of it, he also stresses the importance of additional freedoms beyond the electoral process, defining this system as a democracy. In the democratic system, which Robert Dahl defines as a polyarchy, besides the elections, the elements he sees as the most important include freedoms related to political opposition and participation (Huntington, 2011, p. 19). Where there is no freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and freedom to form civic and political groups, the opposition cannot fully develop. Although democracies operate by majority rule and the primary criterion is regular and free elections, it is still necessary to limit the exercise of power in some way. According to Dahl, only when basic freedoms such

as freedom of expression, freedom of access to different sources of information, and freedom of political organization are secured, the elections will be free, regular and competitive (Özbudun, 2017, p. 23).

Dahl suggests that the opposition should be effectively arranged between the two elections, making use of press and media freedom to be thoroughly equipped for future elections and obtain the right to participate. If the opposition is not given the opportunity to use the media and the press, this points to a flaw in the democratic system of the state, in spite of the freedom of the elections. Democratic systems are characterised by the political freedom to form associations, access information, communicate freely, and express political preferences in order to foster competition among leaders. This freedom promotes a healthy democratic environment and encourages citizens to participate in shaping their society. (Linz, 2017, p. 25-26)

Dahl lists the areas of freedom that he sees essential for political democracy as follows:

- “1. Free and fair elections (Dahl, 1989, pp.221).
2. Right to run for office (Dahl, 1989, pp.221).
3. Right to form and join organizations
4. Right of free expression
5. Right to vote
6. Right of political leaders to compete for support
7. Right to access to the alternative sources of information” (Dahl, 1971, p. 3).

The Narrow definition of democracy Political Scientists: Joseph Alois Schumpeter and Samuel Phillips Huntington	The Broader Definition of Democracy Political Scientist: Robert Alan Dahl
Free elections are the essence of democracy - right to vote (the right to choose) - the right to be elected (the right to be candidate) - elected political government - democratic institutions Democracy is a form of political rule, and the government of the state comes to the power with the elections.	Political freedoms are essential to democracy. -have the right to express themselves -the importance and free use of the press and broadcast -the right to organize as different civic and political institutions In a democratic system, besides elections, it is a political system where the people have equal rights and freedoms and can express themselves freely.
Schumpeterian Democracy approach	Polyarchy

Table 2: Comparison of Narrow and Broader Definition of Democracy

Source: Derived from the studies of (Schumpeter, 1976; Huntington, 1991; Dahl, 1971).

Note: In this table, the two dimensions of democracy are compared. The differences between the two dimensions are clearly seen here. While elections and voters are in the foreground in the first dimension, the rights of the voters are emphasized according to the second dimension.

According to the thesis subject, Schumpeter and Huntington's minimalist approach to democracy appears more plausible. If a country lacks a democratic history, the first steps towards democracy start with conducting fair elections. These elections additionally signify the initiation of a multi-party system. Central and Eastern European post-communist countries made considerable efforts to hold their first democratic elections as they moved from a communist system to a democracy. They did not wait for a strengthened opposition to form before holding these elections, and with their success, newly established governments were able to begin the necessary political reforms and changes on the path to democratization.

The same was true of Bulgaria's transition to democracy. It can be argued that Bulgaria's transition to democracy did not begin after Todor Zhivkov was removed from power, but after the first democratic elections were held. It was only after the first democratic elections in Bulgaria that a new constitution and democratic institutions were established. For this reason, the beginning of the democratisation process in Bulgaria was considered compatible with the minimalist democracy approach. In the dissertation, democracy in Bulgaria has been analysed taking into account the minimalist democracy approach.

Democratization

Democratization refers to the process by which a country transitions from a non-democratic to a democratic system of governance. Fundamentally, democratization involves the establishment of democratic institutions, as well as the acceptance of democratic norms and values within the country. The process of democratization initiates with the decline and fall of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. Following that, the second stage comprises the transition process to democracy, with the third stage consisting of the consolidation process of democracy.

The establishment of a democratic system involves creating institutions such as the legislature, executive branch, and independent judiciary. Additionally, it requires free, fair and regular elections, respect for human rights and freedoms, as well as adherence to the rule of law. The strengthening of the democratic system in a country essentially

pertains to developing and nurturing a democratic culture within society. This involves fostering the viewpoint that only democratic solutions can be implemented to confront challenges and emergencies.

Democratization is a long process and it consists of two parts. While the first part of democratization covers the transition to liberal or constitutional democracy including the formation of the democratic system structure, the second part covers the consolidation process of democracy (Pridham, Herring & Sanford, 1997, p. 1-2). These phases of the democratisation process take place over different periods of time for different countries and are dependent on the influence of internal and external factors. While the process of democratisation takes less time in countries that have had a previous experience of democracy than in countries that have not had a previous experience of democracy.

The process of democratization is the transitional phase between the downfall of the previous regime and the establishment of democratic rule in a country. Essentially, following the transition to democracy, a multi-party system is instituted and free and fair elections are initiated. However, if the democratic ethos is yet to be fully embraced by society, such a system is classified as an unconsolidated or nascent democracy.

The beginning of the democratization process dates back to the 19th century and the first democratic system was implemented in Western Europe and America. Subsequently, democratization occurred in other parts of the world, including Latin America and Central and Eastern Europe, in the form of successive democratization waves. While there was a successful transition to democracy in some countries, in other countries, this success could not be achieved due to certain factors; this led to the emergence of hybrid regimes as well.

The reasons behind the acceleration of democratization and the expansion of democracy around the world have been researched extensively. Various factors, including political culture, economic development, the influence of elites, and the role of external elements, have been identified. According to Grugel (2002), the engine of democratization in the 19th century was class, whereas in the 1980s and 1990s, it was fuelled by a complex combination of social conflict, state-building, and external influence (p. 32).

According to Huntington (1991), a stable authoritarian regime does not move directly into a consolidated democracy; there is the existence of intermediate transition levels between these two political systems. A strong authoritarian regime first starts to lose its legitimacy and evolves into an unstable authoritarian regime. Huntington (1991) argues that an authoritarian regime can weaken due to popular protests and revolts, or when the military withdraws its support for the ruler or government. This withdrawal of support can lead to an unstable authoritarian regime. However, the collapse or weakening of an authoritarian system does not guarantee a transition to democracy. In such a scenario, a transition to democracy or a shift towards a more rigid authoritarian system or dictatorship may occur. If the pro-democracy opposition unites and resists strongly against the overthrown regime, a transition to a democratic system may be feasible.

According to Huntington (1991), the unification of the political opposition with the people, resulting in the overthrow of the authoritarian regime, the seizure of state institutions, and the possibility of holding the first democratic elections, as well as creating a democratic constitution, can be considered the beginning of the democratization process. It is important to acknowledge that a system may be considered a weak democracy, even if it appears to be democratic. This is because the public and state administrators have not fully embraced democratic norms and values.

In the process of democratization, it may take a considerable amount of time, or there may be a risk of reverting to an authoritarian regime. If the ruling party peacefully transfers power to another party through elections, without resorting to violence or any other means of coercion, then it can be considered a step towards democratic consolidation. During the continuation of the process, democracy will be firmly established. The culture of society will be imbued with the norms and values of democracy, leading to the internalization of democracy by the state. This can be seen as the consolidation of democracy.

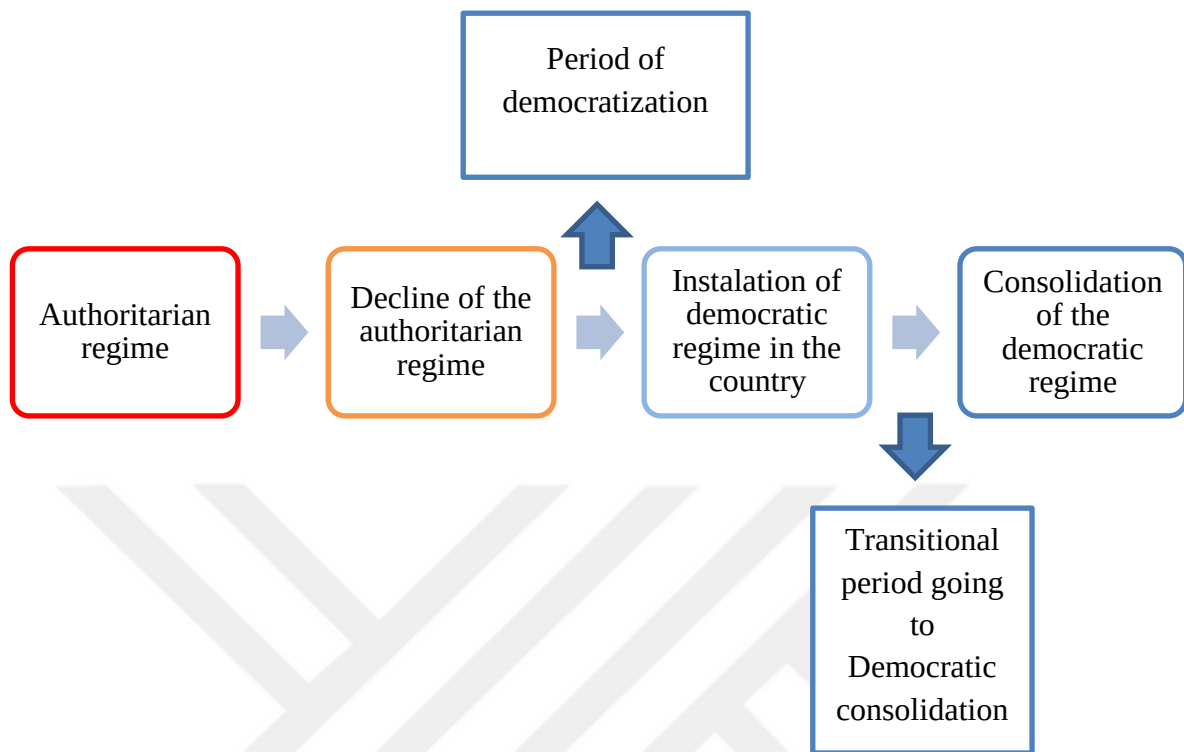


Figure 1: The scope of democratization according to Huntington

Source: (Huntington, 1991, p. 35)

According to the above stated, the democratization process actually includes the transition from an unstable political authoritarian state regime to an unstable democratic system. In fact, this interim period covers the period when the most turmoil, revolutions, protests and uncertainty prevails. Stable democracy includes the internalization of democratic values, the resolution of problems by considering the rule of law, the continual and fair conduct of elections, the change of the government with elections, and the protection of human rights.

Samuel Huntington (2011, pp. 25-38) outlined three global waves of democratisation that occurred between 1828 and 2000, with each wave eventually followed by a separate reverse wave. According to Huntington (2011, p. 28-30), the first democratization wave started in the period 1828 to 1922, and it was also the longest one. It began with the American and French revolutions. When it ended, the number of democracies in the world was 29. The wave of democratization was reversed in 1922 when Mussolini came to power in Italy (p. 28-30).

According to Huntington (2011), the second wave of democratization happened between 1945 and 1962. The second wave began in 1945 with the victory of democracies at the end of the Second World War. It continued with the decolonization process. When it reached its peak in 1962, 36 countries were ruled by democracy. An inverse wave followed from 1962 to 1975 (p. 31-34).

In the third wave of democratization 1975-2000, Huntington (2011) argues that, in the last quarter of the 20th century, trends in seven regions combined to give birth to the third wave. Huntington (2011) lists the causes of the third wave of democratization:

- The decrease of right-wing authoritarian regimes in Southern Europe during the mid-1970s.
- The transition from military dictatorships to elected civilian governments in Latin America during the late 1970s and 1980s.
- The weakening of authoritarian regimes in parts of East and South Asia since the mid-1980s.
- The collapse of the communist regimes in CEE in the late 1980s.
- The dissolution of the USSR in 1991 and the establishment of 15 post-Soviet republics.
- The decline of single-party governments in numerous sub-Saharan African regions during the first half of the 1990s is notable.
- Finally, a weak but visible emancipation trend in some Middle Eastern countries in the 1990s (p.34-35).

However, most of the regions covered in the third-wave democratization process have not been able to establish solid democracies. In the explanation of the democratic waves and democratization process the role of internal and external factors was evaluated by Huntington.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Central and Southeast Europe experienced a swift shift from totalitarian to democratic regimes. The question arises, how did these changes come about? Various states have been forced to make these changes due to the fluctuating balance, the pressures and the parameters within the international system. However, the impact of internal factors on the incidence of this change cannot be disregarded (Huntington, 1997, p. 108).

Huntington developed his own formula as a contribution to democratization. He emphasizes the importance of the role played by groups in the transition period. He claims that in the democratization process, the approach of the groups and the characters of the leaders within the groups determine the direction of this process. In this approach, three different types of democratization have emerged, depending on whether the democratization is initiated by the authoritarian elite or by the democratic opposition:

- Transformation
- Replacement
- Transplacement

a) Transformation

The initial form of transition to democracy is known as transformation. In this case, the elite in power play a crucial role in initiating democratization (Huntington, 2011, p. 140). The reasons for the elites choosing this option may vary, such as the pro-democracy group or the opposition organizing large protests and marches, or the fear of a military coup. In this case, elites may feel compelled to change the system in order to maintain their power, thus initiating the transition to a democratization process. When a regime change occurs through the reform method, changes are made with the decision of the totalitarian regime's administrative staff, resulting in a bloodless transition period (Huntington, 1991, p. 120). Leaders who initiate these reforms should have an explicit goal and ideal for the reform process.

b) Replacement

Huntington's second type of democratic transition is known as replacement. This occurs when the democratic opposition overthrows the existing state power holders and replaces the old regime with a democratic system (Huntington, 2011, p. 158-159). In this method, the opposition is politically stronger and has the support of the people, and does not need to make agreements with former regime officials to change the system. The method for regime change is typically through revolution, war, or uprising, resulting in the overthrow of the totalitarian regime (Huntington, 1991, p.140-143). The newly elected government then begins to implement democratic rules.

c) Transplacement

Huntington's third method of transitioning to democracy is the transplacement method. In the transplacement method, the power holders and the opposition work together to

direct the transition and establish democratic institutions (Huntington, 2011, p. 167). The most successful transition from a totalitarian regime to a democratic system occurred through an alliance between the political elite and the opposition (Zhang, 1994, p. 110). When comparing transplacement with the other two transitions mentioned above (transformation and replacement), the consolidation of democracy is the most robust and rapid due to favourable conditions. This is because both state officials and opposition are represented in the new system. The democratization process can be initiated by an institution that carried out this revolution or coup, which is generally the military. The contract method is employed when the governing leader of a country in a single-party system and the opposition come together to transition towards democracy (Huntington, 1991, p.146). The transition from a totalitarian regime to a democratic system is a lengthy and intricate process, influenced by a multitude of internal and external factors.

It is important to distinguish between democratization and democracy. Democratization refers to the process of transitioning from an authoritarian or non-democratic system to a democracy. However, this transition period carries its own risks. While some countries successfully transition to and consolidate their democracies, others evolve into illiberal or hybrid regimes. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, many countries began the transition to democracy. However, the process ended differently in each country.

This study focuses on the democratization process, specifically the transition from an unstable authoritarian regime to an unstable democracy. It examines the role of internal and external factors in this process. In the first chapter of the thesis, we will explain three significant democratization theories: Modernization, Historical Sociology, and Transition Theory. We will avoid extensive discussions and focus on bringing clarity to the subject.

Research Outline

Introduction Part, is a theoretical-methodological framework part, an explanation of terms which are going to be used, and a theoretical framework along with the literature review were stated. In this section, the structure and mainframes of the thesis are drawn, such as the aim of the research and expectations. Additionally, research questions and

methodology of gathering information are stated. Finally, the results of the literature review and the theoretical discussions in line with the thesis are added to this section.

Chapter 1, the primary objective of the chapter is to identify the principal theories that seek to elucidate the democratization period and to examine them from disparate vantages. It is subsequently demonstrated which theory is more efficacious in elucidating Bulgaria's democratization process.

In Chapter 2, the establishment of the state with the independence of Bulgaria from the Ottoman Empire, sections from the communist era and the political historical process leading to the democratization period are the subjects. It also enlightens the reader about the historical political transformation processes that Bulgaria has passed through. The historical overview of the political phases of Bulgaria before the transition to democracy was listed according to the chronology. Bulgaria's entry into the transition and democratization process was examined. In this period, while the Perestroika and Glasnost reform movement, which started in the Soviet Union, caused changes in the world, it was mentioned how it affected Bulgaria and its domestic politics. This section analyses how the Malta meeting between Bush and Gorbachev led to the abolition of the Brezhnev doctrine and the end of the Cold War. It also examines the impact of this meeting as an external factor on Bulgaria's transition from a communist system to a democracy. The impact of Perestroika and Glasnost, and the Malta Summit was also felt in Bulgaria, leading to the organization and mobilization of political opposition (dissident) and minorities, particularly the Turks, who had long been oppressed and faced assimilation process. These groups played a crucial role in the transition from communism to democracy. This section analyses these internal factors. In a result how reformist communist's politicians in Bulgaria, who foresaw the collapse of the Soviet Union, pushed Todor Zhivkov to resign with an intra-party coup. The aim was to save the old system, and in this way, they started the revolution from the top down. The roads to Bulgaria's democratization process reflections of the transformation of internal and external factors since the eighties were discussed. The third chapter covers the period from Gorbachev's reform policies until the internal coup in the Bulgarian Communist Party.

In Chapter 3, the main theme is the formation of the democratic system and institutions in Bulgaria and the implementation of democracy after the transition from communism

to democracy. This section discusses how political elites negotiated at the Round Table and formed a national pact, reaching a consensus that the new political system of Bulgaria would be a democracy. This peaceful transition from the communist system to democracy was achieved through elite bargaining and their efforts for national unity. The processes of forming a democratic constitution with the holding of the first democratic elections for Grand National Assembly (GNA) were examined and their contribution to democratization was stated. This section provides a detailed explanation of the first general elections and the formation of the initial democratic government. Establishment of the parties that played a major role in politics (such as Bulgarian Socialist Party BSP, Union of the Democratic Forces UDF and Movement for Rights and Freedoms MRF) between 1990 and 2001 and the parliamentary elections these parties have won in different periods are discussed. The politics between 1990 and 2001 was generally a contentious left-right politics between the BSP and the UDF coalition, and generally the people were polarized around these two currents. The fourth chapter focuses on the role of internal factors in Bulgaria's transition to democracy and their contribution to the formation of the new system. This chapter is summarizing the change of the communist system and the establishment period of democracy in Bulgaria between 1990 and 2001.

Chapter 4, analyses the period after 2001 till 2007; how the emergence of liberal parties and their descent into the political arena, the NATO and European Union membership process accelerated. In this chapter, the most important factor is the stabilization of the internal politics in Bulgaria on the path of democracy and thus the acceleration of the membership steps towards EU and NATO was mentioned. As a result, on March 29, 2004, Bulgaria joined NATO and on January 1, 2007, became a member of the EU. In this section, the effects of the EU and NATO on the democratization process in Bulgaria are discussed. NATO membership plays a crucial role in securing democracy in Bulgaria by closing the country's security gap, EU was the main external factor which played a crucial role in the consolidation of democracy in Bulgaria.

Conclusion Part. The conclusion chapter constitutes an important part of the thesis, the data collected were analysed and the results were presented. The chapter presents the analysis and conclusions drawn from the research findings. It includes a summary of the period from the collapse of the communist system in Bulgaria to the consolidation of

democracy, highlighting the major events and changes that occurred. The section also discusses how these changes were managed through a combination of external and internal factors. The summary and the results from a search of the study are presented in the conclusion section.



CHAPTER 1: THEORIES OF DEMOCRATISATION AND THEIR BRIEF DISCUSSION

1.1. Introduction

During the period of the Soviet Union's dissolution, a prolific democratization process²³ emerged in Central and Southeast Europe. Existing theories struggled to explain this phenomenon objectively. The wave of democratisation, however, inspired the development of new ideas for the re-explanation of the concept and approach of democratisation.

The concept of democracy and democratization has been clarified in the previous section; this part will explain the theories and approaches. It is obvious that in political science, to understand the given causes or events, we need to apply some theories from the related field and analyse the events, which helps the researcher find the reason why it happened. The transitions from different regimes (dictatorship, authoritarian and totalitarian systems, etc.) to democracy have been explained by political scientists with different approaches and theories (Teorell, 2010, p. 16). There are a variety of theories. However, three main theories have emerged in political science to explain democratisation or regime change.

Theories of democratisation have focused on causality and have sought to explain the factors that contribute to the emergence and growth of democracies (Grugel, 2002, p. 46). Democratization theories explain the emergence of democracy and the potential for democracy to return to authoritarianism (Teorell, 2010, p.16). In this way, regime changes and political system transitions are also addressed (Gürsoy, 2018, p. 86).

The democratization process is going to be explained by three crucial approaches that are: modernization theory, historical sociology (structuralism) and transition theory (also known as agency theory) (Grugel, 2002, p. 46). Theories differ in their approach to explaining the democratisation process: while modernization theory has a causal approach, the structuralist usually emphasizes structural conditions, and the agency approach emphasizes the preferences of the elites and their choices in the transition period of the regime in a given state to a democracy or democratic system (Kauffman, 2021).

²³ The intensification and acceleration of the third wave of democratization can also be called

The modernisation theory is a theory that examines the transition from the primitive age to the modern age and at the same time tries to explain the formation of systems. According to theory, societies that are modernising are moving in the direction of the democratic system. In the modernisation theory, an attempt has been made to establish a link between modernisation and democratisation. The theory attempted to explain the developments and changes that were taking place over the world in the long term. Structuralist approaches focus on cause and effect, including the impacts of economic growth and class evolution on democratization. These approaches aim to generate a clear list of factors that contribute to the establishment of democratic systems. Structuralist approaches also scrutinize the long-term evolution of regimes and their transition to democracy in particular countries. Although the structuralist approach could account for the democratization process witnessed in Western Europe and America, it faced challenges when explaining the abrupt shifts to democracy that occurred in Latin American and Central and Eastern European countries. In this context, transition theory has been developed. It suggests that the role of elites and their decisions in democratization play a crucial role in transitions. Therefore, in the transition theories the democratization process is based on a short period of techniques such as the choice of the elites, although it is theoretically very convenient to make concise generalizations, it has difficulty in explaining the structural and long-term transitions (Kauffman, 2021).

No single theory is sufficient to explain the events in general for this reason according to Huntington:

- “(1) No single factor is sufficient to explain the development of democracy in all countries or in a single country.
 - (2) No single factor is necessary to the development of democracy in all countries.
 - (3) Democratization in each country is the result of a combination of causes.
 - (4) The combination of causes producing democracy varies from country to country.
 - (5) The combination of causes generally responsible for one wave of democratization differs from that responsible for other waves. |
 - (6) The causes responsible for the initial regime changes in a democratization wave are likely to differ from those responsible for later regime changes in that wave.”
- (Huntington, 1991, p. 38)

While democracy developed gradually over many years in certain countries, including Great Britain, it rapidly flourished in other regions such as the Baltic and Eastern European countries (Kauffman, 2021). In a different instance, certain countries acquired democratic norms and traditions from Britain during the colonization period, such as Canada and Australia. On the other hand, some nations, like Germany and Japan, attained democracy as a result of foreign intervention after the war (Kauffman, 2021). Considering the aforementioned examples, the structuralist approach offers a better explanation for the democratization process in the long run, while the transition theory is more suitable for explaining the democratization process in the short term.

To conclude, democratization is not just a straightforward linear process; instead, it is a long, complex, slow, and contradictory road frequently interrupted and has its comebacks. The process of democratization can be likened to the construction of a building. It evolves with time, and gradually the structure takes shape through innovations and understandings of each period. Successive democratic processes are built on past experiences and institutions while simultaneously shaping those of the future (Kauffman, 2021). As it is pertinent to the thesis, the primary explanations in this section will focus on transition theories. However, a brief overview of modernization theory and historical sociology will also be provided.

1.2. Modernization Theory

The causes of democratization have been researched by political scientists. The theory that has had the widest repercussions on this process is the modernization theory. The modernization theory is a theory that tries to explain the modernization of societies and their transition from traditional to modern life. The theory claims that societies evolve from one level to another which is continuous progress toward modernity. "The term "modernity" is often used to describe the processes of change that occurred in the nineteenth century in Atlantic societies, particularly in Britain and the United States. These changes were also evident to a lesser extent in Western Europe. A modern society is, therefore, essentially a product of capitalism" (Grugel, 2002, p. 47). According to this theory, traditional and underdeveloped countries could modernize by taking modern capitalist countries as an example.

The theory, which draws attention to the change in internal dynamics, has made a connection between the development of the economy and the acceleration of modernization. The modernization theory tried to explain that democracies arose during the transition of the modern world to capitalism. The theory examines how societies relinquished their customary practices and embraced modernity whilst also clarifying the psychological, social, and political implications of this transformation within society. (Cheibub & Vreeland, 2016, p. 3). “The advent of economic development, marked by technological advances and the division of labour, initiates a series of interrelated and self-reinforcing processes that culminate in the establishment of democracy” (Cheibub & Vreeland, 2016, p. 3). The modernization theory attributes democratization to economic reasons.

Modernisation theory posits a causal link between economic wealth development, growth in a country and the establishment of a democratic system. According to proponents of the modernisation theory in developed economies, stable and consolidated democracies are likely to be established. The theory posits that as the economic prosperity of a country grows, its middle class expands and strengthens. The strengthening of the middle class leads to a tendency towards higher education. This empowerment, combined with increasing levels of education, automatically enhances their political participation, resulting in a shift towards democracy within the system.

Some scholars argue that the origins of modernisation theory can be traced back to the Age of Enlightenment, which espoused the notion that technology will enable humans to gain mastery over nature (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005, p. 16). Modernization theory regards democracy as being synonymous with modernization, postulating that the political systems of feudal and agricultural societies will develop towards democracy as they become industrial and rational capitalist societies. This is due to an assumed causal connection between economic development and democratization. Modernisation theory generally assumes that democratic countries are those that are economically developed, and predicts that if poorer countries reach the same level of economic development, they too will become democratic. Economic development has a significant impact on democratisation and sustains it (Boix & Stokes, 2003, p. 545). “The fundamental tenet of this theory, in any of its manifestations, is that there is a singular, overarching process

of which democratisation represents the culminating phase” (Przeworski & Limongi, 1997, p. 157-158).

“In essence, modernization theory posits that democratization and globalization are inextricably linked. The theory suggests that the spread of democracy is a consequence of modernity and the Enlightenment idea of the universality of progress” (Grugel, 2002, p. 46- 47).

The modernization theory suggests a series of social and economic conditions in order to realize successful democratization in a country, the most important of which is the level of economic development.

Seymour Martin Lipset (1959), an advocate of modernisation theory, argued that the economic growth of a country or society bears a correlation with its progress in other areas. In the case of economic development, political growth becomes a consequence (Teorell, 2010, p. 17). As Lipset states: “Perhaps the most pervasive association between political systems and other aspects of society is the notion that democracy is contingent upon economic development. Concretely, this implies that the greater the wealth of a nation, the greater the likelihood of its sustaining democracy” (Lipset, 1959, p. 75). In this context, democratization has emerged as an inseparable part of capitalism. Seymour Lipset also argues that as countries develop economically, democracies are more accessible because modernization produces socio-cultural changes that shape human actions (Inglehart & Welzel, 2010, p. 551), “a common assumption is that an increase in economic benefits for the general population will lead to greater demands for the political benefits of democracy.” (Burkhart & Lewis-Beck, 1994, p. 903).

Lipset identifies two categories of national political systems; one containing stable democracies, and the other containing unstable democracies, with the distinction between these being based on industrialization, wealth, urbanization, and education (Cutright, 1963, p. 253-254). Lipset analyses various regions and concludes that developed countries contain stable democracies, while less developed countries have unstable democracies (Diamond, 1992, p. 450). Lipset also asserts that conditions for democracy are: “The advancement of various aspects of economics, including industrialisation, wealth creation, urbanisation, and the expansion of education systems, are so intricately intertwined that they can be conceptualised as a unified factor with significant implications for the sustenance of democracy” (Axtmann, 2007, p. 112). According to Martin Lipset, modernization is a natural phenomenon and with

modernization, social and political developments occur, and in this way, as the welfare level increases, countries also tend towards democratization.

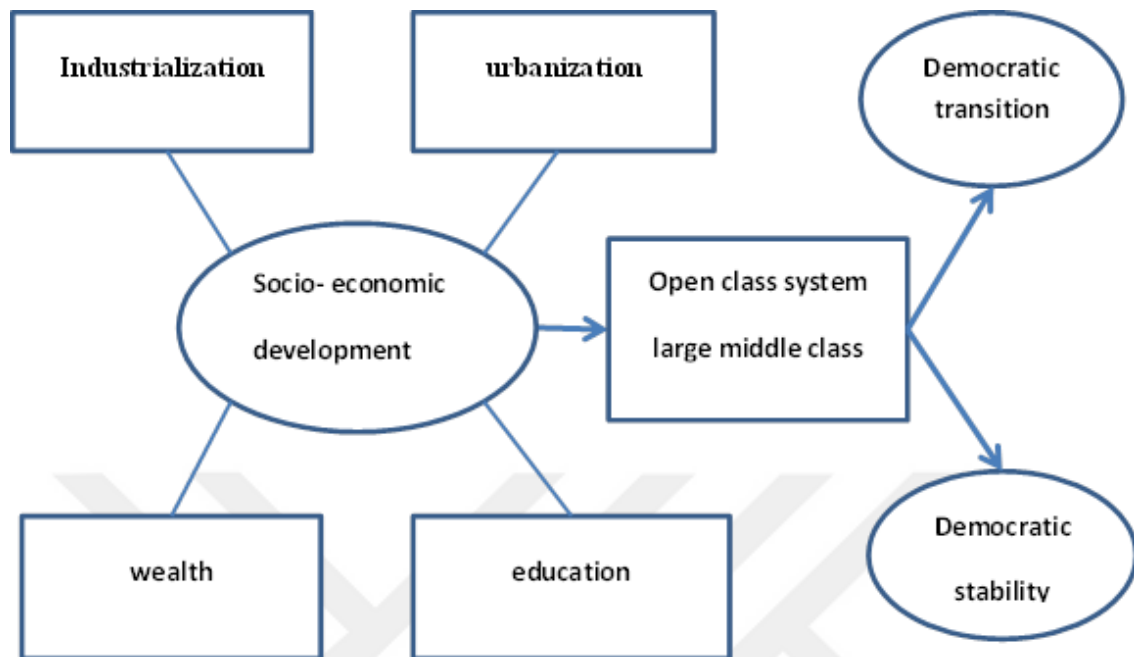


Figure 2: Modernization Theory according to Lipset

Source: (Wucherpennig & Deutsch, 2009, p. 2).

The Lipset hypothesis posits that when societies achieve economic development, citizens become less tolerant of oppressive systems and regimes. Moreover, the rise in GDP per capita leads to the transition to democracy (Epstein, Bates, Goldstone, Kristensen & O'Halloran, 2006, p.552). Lipset employs democratic political development as the dependent variable (McCrone & Cnudde, 1967, p.72). Based on this example, modernization theory posits that the level of democracy increases with improvements in economic and welfare conditions. Lipset argues that although economic growth occurs, the political system requires attention. This is because when leaders obtain excessive economic power, a shift towards dictatorship may transpire. Hence, the check and balance system is crucial (Lipset, 1994, p. 17). According to Lipset, while economic development triggers industrialization and urbanization, on the other hand, the education level of the people increases and the living standards rise, in this way the basic conditions that sustain democracy are created (Arat, 1988, p. 22).

In addition to Lipset, the writers and political thinkers of the era also played a significant role in shaping modernization theory. Sidney Verba and Gabriel Almond

(1963) focused on political culture²⁴ and argued that democracy sowed its seeds in societies with a specific culture (Grugel, 2002, p. 48). These authors emphasized civic culture. The civic culture approach assumes that:

“The viability of democratic institutions is significantly influenced by several factors, including the extent to which individuals believe they can influence political decisions, their feelings of positive affect towards the political system, and their perception of the trustworthiness of other citizens. Countries exhibiting high levels of these civic culture attitudes are anticipated to exhibit a greater likelihood of democratic adoption and sustainability over time, regardless of socioeconomic factors, including levels of economic development” (Muller & Seligson, 1994, p. 635).

On the contrary, modernization theory has faced numerous criticisms. One significant critique is its western-centric perspective. According to Grugel (2002) “consequently, there has been a suggestion that modernization theory lacks historical context, is ethnocentric, and relies excessively on structural analysis. Furthermore, concerns have been raised regarding the typical methodology employed within modernization studies” (p. 49).

O'Donnell criticized Lipset's notion that economic development in countries leads to the transformation of political systems into democracies (Przeworski & Limongi, 1997, p. 158). O'Donnell explains Lipset's thesis that economically developed countries are likely to have political democratic systems. However, it has been noted that not every economically developed country has turned into a democracy, contradicting this thesis (Przeworski & Limongi, 1997, p.158).

According to modernisation theory, economic development of countries is predicted to increase the level of democratisation. However, the democracies of certain states, particularly in Asia (for example, Japan, India and China), have progressed, but have not taken on the exact form of western democracies. In some cases, they have even persisted as totalitarian or authoritarian regimes. Thus, the modernization theory started to diminish in significance and faced criticism from varying viewpoints. This led to the emergence of novel approaches linked to democratization (Inglehart & Baker, 2000, p.19-20).

²⁴ Political culture refers to the set of values that shape a society's attitudes, beliefs, traditions, and behaviours in relation to politics.

Modernisation theory has been the subject of a number of criticisms, such as:

- First, the modernization theory tried to explain the transition to democracy with capitalism and in this way, it reduced democracy to capitalism.
- Second aspect is that the belief that democracy can only be achieved by imitating the models of modern countries and implementing them in other countries has not been proven.
- Third, the idea that the modernization and economic development of countries inevitably leads to democracy holds true for certain countries while, in contrast, it has resulted in the establishment of authoritarian regimes in others. As a result, the modernization theory has lost its standing as a universal theory that explains democratization.

Despite facing criticism, the theory of modernisation has led to the creation of literature exploring how democratisation occurs in diverse societies. While enhancing the economy may ultimately assist and promote democracy, it could not by itself account for the swift process of democratisation in the 1990s. Although the short-term economic reforms in Bulgaria had some positive effects on the economic level, they did not improve the democratization process. In fact, the economic crises in later years contributed to a decline in democracy. Although modernisation theory has been criticised, it is not easy to discredit the link between democracy and economic development.

Another theory has emerged which attempts to provide an alternative explanation of the democratization process across the globe: Historical sociology. This approach seeks to explain the process of regime change through examining shifts between different social classes throughout history. The theory attempted to explain the long-term regime changes while also highlighting the democratization process. The following section will provide an overview of the historical sociology theory.

1.3. Historical Sociology

Historical sociology, as a sub-branch of sociology, emerged in the United States of America in the 1960s, inspired by the theory of modernization (Delanty & Isin, 2003, p. 2). According to Smith: “historical sociology is the study of the past to find out how societies work and change” (Smith, 1991, p. 3). According to Skocpol (2014):

“historical sociology is an on-going, continuous, process of sociology dedicated to understanding the nature and effects of large-scale structures and fundamental processes of change. It is better understood as an ever-renewing research tradition. Here the driving force is the desire to answer historically grounded questions, not classical theoretical paradigms” (Skocpol, 2014, p. 7). The primary objective of historical sociology is to comprehend the transformations within societies by taking historical context into account and to identify the causes and outcomes of such changes. According to Szotompa historical sociology:

“An approach that employs a general theoretical model from sociology to order historical material by applying the model, that is, by placing historical facts in the wider context provided by the model” (Szotompa, 1986, p. 330).

While historical sociology is significant in understanding societal changes, it also scrutinises political changes and their implications in correlation to societal changes. It analyses the causes and consequences of these changes in societies. Since historical sociology is concerned with social and political transformations, it has been interested in social classification and new political movements that took place after the industrial revolution and have tried to explain the reasons for these transformations.

This approach was employed to elucidate the political revolutions and transformations that have occurred throughout the annals of world history, with democratisation serving as a case in point. The historical sociology's approach to democratization is considered more comprehensive than the modernization theory, and the primary purpose of the theory was not to predict the results but to explain them in detail (Grugel, 2002, p. 51).

The aim of the historical sociology theory is to explain the origins of democratic government through the characteristics of social classes present within society and the relationships between them. (Teorell, 2010, p. 22). From the perspective of historical sociology, it can be said that democracy is a system that emerges as a result of an inter-class struggle. Historical sociology, in line with modernization theory, establishes a connection between economic development and democratization. According to this theory, societies do not all follow the same path towards democratization, but successful democratizing countries and communities possess certain historical features and conditions. The theory explores the origins of different regimes and enables the comparison of differences between them. The main focus of historical sociology

extends beyond democracy, encompassing the study of both the causes and effects of democratization and historical social changes in this process.

Since the social classes before and after the industrial revolution were decidedly on the agenda, the historical sociology approach tried to explain the regime changes based on social classes. As the pioneers of historical sociology, Durkheim, Marx and Weber carried out studies related to the modernization of the societies in West Europe after the industrial revolution and had sociological approaches by considering historical events to explain these changes (Giddens, 1971, p. vii- x).

One of the prominent figures in the field of historical sociology is Barrington Moore and his book “Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World”²⁵ (1966)²⁶ contains valuable insights. Moore in his book examines the emergence of democracy, fascism and communism in various societies, exploring their historical roots and origins. It also investigates how industrialisation and agricultural practices have impacted the development of these political systems. Moore explores the revolutions that occurred during the transition from pre-industrial societies to the modern world in various nations. According to Moore (1966)²⁷, states followed three main routes in the transition from pre-industrial to the modern capitalist era. He emphasised that in revolutions in which the bourgeoisie was successful, there was a transition to democracy and democratisation. According to Moore, the main actor of democracy is the bourgeois class, and that is why he says: “No bourgeois, no democracy” (Moore, 1966, p. 418). The first democracies, such as those in the United States of America, England, and France, achieved democracy through bourgeois revolutions (Moore, 1966, pp. 413-432). During the transition to a capitalist system in these countries, the peasant and aristocratic classes were eradicated, and since the bourgeois revolutions were carried out, democratization and the transition to democracy were experienced.

At the same time, he emphasized that fascism emerged in the revolutions where the bourgeoisie failed. In countries such as Germany and Japan, bourgeois revolutions

²⁵ Moor, B. (1966). *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*. (1 ed.). UK: Penguin University Books.

²⁶ Barrington Moore is a famous writer with the phrase “No bourgeois, no democracy” (Moor, 1966, p. 418). However, it should also be noted not to forget the system changes mentioned in his book and the effects on other classes.

²⁷ One of the crucial contributions of the author is his historical and sociological explanation of the democratization process within the framework of political changes.

failed and the emergence and dominance of fascism occurred in these countries (Moore, 1966, p. 433-452). In these countries, as the peasant class was being eliminated, the aristocracy grew in power and moved towards a fascist form of government.

Finally, where the peasants' revolutions were successful the system moved to communism. In countries like China and Russia, the peasants' revolution happened, and communism was dominant in these countries (Moore, 1966, p. 453-483). In these last countries, however, the peasants gained power, and while they were kneading this power with a communist ideology, there were transformations towards totalitarian systems. Moore considers the structural transformation processes and changes in these different countries and also evaluates the consequences of these transformations (Smith, 1999, p. 364 -365).

Moore uses a historical sociology approach and talks extensively about democracy and democratization. However, democratization here is tried to be explained on the basis of social classes. The central argument of historical sociology posits that the establishment of political systems, such as democracy, communism, and fascism, is not immediate in nature but rather emerges through a lengthy process of collective interaction. As Grugel (2002) mentions:

“Structuralists concur that democratic institutions do not emerge instantaneously; nor does democracy arise spontaneously as a result of the actions of a single individual, group, or class. Structuralists posit that the transformation of the state is the result of class conflict over time. They argue that this process of state transformation can be observed in instances where democracy emerges” (Grugel, 2002, p. 52).

Historical sociology theory, similar to modernization theory, has undergone significant critique and its flaws have been highlighted. Examining Moore's ideas, they seem to explain how democracies emerged in the first period (when the first democracies were established) (Grugel, 2002, p. 52). Historical sociology prioritises the relationships, alliances, and power balances between social classes. It should be noted that this approach is more sociological and therefore, individuals' thoughts and actions are disregarded to some extent. “Indeed, historical sociology acknowledges the pivotal role of the agent in political transformations and changes. However, it posits that classes and even states are the primary agents of change. Consequently, historical sociology is not

aligned with the perspectives of thinkers who solely accept individuals as agents, and as a result, the theory is frequently subjected to criticism” (Grugel, 2002, p. 55).

An additional critique of historical sociology is that although it can account for changes that occur over extended periods, it fails to address shorter-term changes. Especially following the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, transitions towards democracy were experienced in Central and South-eastern Europe in a relatively brief period. It is evident that these events did not evolve into a struggle for democracy largely driven by social class.

Therefore, the following section will provide a general examination of the Transition Theory which explains the democratic revolutions that occurred in the short term.

1.4. Transition Theory

Modernisation theory and historical sociology are approaches that attribute significance to structural variables and explore the origins of democratisation in historical processes. They are concerned with the gradual changes that occur over time. Following the emergence of democracies in many parts of the world in the late 1980s (Simensen, 1999, p. 391), scholars interested in democracy and regime change during this period began to scrutinise these transformations. During the “Third Wave”²⁸ of democratization, as identified by Huntington, unexpected regions experienced the process of democratization, including Latin America, and Central and Eastern Europe countries. The thinkers of the time produced new approaches as they were unable to explain the situation with existing theories, such as Modernization and Historical Sociology. The main reason for this is that there has been a transition to democracy in unexpected places and it has been witnessed that democratization can occur anywhere. The transition theory provides a reasonable perspective on this phenomenon, explaining the rapid democratization occurring in the short term. Indeed, the effectiveness of this theory stems from its ability to explicate the fast transition towards democracy which occurred in the early 1990s.

The focus of transition theories is on actors and individuals and their decision-making mechanisms, rather than on historical events (Grugel, 2002, p. 56). Transition theories

²⁸ It is the period of transition to democracy of different states that started in the mid-1970s and lasted until the 2000s. The third wave of democratization coincided with the transition to democracy in Bulgaria.

approach democratization in a shorter period of time. It should be emphasized that the theories of transition are not based on economic development or class struggle in relation to democratization and system changes like the previous theories of modernization and historical sociology. “The structuralists and the modernization school posit that democracy is an exception that has occurred only in certain parts of the world. It is not possible to create a democratic system in countries where the necessary level of development to support such a system is lacking, and where the social or class structure is not conducive to its formation. Consequently, the appeal of transition theory lies in its response to this pessimistic perspective. In contrast to this pessimistic assertion, transition or agency theory posits that democracy can be established independently of the structural context”(Grugel, 2002, p. 57).

According to the transition theory, democratization can take place anywhere in the political world, where the role of actors, and elites is significant. The theory claims that democracy is a system produced by the people themselves, and the role played by the elite and the steps and actions they take are of vital importance for democracy. The elites generally adopt rational approaches to keep up with the political changes within and outside the state, and thus they aim to protect themselves in a way and maintain their power.

One of the authors who contributed to the emergence of transition theories is Rustow (1970). Rustow took a critical approach to the modernization theory and questioned that democratization, especially in old democratic countries, depends on the genetic cultural structure of the country, but what does democratization depend on in newly emerging and developing democracies (Rustow, 1970, p. 337-349). He includes that: “the vast majority of the citizens in a democracy must have no doubt or mental reservation as to which political community they belong to” (Rustow, 1970, p. 350). Rustow contends that national unity plays a more significant role than social or economic development in achieving democratization within a state. According to him, the democratization process is a “set-off prolonged and inconclusive political struggle” (Rustow, 1970, p. 352). Rustow places great emphasis on the role of elites. According to him, in the democratization process, the most important thing is the elite's conscious negotiation for a given political agreement. Elites play a significant role in the consolidation of democracy, and their strategic political choices determine the direction in which

democracy will evolve. Democratization passes through three phases: the preparation period, the decision-making period, where the decisions and negotiations of a small group of leaders are very important, and finally the habitation period, which is the period of accepting and adapting to the newly established system (Rustow, 1970, p. 352-359).

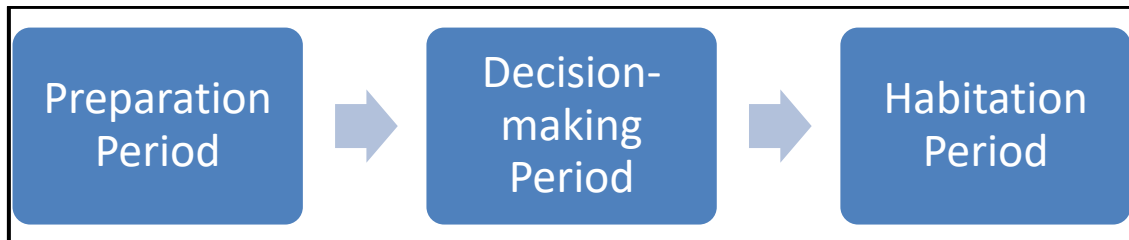


Figure 3: Democratization Model according to Dankwart Rustow

Source: The graph is prepared by the researcher. The source of information is: (Rustow, 1970, p. 350-360).

Other names who have pioneered transition theories are O'Donnell, Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead. In 1986 these authors compiled a series of books named "Transitions from Authoritarian Rule". The main focus of this series was the transition from an authoritarian regime to a democracy (Grugel, 2002, p. 57). According to Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, the agreements made between the rulers of the old regime and the opposition leaders played an important role in the transition to democracy. According to the authors, the transition to democracy emerges as a result of the pacts reached between the old regime and the opposition, especially in the negotiations of their moderate leaders (O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986, p. 37- 48).

While democracy in historical sociology and modernization theory is reduced to class conflict and economic development, contrary to this approach in transitional theories, it offers a political explanation of the democratization process (Grugel, 2002, p. 58) and in this way tries to prove that democratization can take place in different parts of the world and in different states. According to another transition theory thinker Adam Przeworski, there are two ways to transition from an authoritarian regime to a democracy: "The academic literature on regime change is divided into two main categories. Some scholars attempt to explain events from a macro perspective, focusing on objective conditions. A further aspect of the studies under consideration here is the role of political actors and their strategies in relation to regime change" (Przeworski, 1986, p. 47).

The transition theory stands out from other theories (modernization and historical sociology) with its capacity to explain fundamental issues such as the establishment of democratic institutions, the creation of the new democratic constitution, and the determination of the electoral system. The transition approach has emphasized the importance of the consideration of micro-politics in the democratization process as a contribution to the academic field. In particular, the transition theory highlighted the importance of agencies, negotiation, a pro-conciliation attitude and the implementation of political change policies in the transition to the democratic system.

The transition theories have also faced criticism, similar to the critiques of previous theories. The theory of transition has been criticized from different perspectives, and these are the main ones:

- While this theory emphasizes the importance of elites and political leaders, the roles of civil society organizations and classes in this process are ignored.
- This approach distances democracy from the concept of the rule of the people and reduces it to specific re-established institutions (Grugel, 2002, p. 61).

The transition theory explained the opening of democracy and the formation of democratic institutions by dealing with micro-political changes. However, it has been criticized as an approach that is too elitist and leaves the democratization process to the will of the elite. While the transition theory addresses the role of the elites in the transition to democracy, it ignores the role played by the masses of people in this process. For this reason, while the concept of democracy is the rule of the people theoretically, according to the transition theory, democracy seems as the rule of the elite.

However, considering the revolutions that took place at the end of the Cold War and the dynamism and speed of the democratization process, elites and political leaders were on the front lines and tried to control the events. While class and economic explanations cover a long period of time, the transition theory seems more relevant in explaining dynamic events. Nevertheless, it is a fact that although the views of the leaders on certain issues seem to be in the foreground, sometimes the pressure of the public and civil society or the geopolitical political situation of the period can affect these decisions.

1.5. Conclusion

It has been seen that there are different approaches and theories explaining democratization process from the perspective of social economic factors to class development, from the role of elites to strategic decisions. These theories provide us with evidence that democratization is affected by different factors in different countries. And they may not be sufficient to explain the democratization phenomenon alone. It is necessary to select most specific cases rather than generalize and look at which theory can make it clear.

When using these theories, should be decided which part of democratization is going to be researched in the given case study (the beginning of the democratization process, the internalization period of democracy or the consolidation of democracy) thereupon the theories can be more explanatory. For example, there may be national unity in a country, but the decision of the elites may play a significant role in the transition from an authoritarian regime to democracy, and the elites may have started democratization due to the pressure of the international political system.

In fact, the democratization process resembles a chain of factors. However, the weakness of democratic institutions in the country and the increase in poverty while experiencing a decline in the economy may cause political crises and lead to instability in the state. In such a situation, the state may be interrupted in its progress towards the consolidation of democracy and may have to focus further on solving problems. Hence, the importance of a developed economy and political culture emerges.

Once a transition to democracy has been made, this time in the consolidation process, the strengthening and developing of the democratic institutions and the increase and growth in the level of economic development can play a key role in this long process.

In this context, the main purpose of this thesis is to examine the overthrow of the communist regime in Bulgaria and the transition to democracy, and the role of internal and external factors in this process. To summarize, it can be stated that the collapse of the communist system and the transition of Bulgaria to democracy were helped by some internal factors and some hindered this process:

- The role of political actors
- The social economic developments
- The historical and ideological legacy

However, when talking about factors affecting the democratization process, it should not be forgotten that external factors have an undeniable effect on the democratization process. In this context:

“The current wave of democratisation has been propelled by a complex interplay of domestic and international factors, with the specific combination of these two elements varying considerably across countries. For instance, in Eastern Europe, international factors were more influential. Conversely, in the majority of democratic transitions in Latin America, domestic factors played a more significant role. Despite the aforementioned differences, it is this convergence of domestic and international factors that distinguishes the current wave of democratisation from previous ones” (Shin, 1994, p. 153).

Finally, it may be concluded that different theories complement each other's weaknesses and disadvantages. In addition, it is natural that whichever theory is closer and more convenient to the phenomenon that theory is preferred. “The advantage of the elite-choice approach is that it is theoretically concise and overcomes the problem of multiple causalities inherent in structural explanations” (Kauffman, 2021). To sum up, transition theories had a general interpretation and explanation for the shortcoming democratization process in Eastern Europe. The transition theory has a more comprehensive explanation of the democratization process of Bulgaria; it has been chosen according to the subject of this thesis.

CHAPTER 2: THE ROAD TO BULGARIA'S DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS

2.1. Historical Background of the Foundation of the Bulgarian State

Bulgaria is located in the heart of the Balkan Peninsula and the South-eastern part of the European continent. In addition, what increases the geostrategic importance of Bulgaria is its position that is at a crossroads between Europe and Asia. The Ottoman-Russian War²⁹ was a pivotal event in the history of Bulgaria, leading to the establishment of a new state after gaining its independence from the Ottoman Empire. During the First and Second World Wars, Bulgaria was an ally of Germany. After the conclusion of the Second World War in 1946, Bulgaria assumed the status of a one-party Communist State and joined the Eastern Communist Block, which was led by Soviet Russia. It subsequently transitioned to a multi-party democratic system in 1989.

Bulgaria became a Principality following the 1877-78 Russian-Ottoman War (Crampton, 2005, p. 83) and subsequently regained its position in the political landscape of the Balkans. After gaining independence from the Ottoman Empire through the Berlin Congress³⁰ decision, Bulgaria was once again subject to boundary procedures. The country lost the majority of its territories due to the agreement reached. In 1908, Bulgaria achieved full independence from the Ottoman Empire, encompassing its current borders, and established a central authority for the first time in a prolonged period (Crampton, 2005, p. 130). As a newly established state, it had to work closely with influential countries in the international system at the time, particularly with Russia. Unlike Western Europe, where the concept of the "nation-state" originated, the formation of a nation-state in the Balkans has been marked by a painful and violent history of wars and conflicts.

In 1912, the war broke out among the newly formed nation-states in the Balkans due to territorial and border problems and was named the First Balkan War (Crampton, 2005, p. 132-133). In this conflict, Bulgaria succeeded in reclaiming some of the territories it had previously lost, but ultimately suffered a defeat in the Second Balkan War, which commenced in 1913 (Crampton, 2005, p. 133) and again lost territory. Between 1913

²⁹ Ottoman-Russian war in 1877-78

³⁰ The congress was held in Berlin from June 13 to July 13, 1878. This congress replaced the San Stefano treaty signed between Russia and the Ottomans on March 3, 1878.

and 1945, Bulgaria went through coups and instability. Following the Second World War, the Communist Regime came to rule and sided with the Soviet Union. In 1989, as the bells of the last days of the Cold War rang out, Bulgaria was in the throes of an economic crisis. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the transition from the existing one-party Communist Regime to a democratic system began.

The main subject of this thesis is to deal with the historical process of Bulgaria's transition to democracy (1989 and 2007). In this context, the role of internal and external factors has been examined. However, to better understand the subject, the process before the transition to the democracy period has been discussed in the introductory section. It has been examined in two parts as a period. The first part examines the Veliko Tarnovo Constitution, which was the initial democratic constitution of Bulgaria after the time of Ottoman rule. The second part scrutinizes the fall of the communist regime in 1989 and the beginning of Bulgaria's transition towards liberal democracy.

2.2. Earlier Inspirations of Democracy

The first official constitution of the Bulgarian state was created in the city of Veliko Tarnovo³¹ in 1879 and therefore went down in history as the “Tarnovo Constitution”.

“Bulgaria, which has just gained its freedom and takes its first breath of freedom, is called to prepare its basic law in accordance with the Berlin Treaty. Inexperienced MPs do their job brilliantly with their enthusiasm, responsibilities and patriotism, and complete the assignment brilliantly. Thus, on April 16, 1879, the Constituent Assembly in Tarnovo, the former Bulgarian capital, adopted a democratic Constitution, sending the message that Bulgaria is an independent state and will decide its own path ”(Tsankova, 2019).

The Tarnovo constitution is relatively liberal and democratic despite specific changes and remained in effect until 1934. According to this constitution, an independent judiciary was established, freedom of expression was allowed, a parliamentary system and centralized state were established, the security of the people was assured, and optional local self-government was established (Bideleux & Jeffries, 2007, p.76). After creating this constitution, a multi-party system was adopted in Bulgaria, and new parties

³¹ Veliko Tarnovo was declared the capital city of the first Bulgarian Principality established after the end of the Ottoman rule in the Bulgarian lands and the first constitution was named with the name of that city.

started to emerge for the first time. The state was established as a kingdom and began to carry out a policy that attached more importance to the peasants³². The peasants, affected by the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, began to form their movement. However, the free atmosphere brought by the Veliko Tarnovo constitution will not last long and will be replaced by an oppressive and restrictive system. In fact, the democratic liberal system, which has just begun to flourish, will not be present in Bulgaria for the long term.

Although the opening of the parliament and the existence of a multi-party system won the people's confidence, after a bloody coup on June 9, 1923, the administration shifted to a more totalitarian axis (Crampton, 2005, p.153). King Boris III³³, who came to power in 1932, banned the multi-party system and pioneered the beginning of an authoritarian rule. The coup and authoritarian regime curtailed the liberties that were present until that time, and individuals had to comply with this regime even if they did not wilfully want it.

Due to its strategic location in the Balkans, Bulgaria was unable to act as a completely independent state at the time. It had to cooperate with influential countries that were pursuing active policies in the region. As a result, Russia increased its sphere of influence in the Balkans, especially after proclaiming itself as the "Patron of Orthodox"³⁴, and pursued its strategy of gaining access to the warm seas. Consequently, Bulgaria, a newly established state as a result of this strategy, has adopted a policy of being an indispensable friend of Russia for a considerable time. In this way, Russia's involvement in Bulgarian politics became easier, and Russian influence was felt in Bulgaria for a long time. In this context the Russian aid provided to Bulgaria during its struggle for independence from the Ottoman Empire greatly contributed to the development of a strong affinity towards Russia among the people.

Bulgaria and Russia have a relationship based on shared language, culture, and the Orthodox Christian religion, which fosters strong bonds between the two countries.

³² Since the majority of the people lived in the countryside at that time, such a policy was followed. The first party to be established was the "Union of Bulgarian Agricultural Peoples (BZHC)".

³³ The king ruled Bulgaria between 1918 and 1943. Between 1938 and 1943, he turned the Bulgarian administration into a totalitarian regime.

³⁴ With the Treaty of Kucuk Kaynarca signed as a result of the 1768-1774 Ottoman-Russian wars, the Ottomans suffered a significant loss of land, and Russia was instrumental in the opening of the Orthodox Church in Istanbul through this agreement and thus declared itself as the patroness of all Orthodox Christians.

Close relations with Russia have led Bulgaria to distance itself from the Western democratic states, or there has been a lack of effective communication with these states. What is meant to be emphasized here is to explain why Bulgaria's desire to transition to a democratic system with the first constitution could not be realized for a long time. Due to Russia's significant influence in Bulgaria's political sphere, the change to a democratic system was incomplete, leading to the further evolution of the system into a dictatorship.

Although forming a liberal democratic government, the state could not be stabilized for a long time; a centralist understanding of the state prevailed again, the government severely suppressed the opponents, and they were subjected to assassinations³⁵ and exile. Despite this, different parties continued to exist in the country, but they were relatively passive in politics and this process remarkably hindered the realization of democratic aspirations. The unstable environment continued until the end of the Second World War, and then Bulgaria passed to the communist regime. This political instability in Bulgaria, Russia's strong influence and the inability to establish a democratic authority facilitated the transition to the communist regime.

2.3. Bulgaria's Totalitarian Regime History

After the end of the Second World War, the victorious powers gathered³⁶ to re-establish the new global world system, resulting in a shift from a multipolar to a bipolar international system. During that period, two distinct ideologies - democracy and communism - gained support from two different poles and spread globally. The transition to democracy that occurred during that time was expedited with the support of Western

³⁵ In 1907, Dimitar Petkov, who headed the 27th government of Bulgaria, was murdered by his political opponents on Tsar Osvoboditel Boulevard in Sofia. Another politician, Stefan Stambolov, was killed in the centre of Sofia on July 15, 1895, and on June 14, 1923, Prime Minister Alexander Stamboliiski was killed by being subjected to severe torture and beheaded (Михайлов, 2018). These political showdowns dealt heavy blows to the democratization process in Bulgaria.

³⁶ Between the 4th and 11th of February of 1945, a significant meeting occurred in Yalta among the United States of America, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union concerning the establishment of the new global system after the conclusion of the Second World War. The conference was held by President Roosevelt, General Secretary Stalin and Prime Minister Churchill. The focus was on Europe's future and how to handle Germany. The outcomes of the Yalta conference precipitated the creation of a bipolar global system. Although the conference aimed to establish global peace, its outcome failed to meet expectations. The world was split into two opposing poles, a division that was particularly felt in Germany and Europe. These events marked the beginning of the Cold War, a protracted struggle between democracy and communism. Ultimately in 1989, democracy emerged as the victor, and communism was left bankrupt both in terms of ideology and political system in the world.

Europe and America, representing the bloc of democracy and capitalism. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union represented the communist bloc and furthered the spread of communism. The partitioning of Europe into two opposing factions following the Yalta conference signalled the commencement of a new conflict. Despite the conclusion of the Second World War, it also instigated the onset of the Cold War.

Central and Eastern Europe were under the influence of Soviet Union and communist rule at the beginning of the “Cold War” era. Bulgaria maintained its position as the most dependent and loyal state to the Soviet Union among the Central and Eastern European states until the dissolution of the Union (Райчев & Стойчев, 2008, p. 16). What were the reasons behind Bulgaria's strong adoption of communism? Considering these factors, it is understandable why the communist regime was stable in Bulgaria between 1946 and 1989 and why the transition to democracy was a challenging and overlong process. Author Karasimeonov outlined the leading causes related to the subject and highlighted Bulgaria's move away from the democratic system. According to him, the main reasons were:

- The unstable and weakened economy that dominated the country was the primary factor. Both the peasant-worker community and the intelligentsia relied on the communists for assistance in resolving the issue (Карасимеонов, 2006, p.20).
- The second factor was the sense of gratitude and camaraderie among the populace towards Russia for their aid in the war of independence against the Ottoman Empire. This prompted a speedy acceptance of the communist regime and facilitated the transition to a Bolshevik-style dictatorship in Bulgaria (Карасимеонов, 2006, p. 21).
- The third factor was that Bulgaria remained within the Soviet Russia zone of influence in the bipolar world system following the Second World War. Consequently, anti-communist and democratic movements and elites in Bulgaria did not receive the anticipated backing from Western democratic nations, and the communist regime was able to swiftly suppress them (Карасимеонов, 2006, p.21).

The strengthening of the communist system in Bulgaria took place with Todor Zhivkov coming to power. In 1941, when Bulgaria joined the Axis alliance, Zhivkov took part as a guerrilla Detachment (political commissar) organized by the Bulgarian Communist Party (Binder, 1998). Communist leader Todor Zhivkov ruled Bulgaria from 1954-

1989, one of the longest-serving heads of state in Europe. The Bulgarian Communist (БКП) was responsible for the State administration in Bulgaria from 1944 to 1989 (Sharlanov and Genev, 2010, p.1). Todor Zhivkov had close ties with the Soviet Union, encouraging Gorbachev's arrival.

Since the early stages of the communist era, Bulgaria made significant strides in industrialising and hastening the economic development process. Consequently, employment opportunities were created and the overall welfare level improved. During the communist regime in Bulgaria, elections were held regularly³⁷. However, every time the Bulgarian Communist Party emerged as the victor.

At the same time, violations of human rights and freedoms against minorities and political opponents living in the country began to increase gradually. With the passage of time, these violations reached the point of including assimilation and forced migration policies. Zhivkov was in charge of establishing concentration camps for political prisoners such as Kotsian, Bogdanov Dol, Belene Island, and Lofcha on the Danube in 1959. Zhivkov was never tried for political crimes; instead, he was illegally charged with spending \$ 24 million in state funds (Binder, 1998).

Whilst this process continued in Bulgaria, notable developments started to surface in the global political arena. Mikhail Gorbachev took over the leadership of the Soviet Union and initiated major political and economic reforms within the Union. Gorbachev's reforms in 1985 had two main objectives in the Soviet System. While the first axis was based on economic reforms, the second axis focused on the alignment of the countries within the Soviet Union towards political reforms in the context of giving society more rights and freedoms, as well as acknowledging the significance of the social changes occurring within those countries³⁸.

The dissolution of regional political, military, and economic structures resulted from a series of inadequacies, such as the legitimacy crisis within the ruling Communist Party

³⁷ The Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (BANU) was established in the 1900s and represented the interests of the peasants for a considerable duration. Despite having the opportunity to participate in elections during the communist regime, BANU was unable to gain power. It had joined forces with the Bulgarian Communist Party for the elections, which was considered as evidence of a multi-party system in Bulgaria.

³⁸ After the declaration of perestroika, many underground opposition anti-communist movements and organizations came to light in Central and Eastern Europe. They switched to democratic systems by taking the people and the church behind them. Lech Wales' "Solidarity" organization can be given as an example. However, as for Bulgaria, such dynamism was made only in 1989 and especially by Turkish minorities, after which the transition to democracy took place rapidly.

regimes and the reform process introduced by Gorbachev. This compelled the Central and Eastern European countries to embark on a "new quest" (Akşit, 2011, p. 68). The implementation of on-going reforms in the Soviet Union expedited the downfall of the Union. The Soviet Union was confronted with political and economic crises, which resulted in increased dissatisfaction and modifications in government across its member states.

Bulgaria was affected by these crises and reforms policy due to its dependence on the Soviet Union. Resisting change and relying on his own strength, Zhivkov contradicted the Soviet policy of political reform and reconstruction.

As a consequence of civil unrest and significant protests in Central and Eastern European countries, the communist systems collapsed, leading to the start of the transition to democracy. Unlike other Central and Eastern European communist countries, there was no strong opposition in Bulgaria until 1989, which shows how deeply the communist regime settled.

These rapid developments had an impact on Bulgaria finally, resulting in rebellions against the communist regime in the country. First steps were taken within the ruling party. There was a silent revolution within the Bulgarian Communist Party in a short period and Todor Zhivkov the longstanding communist leader was removed from his position of power. The removal of Zhivkov from power and the subsequent civil unrest indicated the initiation of the democratization process in Bulgaria.

The democratisation of Bulgaria is a remarkable case of how the country is going through the process; however, it has only received a limited amount of research attention. The aim of this thesis is to perform a comprehensive examination of Bulgaria's transition to democracy and pinpoint crucial moments in the course of action. The study strives to explore the mechanism of the democratic transition in Bulgaria, focusing on the impact of both internal and external factors

2.4. Opening Stage of Bulgarian Democratization

In 1989, the world was witnessing great historical events, the Berlin wall was falling down, the Cold War was coming to an end, and communist regimes in Central, Eastern and Southeast Europe were being replaced by the democratic systems. These events brought about a great change in the politics of the world that the people of that time

could not even have imagined. Historical, political, and social events frequently lead to significant changes at crucial turning points. These turning points redefine existing norms and values, leading to the transformation of old systems, understandings and assumptions. The collapse of the Soviet Union could be cited as such a breaking point. The collapse of the Soviet Union was followed by the collapse of communist ideology, and with the triumph of liberal democracy, the third wave of democratization accelerated as Huntington pointed out.

Considering that Bulgaria was an Eastern Bloc country and was under the influence of the Soviet Union, these major political changes had profound political and economic effects on the country³⁹. Although Bulgaria remained under a totalitarian communist regime for an extended period, it underwent a democratization process through a series of irreversible events that occurred within the country and beyond its borders. During Bulgaria's transition to democracy, various internal and external factors had an impact at different levels. The following chapters analyse the internal and external factors that were significant in Bulgaria's democratization process.

However, Bulgaria has faced certain obstacles and difficulties in the democratization process. In this regard, from 1989 to 1996, political and economic problems followed one after the other; consequently, Bulgaria progressed slowly on the road to the implementation of democracy. During this period, the politicians of the old system maintained their position in state institutions and at the same time, the old ruler party the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) was transformed into the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) and somehow controlled the transition period until 1996. It has been revealed that the politicians of the newly formed parties in the transition period were lack of political experience. The Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) supported the implementation of reforms to the communist system, advocating for change by following the perestroika and glasnost movement, without insisting on an immediate transition to a democratic political system within the country.

Furthermore, short-term governments were established in the transition period, and none of them could complete their mandate until the end. These frequent changes brought

³⁹ With the dynamic changes that developed in the world, the Cold War came to an end; the Iron Curtain and the Berlin Wall were demolished. This paved the way for Europe to reunify after an extended period of division. In 1989, Bulgaria was also impacted by these changes, marking the beginning of a transition from a totalitarian and repressive communist regime to a democratic government.

political instability and subsequently, the social tension in the country increased. Bipolar politics were followed in the country, communists BSP⁴⁰ on the one side and the democratic opposition UDF⁴¹ on the other side competed in the elections and political fragmentation was observed in the society. Western Europe and the United States closely monitored the situation in Bulgaria and did not establish close diplomatic relations until 1996. Therefore, the period between 1989 and 1990 was designated as the transitional period⁴² when Bulgaria departed from the communist system.

Important Phases	Years according to periods
The Fall of the Communist Totalitarian Regime and Transition Period of Bulgaria to Democracy	1989-1990
The Establishment Period of Democracy in Bulgaria Between 1990 and 2001	1990-2001
The Road Of Bulgaria to the NATO And European Union Integration and consolidation of the democracy	2001-2007

Table 3: Division of the Political Process in Bulgaria by Years and Periods

Source: The table is prepared by the researcher based on information from readings

Note: In the 1990s, Bulgaria experienced very fast and turbulent transitions. First of all, the communist system collapsed and the transition to democracy took place. Subsequently, a long-term flexible procedural democracy emerged in the country. In the third stage, a culture of democracy was tried to be established in the country.

During the transition period, The United Democratic Forces UDF emerged as the most powerful opposition party formed against the communist system, among other parties. However, since the UDF was composed of a combination of different factions, there were significant break-ups from the party due to internal conflicts which ultimately hindered the party's ability to operate at full capacity. This deficiency in the UDF

⁴⁰ The Bulgarian Communist Party (BKP) - the former governing party - underwent a transformation into the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP). Although the Bulgarian Communist Party transformed into a socialist party, the former communist staff remained actively engaged in the party. Consequently, Bulgaria maintained its Russian-oriented political stance for a period of time. The socialists were referred to as "reds" due to their adoption of the colour red.

⁴¹ The Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) is a democratic opposition party formed from the unification of several anti-communist opposition groups. It held significant political influence in Bulgaria for many years; however, in 1996, certain politicians defected from the party and established different new ones, leading to a decline in UDF's former power. The UDF was established as the democratic opposition and opted for blue as its colour. Consequently, the party became known as the Blues.

⁴² Despite the bloodless coup that saw the removal of communist regime leader Todor Zhivkov in Bulgaria, the rule of the regime persisted under the control of former communists. However, the full democratization process required a few additional years, although there was a transition to democracy in the 1990s. The pro-government communist faction in Bulgaria held power for a specific period, though it chose to pursue a pro-Russian policy instead of European integration. However, once the balance tilted towards the Democrats in 1996, the democratisation process gained momentum.

prolonged the BSP's tenure in office. The economic and political crises in 1996 left the BSP in a difficult situation and resulted in the fall of the government. The UDF's victory in the 1997 general elections was aided by this situation, which garnered public support and led to the establishment of a new democratic government.

The United Democratic Forces won the general elections in 1997 and remained in power until 2001. This is the first time after the beginning of Bulgaria's transition period that a government remained in power during the mandate. UDF launched a comprehensive campaign to democratise the country, while also addressing corruption. Simultaneously, efforts were made to secure membership to the EU and NATO and to establish closer ties with the Western democratic world. This period witnessed positive economic and political developments, increasing the welfare of the populace. Hence, the years between 1997 and 2001 have been identified as the timeframe in which the process of democratization was expedited.

The 2001 general elections marked a crucial moment in Bulgarian democracy, as the NDSV⁴³ party founded by King Simeon II⁴⁴ (who had returned from exile) emerged victorious. This marked the first time that a party with liberal leanings had taken power. The period of bipolar politics in Bulgaria came to an end, after which the politicians in power embarked with determination on the path of democracy. During this period, Bulgaria experienced favourable developments in its relations with the USA and the EU, resulting in a stabilisation of the political and economic situation. While NATO membership was realized in 2004, EU membership was reached in 2007. The years between 2001 and 2007, have been determined as the years of the road of Bulgaria to the NATO and European Union integration⁴⁵. All these developments will be subject to review in the coming chapters.

⁴³ The National Movement for Stability and Progress

⁴⁴ Simeon Saxe-Coburg ascended to the throne following his father's death in 1943 when he was a mere six years old. He was exiled in 1946, when the country declared itself a republic and abolished the monarchy. Simeon II returned to Bulgaria in 1996 after the collapse of the communist regime and established a political party in 2001, ultimately serving as the Prime Minister of Bulgaria until 2005, when his party achieved considerable success in the elections. Although NATO membership was achieved during this period, notable advancements were made towards securing EU membership.

⁴⁵ Switching from one system to another presents significant challenges. Each regime establishes deep roots within a community, and transforming these roots requires the active participation of the people and society. Bulgaria remained under communist control for an extended period, making it difficult to quickly abandon old habits and beliefs. However, it should be noted that Bulgaria's integration into the European Union and NATO represents significant progress compared to other Balkan states.

In this part of the thesis, the process leading to the democratization process of Bulgaria will be examined under certain titles. External factors played a significant role as the main reason for initiating this process. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that these factors forced changes in domestic politics. They forced the elite to take the lead in reforming the communist system. Society⁴⁶, which had long been oppressed by a totalitarian regime, acted to turn these dynamic changes to its advantage. Due to a number of internal and external factors, the communist regime in Bulgaria, existed for half a century, finally fell, leading to the transition to democracy.

The democratization process of Bulgaria will be discussed in three parts. In the first part, internal and external factors that played a leading role in the initiation of the democratization process from 1989 to 1990 will be listed and going to be explained. The factors that significantly contributed to the fall of the communist regime and the subsequent transition to democracy will now be examined.

2.5. External Factors

In this section, external factors that influenced the collapse of the communist system in Bulgaria and had a significant effect over the transition period are going to be discussed and the factors are:

- Firstly, the perestroika glasnost and democracy reform movement initiated by Gorbachev will be discussed and how the breezes of these reform steps triggered the democratization process in Bulgaria. Gorbachev's coming to the head of the Soviet Union and the start of Perestroika and Glasnost (Gorbachev, 1987) caused the Cold War to enter a new phase. At the same time, it triggered reforms towards liberalization and caused political, social and economic transformations to take place, after which the communist regimes of Central and Eastern Europe clearly showed softening towards their societies. The reform movement initiated by Gorbachev had a profound impact on the global stage, but its most significant effects were felt in Central and Eastern Europe, where the Soviet Union exerted a dominant influence. The movement prompted internal

⁴⁶ The Bulgarian society staged a rebellion against the communist system through two distinct groups. The first comprised of the Turkish society, which had been subjected to long-standing assimilation policies, who organized and participated in street protests. The second group was the suppressed anti-communist opposition, encompassing a broad range of individuals - from democrats to members of the anti-communist society. This opposition was formed near the end of the regime's rule and played a critical role in the transition period.

dynamics in these countries, leading to a transition from a communist system to democracy.

- Secondly, the discussion will focus on the Malta meeting between President Bush and Gorbachev, which marked an important milestone in ending the Brezhnev doctrine and abandoning Central and Eastern European countries to political fate. The Malta meeting marked the conclusion of the Cold War and the inception of a new era in Central and Eastern Europe. Before this, the region had been characterised by a climate of fear surrounding the prospect of Soviet intervention. However, the meeting catalysed a series of significant political and social transformations, leading to the emergence of anti-communist movements and the advent of a new democratic era.

Perestroika, Glasnost, Democracy

By 1984, the Soviet Union, with one of the most powerful military and economic systems in the world, was very different from the image it had presented for decades. The Soviet Union, one of the world's largest producers of machinery, iron, oil and gas, in the world, was on the verge of a major economic⁴⁷ and, accordingly, political crisis (Goldman, 1992). In the last days of Konstantin Ustinovich Chernenko⁴⁸ rule, the Soviet Union was in economic, social and political decline. Even though new factories were built, production decreased a lot and workers lost their motivation, people were unable to find the necessary things in the shops to continue their daily life, and this situation created deep discontent and hopelessness among the people (Desai, 1988, p. 3). This heavy situation brought along multiple problems. The effect of the changes in the domestic policy of the Soviet Union had its reflections on foreign politics. In this context, the Soviet Union focused on improving political and economic relations with the Western democratic block (d'Estaing, Nakasone, Kissinger, 1989, p. 1).

One of the important changes in foreign policy was the retreat and slowdown of the Soviet Union in armament. The Cold War period between the Western capitalist and the Eastern communist poles forced both sides to make large investments in the field of armament (Light, 1990, p. 170). The armament phase necessitated the procurement of

⁴⁷ The Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s resulted in a costly war due to the support received by resistance groups in Afghanistan from the United States and its allies. Furthermore, investing the country's gains into the arms race was the cause of the economic crisis in the Soviet Union.

⁴⁸ Konstantin Ustinovich Chernenko was the fifth general secretary of the communist party in the Soviet Union and a famous Russian politician. He in 73 years old became the president of the Soviet Union for a short time between February 1984 and March 1985, and after his sudden illness and death, Michael Gorbachev took his place.

materials and the retention of military personnel from a strategic standpoint. Consequently, the majority of the country's economic resources were allocated to the defence sector.

Politics of Mikhail Gorbachev

With the death of Konstantin Chernenko on March 10, 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev⁴⁹, who was the second name in the hierarchy of the leadership in the Soviet Union, called the Politburo, which constitutes the governing body of the communist party, to a sudden meeting (Brown, 2015). The date of March 11, Michael Gorbachev was elected as the general secretary of the communist party with a unanimous vote of the central committee, and has taken the leadership of the Soviet Union, the second superpower of the world on that day (Goldman, 1992). When Gorbachev took over, he had to find solutions to multiple problems, which made it necessary to initiate the reform movement. Gorbachev was convinced that with the replacement of the system created by Stalin, the Soviet Union would become freer and more stable, and the country would become a safe place by increasing economic production (Bunce, 1990, p. 395). In order to facilitate the acceleration of the reform process within the Soviet Union, he implemented a series of decisive actions.

With the economic downturn looming in the Soviet Union, Gorbachev tried to reduce defense-related spending to a minimum (d'Estaing, Nakasone, Kissinger, 1989, p. 6). "But cutting the defense budget required a decrease in international tension and, in particular, better Soviet-American relations" (Light, 1990, p. 170). This forced the Soviet Union to withdraw its military presence in many regions and led it to abandon its armament policy against the Western block. These steps taken by the Soviet Union were welcomed by the West and a new page of political and economic relations was opened. In the same period, the Soviet Union started to establish better political and diplomatic relations with the West, and Gorbachev created key relations with the President of the United States Ronald Reagan, the Prime Minister of England Margaret Thatcher and the

⁴⁹ Mikhail Gorbachev was a Russian politician and the final leader of the Soviet Union before its dissolution. He was awarded the title of youngest Soviet leader. He pursued the objective of enhancing the economy and politics of the country through the reforms he implemented. Nonetheless, instead of maintaining the Soviet Union's status, these reforms brought about its disintegration and collapse. In 1990, Gorbachev received the Nobel Peace Prize. Gorbachev's historical legacy includes the improvement of Western-Soviet relations and the end of the Cold War.

leader of West Germany, Helmut Kohl (Brown, 2015). Gorbachev sought various strategies to avert an escalating economic and political crisis in the Soviet Union.

One of his priorities was reconciliation with the West. Unlike the previous Soviet leaders, Gorbachev was assuming he could solve this issue politically and diplomatically rather than through military steps. To some extent, Gorbachev initiated a process of increased diplomatic engagement with the West, with the objective of finding a solution to the crisis in the USSR. The measures concerning the economy and newly granted political liberties not only impacted Soviet Russia but also sparked varying outcomes in countries ruled by Communist parties, as was the case in Eastern and Central Europe. During a significant conversation on February 1988, Gorbachev stated that the states under the influence of the Soviet Union had the right to determine their own destiny (Spiegel International, 2006). The opportunity to break free from Soviet influence provided by this decision resulted in the collapse of communist systems in Central and Eastern European states. This marked the start of a transition period towards democracy. While Gorbachev expected that the reforms he initiated would be implemented in Central and Eastern European countries in a manner similar to that of the Soviet Union, the developments took place in the opposite direction. It is worth mentioning that “the Soviet leader did not anticipate that Central and East Europeans would interpret reform as meaning the removal of communist political, economic and military control “(Rose, 2009, p. 13). On December 25, 1991, Gorbachev resigned from the presidency of the Soviet Union (By Reuters, 1991) and the next day on December 26, it was announced that the Soviet Union was dissolved.

Gorbachev's “Perestroika and Glasnost” Movement

The most important development among the changes initiated by Gorbachev in the Soviet Union was the Perestroika and Glasnost movement. Perestroika and Glasnost reform movement not only affected the Soviets but also led to the beginning of major changes in the communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. First of all, it is necessary to examine what is the meaning of this movement.

“Perestroika and Glasnost” involved a series of bilateral reforms, both in economic and political aspects. As perestroika, the reshaping of the economy included reducing the role of central planning, decentralizing the decision-making mechanism, expanding the role of the market economy and increasing the role of private enterprise (Mason, 1988,

p. 431). While glasnost constitutes the political pillar of these reforms, it involved more openness and publicity in the media, more pluralism in the political arena, and secret and competitive state elections, even within the party (Mason, 1988, p. 431).

“The term 'glasnost' is one of those Russian words that have no direct equivalent in English. The term is typically translated as "openness" or "publicity," but both of these translations fall short of the comprehensive Russian meaning derived from the poetic word "glas," which means "voice." The act of "giving glasnost" can be defined as the act of providing an individual with the opportunity to express them in a bold and open manner” (Schmemmann, 1986).

However, glasnost highlighted accessibility, which was one of the democratic principles in terms of guaranteeing the openness of government bodies, in this way symbolized the control of the masses over the governments and especially over the local bureaucracies (Laqueur, 1988). The prominent channels of glasnost were mass information, protests and verbal propaganda and visual tools (Laqueur, 1988). The Glasnost movement was received with great respect in the eyes of the people.

The reforms of Perestroika and Glasnost, which were introduced in the Soviet Union, resulted in a number of significant changes. The Glasnost movement facilitated freedom of expression and permitted previously banned literature to be republished. With the release of political dissidents from prisons, the irrigation system against them was repealed, and religious tolerance increased across the country, while the prohibitions on the church were withdrawn (Brown, 2015). Marxist-Leninist ideology was gradually replaced, with a simultaneously growing pluralist understanding of ideology. In this context, the first competitive elections were held in 1989. In the early 1990s, the constitutional amendment legalized the establishment of new parties and the idea of pluralism, which existed close to that period, gained even more legitimacy (Brown, 2015).

As for perestroika, it was a term used to describe new political and economic reforms in the Soviet Union. In order to be successful in this process of change, support from political cadres was necessary. Therefore, Gorbachev made major changes in cadres, both inside and outside of the Soviet Union, so that he could properly develop the reforms. With this new staff, he attempted to alter the antiquated system with a modern comprehension, resulting in enhanced political leniency in both the domestic and foreign policies for socialist countries (Light, 1990, p. 179).

The connections between the domestic reforms and the foreign policy of the Soviet Union arose in two distinct areas. Firstly, the country needed new technology, and secondly, there was a need for foreign investors in the country and foreign trade had to be accelerated (Light, 1990, p. 170). In order to achieve these goals, the socialist economy needed to be integrated into the world economy. In this regard, Gorbachev implemented significant reforms in foreign policy to achieve integration with the economy of the Western capitalist world. According to Light (1990):

“The prevailing political outlook is characterised by a pessimistic assessment of the current state of international relations, yet simultaneously an optimistic conviction that the emergence of novel forms of collaboration can facilitate the realisation of a just and peaceful international order. This perspective acknowledges the limitations of security solutions that are pursued unilaterally or through the exclusive use of military means. The issue of security is inherently political in nature and thus requires the application of political solutions” (Light, 1990, p. 176).

Light emphasises that the Soviet Union should abandon its previously aggressive policy towards the West and instead pursue a new vision through diplomatic relations. This approach could lead to a more structural solution to the crises faced by the Soviet Union.

The reform effect developed in two ways. Firstly, as the Perestroika and Glasnost reform movement commenced, the communist states in Central and Eastern Europe, who were affiliated with the Soviet Union, were obliged to implement corresponding reforms in their own countries. The collapse of the communist system was predominantly caused by granting more rights and freedoms to the people and society, rather than economic changes. Societies subjected to the pressure of communist regimes have fostered political opposition and pro-democracy organizations through newly granted freedoms. These groups have organized significant demonstrations and processions against the communist system, as a reflection of the changing power dynamics within the international system⁵⁰.

⁵⁰ During the Cold War era, a binary world became apparent with two distinct poles: the Communist and the Democratic. Countries were compelled to embrace the ideology of the pole they were subject to. However, following the end of the Cold War and the defeat of the communists, as well as the victory of the Democrats, the Central and Eastern European countries under the influence of the Soviet Union underwent a rapid transition towards the Democratic side. This change was a natural consequence of the shift in the international system.

Secondly, after Perestroika and Glasnost reform movement Gorbachev abolished the Brezhnev doctrine⁵¹. According to the Brezhnev Doctrine, if an offensive movement begins in any socialist country to overthrow the communist system and replace it with a democratic one; this is not solely an internal affair. In such a case, all socialist countries must take action to defeat that movement together (Kramer, 1989, p. 25-26). Upon assuming power, Gorbachev found that the Brezhnev doctrine was still in effect. However, in 1988, this doctrine was formally abandoned.

After the doctrine was abolished, the countries that were under the influence of the Soviet Union, particularly those in Central and Eastern Europe were left to determine their destiny. Beforehand, when the doctrine was in effect, the Warsaw Pact was obliged to interfere if there was any rebellion against the communist system in those countries. However, now if the anti-communist or pro-democracy opposition took action in these countries, they had to fend for themselves. These two significant occurrences had a considerable impact, particularly in CEE countries.

As the new foreign policy of the Soviet Union, started to take shape, the military units in Afghanistan were withdrawn as the first step, and as the second step, Gorbachev refused to take any action against the democratization wave that started in Central and Eastern Europe (Tikkanen, 2021). Thanks to these measures, perceived positively by the Western democratic bloc, they expedited the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two conflicting factions.

Results of the Reform Movement in the Soviets

Analysing Mikhail Gorbachev's reform movement, it is clear that the Soviet Union supported revolutions and changes in Central and Eastern Europe to revive the closed

⁵¹ "The Brezhnev Doctrine asserts the right of the Soviet Union to intervene in the internal affairs of the states comprising the Socialist Bloc (SB). The genesis of this doctrine can be traced back to a declaration made by Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko at the 27 June 1968 session of the Supreme Soviet. In this declaration, Gromyko asserted that the Socialist commonwealth would not tolerate the withdrawal of any of its constituent parts, should such an attempt be made" (Romaniecki, 1970, p. 527). In line with the Brezhnev doctrine and the "Socialist Internationalism" formula, the first intervention was in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and this intervention was repeated in Afghanistan in 1979. After the Second World War, two global powers came to the fore in the world, the USA and the Soviet Union. These two global powers intersected, especially in Europe, and went to a long-lasting polarization. While America and Western democratic states formed NATO, the Soviet Union, in turn, formed the Warsaw Pact, and this is how the Cold War began. While NATO cared for democratic countries, the Warsaw Pact tried to protect socialist countries. Leonid Brezhnev created his own doctrine using the Warsaw Pact (Mitchell, 1972, p. 190). In fact, the main reason for introducing the doctrine was the intervention of the Red Army in Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968) (Baroch, 1971, p. 689). Despite the alleged interference in the internal affairs of states in these interventions, this doctrine has eliminated this thesis

economy and resolve political crises. These revolutions may not have occurred if it had been foreseen that the USSR would collapse and the communist parties would be disempowered in Central and Eastern Europe. After the initiation of the perestroika and glasnost reform movement, it can be observed from Gorbachev's conduct that Moscow has relinquished its aspiration for supremacy in Central and Eastern Europe. Gorbachev's Perestroika and Glasnost initiatives had an effect on the movements towards regime change and democratization in Central and Eastern Europe. Russia's soft attitude to the dynamic changes in Europe led to the start of reform movements of the intelligentsia in those countries. Consequently, within a short period, most countries embarked on a path towards democracy.

The Glasnost and Perestroika movement had a significant impact in two distinct areas.

- Firstly, it paved the way for democratic principles to take root within the USSR, as the country began to embrace liberalisation and pluralisation.
- Secondly, the Soviet Union gave up its patronage of CEE countries.

The Soviet Union's choice to remain neutral regarding regime changes and democratization in Central and Eastern European countries, refraining from military interventions in their internal politics, and shifting towards diplomacy to reshape its foreign policy are significant achievements of the era (Brown, 2007, p. 222).

Following Gorbachev's reforms, opposition groups in Central and Eastern Europe began to overthrow communist party dominated governments to implement similar reforms in their own countries as in the Soviet Union. This led to rapid and dynamic steps towards regime change and democratization. The mobilisation of democratic movements in Bulgaria coincided with these events during the same period (Brar, 1992, p. 271).

The “Perestroika and Glasnost” reform movement, which was intended to be a remedy for the crises faced by the Soviet Union, instead hastened its downfall. A few years after the commencement of this reform, the Soviet Union underwent irreversible occurrences. Revolutionary upheavals against communist systems began first in Central and Eastern European countries and subsequently spread across all members of the Soviet Union. In Central and Eastern European countries, communist regimes have collapsed, leading to unexpected⁵² transitions to democracy.

⁵² The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War expedited the third wave of democratization, as mentioned by Huntington. This led to a rapid shift from a communist regime to a

The measures implemented by Gorbachev were instrumental in the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union. It is worth noting that Gorbachev sought to reform rather than replace the communist system, leading to significant alterations in the domestic and foreign political landscapes. Regrettably, these measures resulted in unintended consequences akin to a snowball effect, sparking important revolutions first in the CEE countries, and eventually throughout the Soviet Union.

While Perestroika and Glasnost hastened the collapse of the Soviet Union leading to its eventual end, the Malta Summit proved to be a crucial meeting that ultimately marked the conclusion of the Cold War.

The following section will cover the pivotal encounter between the President of the USSR, Gorbachev, and the President of the United States, George H. W. Bush. This meeting played a crucial role in ending the Cold War. The Malta Summit is renowned for its significant role in the regime changes of Central and Eastern Europe, as well as the democratization process of Bulgaria. However, this section will first analyse the effects of the reforms in the USSR on Bulgaria before moving on to the next external factor.

Implementation of Perestroika and Glasnost in Bulgaria

The “Perestroika and Glasnost” reform movement in the Soviet Union showed its impact in Bulgaria as well. Bulgaria was occupied by the Red Army⁵³ (Dellin, 1963, p. 281) at the end of the Second World War and this occupation lasted until 1947. In this period, the Bulgarian kingdom was abolished and a communist regime was established under the leadership of Georgi Dimitrov⁵⁴ and Bulgaria was officially under the influence of the Soviet Union. In 1954, Bulgaria became a member of the Warsaw Pact and, due to its membership, played a leading role in the occupation of Czechoslovakia

democracy in several communist countries. Bulgaria's democratic transition also coincided with this time frame.

⁵³ The Red Army is referred to as the military force of the Soviet Union. The term "red" was used to refer to workers. Firstly, it is the military force established by the Communists during the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. The Red Army became famous during the Second World War when it defeated Hitler and quickly invaded Central and Eastern Europe.

⁵⁴ Georgi Dimitrov is a communist politician in Bulgaria. He was the first prime minister of the communist People's Republic of Bulgaria, which was established after the World War Two, and remained in the administration from 1946 to 1949. While he was on good terms with Stalin, there were disagreements over the Macedonian question.

in 1968⁵⁵. Bulgaria remained economically, politically and culturally linked to the Soviet Union for a long time.

The slightest change in the Union was reflected in Bulgaria. The coming of Gorbachev to the leadership of the Soviet Union and the start of perestroika and glasnost deeply affected Bulgaria. The oppressive communist regime in Bulgaria deprived the society of rights and freedoms for a long time and suppressed all opposition⁵⁶ with using of power (Vuchinich, 1951, p. 129 - 130). However, the adoption of perestroika and glasnost policies in Bulgaria, as well as Gorbachev's reforms in the Soviet Union's foreign policy, initiated the collapse of the communist system in Bulgaria. Thanks to Gorbachev's determined actions, he paved the way for revolutionary change and internal reform in European communist countries, including Bulgaria.

a) July concept

Gorbachev's desire for the reforms to be implemented in communist countries put the leaders of the communist regimes in a difficult situation. Although these leaders were not enthusiastic about the reforms, they had to make some changes. The first significant change in Bulgaria was made with the July concept.

Bulgaria was impacted by the reforms implemented by Gorbachev in the Soviet Union through the Perestroika and Glasnost movement. The implementation of perestroika and glasnost reforms by the Bulgarian communist regime was slow, resulting in criticism from Moscow (Mason, 1988, p. 443). These criticisms were made by the Soviet Union's ambassador in Bulgaria and by Gorbachev personally. After this sharp criticism, the reforms of “perestroika, democracy and glasnost” began to appear in Bulgaria and various non-formal organisations began to be established based on this idea.

Under the impact of the “perestroika and glasnost” reform movement, the first important step taken by the communist regime in Bulgaria in this direction was the “July Concept”.

In the plenary meeting of the Central Committee (CC) of the Bulgarian Communist Party on 28 to 29 July 1987, Todor Zhivkov presented some new ideas about

⁵⁵ The Prague Spring reform movement, which occurred in Czechoslovakia in August 1968, was forcefully suppressed by the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. Bulgaria also supported this occupation. The violent suppression of the movement caused civilian casualties.

⁵⁶ Following the establishment of the communist system in Bulgaria, the regime implemented a harsh policy against minorities and political opposition, resulting in the swift elimination of opposition leaders. Various methods were employed, including imprisonment, exile, and even assassination.

liberalization in order to get out of the economic crisis in Bulgaria. Although the main focus of the July Concept⁵⁷ was economic liberalisation, there were also discussions regarding the transformation of the Bulgarian Communist Party from a governing party to a regular political party and the right for citizens to establish amateur organisations independently. According to Гръев:

“One of the most striking examples of a simulation of reform is the so-called July Concept of 1987, with which Zhivkov actually began his last attempt to meet the Kremlin's expectations. In words, it proposed changes to the economy, social field and administration, and only in the space of the political system are they symbolic and generally do not affect the monopoly of the Communist Party on power” (Гръев, 2012).

The July Concept has brought relief and hopes to Bulgaria's political opposition and oppressed minorities. On the other hand, this concept also allowed the political opposition and minorities to legally demand more rights from the communist system. The opposition and oppressed minorities saw these freedoms as an opportunity and valued them. Although the Zhivkov regime was disturbed by this situation, its close ties with the Soviet Union inevitably influenced the implementation of reforms in Bulgaria.

b) The emergence of the opposition

Following the reforms, opposition groups in Central and Eastern Europe started to suppress the governments dominated by the communist parties in order to implement reforms in their countries in the same direction as in the Soviet Union. In this manner, swift and dynamic measures were taken towards the initial democratization and alterations of the regime. Along with these events, the mobilization of the democratic movements in Bulgaria coincided with the same period (Brar, 1992, p. 271).

Unlike the Central European communist countries, Bulgaria took very harsh steps and reacted against the opposition during the establishment of the communist system. As a result, the opposition was weakened, although not completely eliminated. For a considerable period, political opposition in Bulgaria held little significance. Nevertheless, the mobilisation of the opposition proved pivotal in the downfall of the communist regime.

⁵⁷ According to the July concept, liberalization had to take place in the economy, where it was providing to transfer the state-owned enterprises to the owners (in case workers), and at the same time, it was tried to trigger private entrepreneurship.

With the emergence of perestroika and glasnost in the country, and the declaration of the July concept, political opposition began to form through legal means, with varying targets and in different regions of the country. The formation and strengthening of the opposition led to questioning of the communist system and its chiefs and expressed a desire for reform or complete change.

The communist system collapsed rapidly due to dynamic global developments including the perestroika and glasnost reform movement. Bulgaria entered the democratization process as a result of the opposition's important resistance and steps taken. How the opposition is organised and the important role it plays in regime change is discussed in detail in the internal factors section of this chapter.

c) Turkish protest and its effects

Among the minority groups, the Turks displayed the strongest resistance against the communist system and opposed the assimilation campaign, even considering the use of violence. After July concept simultaneously, the Turks, minority group in Bulgaria whose names were altered and were forced to leave the country during the communist regime, organised huge protests to regain their lost rights and for the return of those who had been deported.

These events had great unexpected effects in the country under the communist rule, and the politicians felt themselves under pressure. The Turks issue has been moved to the agenda of the government frequently. With the revolt of the Turks in Bulgaria against the communist system, the pro-democracy opposition that was secretly organized in the mid-1980s began to emerge and organized large marches, meetings and protests, in this way began to mobilize the society against the communist system.

The uprising of the Turks against the communist system bolstered the anti-communist opposition and the political communist elites who were against Zhivkov's regime. This made the Turks an important internal factor in the political revolution that occurred in the country. The important role played by the Turks organizing and revolting against communist regime and in the transition of the political regime to democracy is analysed in the internal factors section of the chapter.

d) Effects on the Communist Leadership

As mentioned earlier about the impact of perestroika and glasnost on the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the impact of this movement was linked to the expansion of political rights and freedoms in Bulgaria.

The Perestroika and Glasnost reform movements also played a significant role in the organization and actions of the communist political leadership against Todor Zhivkov in Bulgaria, ultimately resulting in his removal from power. Zhivkov's failure to carry out the reforms promptly caused him to lose favour with the Kremlin and Gorbachev. As a result, the opposition took action and Zhivkov was ousted from power by a party coup. The beginning of perestroika and glasnost reform movement in Bulgaria was seen as the first sign of the collapse of the communist system.

2.6. Malta Summit 2 December 1989

On 8 November 1988, George H. W. Bush was elected as the President of the United States of America. He played a prominent role in promoting peace in Central and Eastern Europe, ultimately leading to the end of the Cold War. (Savranskaya, Blanton & Zubok, 2010, p. 3-4). The objective of the president of the US was to economically and politically integrate the USSR with Western Europe, thus initiating the process of democratization there. This effort facilitated the Soviet Union's quiet withdrawal from Central and Eastern Europe, providing an opportunity for new democracies to emerge in the region. However, Gorbachev's Perestroika and Glasnost reforms also helped to find peaceful solutions to the escalating crises in the region⁵⁸ (Savranskaya, Blanton & Zubok, 2010, p. 4-5).

On December 18, the same year Henry Kissinger as an emissary had a meeting with President Bush and his advisers James Baker⁵⁹ and Brent Scowcroft⁶⁰. Kissinger

⁵⁸ When the Soviet Union's weakness became apparent in 1989, protests and uprisings erupted against communist systems in central and eastern European countries. Although uprisings occurred in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968, they were brutally suppressed by both the Soviet army and the Warsaw Pact. Nevertheless, in 1989, protests occurred without violent interference, and the previous brutalities did not repeat. As a consequence, communist systems successively collapsed and transitions to the democratic system occurred. The reforms carried out in the Soviet Union had their effect, but the diplomatic discussions between the United States and the Soviet Union also led to a peaceful change in the politics of Central and Eastern Europe.

⁵⁹ James Addison Baker is an American statesman, lawyer and prominent political figure. Having made great diplomatic contributions to the end of the Cold War, Baker served as chief of staff and US secretary of State during President Bush's era.

proposed a visit to the Soviet Union to negotiate the Central and Eastern European question, and his offer was accepted. (Savranskaya, Blanton & Zubok, 2010, xxxiv). “January 16, 1989, Kissinger met with Yakovlev⁶¹ in Moscow. He drew a parallel between the current situation in Eastern Europe and the circumstances preceding the First World War, during which the Great Powers set off a chain reaction that ultimately led to war. To prevent a catastrophic outcome, he proposed high-level negotiations to establish a set of both formal and informal understandings. Yakovlev concurred with the view that negotiations should be held” (Savranskaya, Blanton & Zubok, 2010, xxxv). The meeting between Gorbachev and Kissinger focused on the current events taking place in communist countries. In addition, the US delegation delivered a letter⁶² from President Bush to Gorbachev. (Savranskaya, Blanton & Zubok, 2010, xxxv). The purpose of this important visit was to strengthen diplomatic relations between the US and the USSR. It also laid the groundwork for a face-to-face meeting between President Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev, which was expected to take place shortly.

During the political, economic and social changes sweeping across Central and Eastern Europe, the first face-to-face meeting between H.W. Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev took place in Malta⁶³ on 2 December 1989, with the pressing issues of the day on the agenda. When examining the events of 1989 in Europe governed by communist regimes, a striking image emerges. This was the moment when both global powers recognised that control had slipped from their grasp in regions where unforeseen transformations were occurring. In order to overcome this situation, the superpowers needed to collaborate to find a peaceful and effective solution to the transition and regime change in Central and South Eastern Europe. Moreover, political decision-making between the United States

⁶⁰ Brent Scowcroft, an air force officer, served as US national security adviser during President Bush's term.

⁶¹ Alexander Nikolaevich Yakovlev was one of the best-known architects of perestroika and glasnost and a supporter of the democratic reforms in the Soviet Union (Savranskaya, 2005). He became a Soviet ambassador to Canada, after being a member of the Politburo at the same time adviser to Michael Gorbachev (Savranskaya, 2005). He was called the Father of the Glasnost movement. Alexander Yakovlev was the hardest Critic of Stalinist ideas and calling for the democratization process especially in the second half of the 1980s the same time history remembers his name as one of the most active people who played an important role to end the cold war (Savranskaya, 2005).

⁶² In his letter, President Bush highlighted key concerns crucial to concluding the Cold War, including enhancing diplomatic relations between America and the Soviet Union and collaboratively making decisions to resolve global crises.

⁶³ “The Bush-Gorbachev meeting in Malta was originally conceived as a preparatory event for a more extensive summit to be held in 1990. However, the meeting itself became an independent entity, symbolically closing the Cold War” (Savranskaya, Blanton & Zubok, 2010, p. 619).

and the Soviet Union presented difficulties during the Cold War due to their adversarial policies. However, certain meetings may have unexpected outcomes for resolving the crisis, and the Malta summit was such an occasion. This gathering, which is renowned for having brought about an end to the Cold War, addressed a multitude of topics; however, the developments in Eastern and Southeast Europe remained a focal point with various opinions expressed on the matter (History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, George Bush Presidential Library, National Security Council, Condoleezza Rice and Arnold Kanter files (1989)).

At the Malta Summit, a wide-ranging package was adopted related to the most significant issues at that time. The meeting held in Malta was primarily focused on the on-going changes in Europe and the world. Specific attention was given to bilateral relations between the United States and the USSR, as well as disarmament efforts. The discussion also centred on crucial issues related to economics and cooperation within that field. One of the most significant topics was over the rapid process of regime changes happening in the Central and Eastern European countries. In this part, we will mention some small parts from the discussion between President Bush and Gorbachev at the Malta Summit on December 3, 1989, about turbulent changes in the Central and Eastern Europe:

“Gorbachev: I agree. However, I think one can explain such a reaction in the context of the current situation. Just take a look; Europe is changing; governments are falling—governments that were also elected on a legitimate basis. One wonders if during this power struggle someone were to ask the Soviet Union to intervene, what should we do? Should we follow the example of President Bush?

Bush: I see.

Gorbachev: Sometimes I hear that in the current situation we are not fulfilling our mission with regard to our friends. I always respond in such cases: first, nobody asked us to help; second, the changes are proceeding according to the Constitution.

Bush: I would say more—that it is thanks to you that they are proceeding peacefully.

Gorbachev: We stand for peaceful change; we do not want to interfere, and we are not interfering in the processes that are taking place. Let the people themselves decide their future, without external interference. But, you see, such colonels, such people can pop up in any country.

Bush: I do not want to sound like an old, bad record, but let me repeat: public opinion in the U.S. supports you, firmly supports perestroika as well as your role in the pluralist processes in Eastern Europe: a role that cannot be reduced merely to restraint, but also is the catalyst for change.” (Savranskaya, Blanton & Zubok, 2010, p. 633).

In a paraphrased speech, Gorbachev emphasised that changes were taking place in Europe that legitimately elected governments were falling, and expressed concern about what role the Soviet Union might play in this. However, he insisted that the changes were taking place according to the will of the people, without Soviet interference, and according to the constitution. Bush encouraged Gorbachev by praising his role in the pluralist processes sweeping Eastern Europe (Savranskaya, Blanton & Zubok, 2010, p. 633).

From the discussions examined in the reports, it is noteworthy that Gorbachev gave the go-ahead for peaceful revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe. He states that the conflicts will not be interfered with and acknowledges that the states have the freedom to choose their own paths. In addition, nations have the right to self-determination. Furthermore, the Soviet Union has made a promise not to intervene in crisis situations by sending any form of troops. During the debate, President Bush exerted pressure on Gorbachev, indicating that the US was in a strong and stable position (History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, George Bush Presidential Library, National Security Council, Condoleezza Rice and Arnold Kanter files (1989)).

It is important to acknowledge that geopolitical factors played a significant role in the regime changes that have taken place within Central Eastern Europe.

- Firstly, the talks and discussions that occurred during the Malta summit were pertinent to both the timeframe and the agenda at hand.
- Secondly, Gorbachev's statements made several promises.
- Lastly, the Soviets maintained their neutrality in the crisis situation in the region.

As a result, the Malta Summit holds a distinct position for Central and Eastern Europe, regarding the decision-making process that brought an end to the Cold War and prevented Soviet Union intervention during the transition⁶⁴ from communist regimes to

⁶⁴ Following these decisions, countries in CEE such as Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia and East Germany underwent rapid transitions from communist regimes to democracy.

democracy. The summit afforded countries under communist rule the opportunity to act and decide freely and to engage in a process of self-determination.

The end of the Cold War and the successful conclusion of the Malta talks created excitement in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Communities that have long suffered under oppressive regimes, and have been stripped of their rights and freedoms, gained an opportunity to resist repressive communist systems. The third wave of democratization has been expedited by consecutive events, resulting in the onset of transitions from communist regimes to democratic systems in Central and Eastern Europe within a brief period.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War precipitated a chain reaction of regime collapses and transitions to democracy in formerly communist countries. Key external factors, such as the Malta Summit, Perestroika and Glasnost reform movement, served to instigate suppressed internal factors, which became a pivotal part of the transition to democracy. These internal factors include anti-communist opposition and minority groups.

Implementation of Malta Summit in Bulgaria

The Malta meeting took place in 1989, a year of rapid transformation marked by the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the communist system. These events had a significant impact not only on Central and Eastern Europe but also on global politics. Gorbachev's statement that he would not interfere to the future political changes of the Central and Eastern European countries and his approval of these changes marked the beginning of irreversible transformations in those countries.

Bulgaria, located in Eastern Europe and formerly under communist rule, was significantly impacted by the Malta Summit. In the past, if any country in communist Europe attempted to turn towards democracy or a different system, the Warsaw Pact would violently suppress these tendencies and brutally crush the groups that initiated it. For this reason, the communist system has remained unchanged in Bulgaria and no opposition attempts or orientations have been permitted.

However, the abolition of the Brezhnev Doctrine during the Malta Summit and the guarantee that the Warsaw Pact would remain neutral towards changes in Central and Eastern European communist countries caused the opposition, which was under

These transitions took place unexpectedly, and this event was later recognised as a crucial development of democracy.

pressure in Bulgaria, to organize and initiate a rebellion against the communist system. The end of Todor Zhivkov's government was due to Gorbachev's introduction of perestroika and glasnost reforms for communist countries, but the Malta negotiations accelerated the complete collapse of the communist system in Bulgaria and its transition to democracy.

The anti-communist opposition in Bulgaria was formed in response to the perestroika and glasnost reforms. Initially, it took measured actions against the communist system. Following the Malta Talks, opposition became even more emboldened and began to struggle not for the revision and reform of the communist regime in the country, but for the transition to a fully democratic system.

In the years leading up to the fall of the communist regime in Bulgaria, the process of democratization was influenced by two important internal factors: dissident factions and minority groups, particularly the Turks. The communist regime in Bulgaria adopted a policy of destruction towards minorities and opposition groups during its initial years. However, in the long run, there was no noticeable action or movement observed from these two repressed groups. The communist regime, aided⁶⁵ by the Soviet Union, established a political tradition of repressive policies and human rights violations that persisted for many years.

The Malta meeting, in particular, marked the end of the Cold War and the triumph of the Democratic Pole, leading to the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In turn, the Bulgarian communist government lost significant backing, compelling it to restructure the system. This presented an ideal opportunity for the anti-communist opposition and minorities, who quickly, albeit belatedly, organised themselves and rose against the communist system. In the following parts of the thesis, the organization of these groups and their revolt against the system are mentioned as important key internal factors.

⁶⁵ Bulgaria considered itself the Soviet Union's closest and most loyal ally. It endeavoured to adopt the Soviet system in its country and viewed the Union as a vital protective force. Consequently, the Bulgarian Communist system adopted a strong, uncompromising stance towards minorities and opposition forces. After the Malta summit, where the Soviet Union withdrew their support for the Central and Eastern European countries, the Bulgarian opposition seized the chance to rebel against the system. As a result of losing the Soviet's backing, the Bulgarian communist party was compelled to reform and grant more rights to society. Consequently, when the opposition gained power, it emphasised not the reform of the communist system but the transition to a fully democratic system. The pressure exerted by the opposition and minority groups ultimately led to Bulgaria making a swift move towards democracy.

2.7. Internal Factors

Following the reform movement initiated by Gorbachev and the Malta talks, Bulgaria witnessed the emergence of internal dynamics that gave rise to the first significant and effective rebellions against the communist system. In this context, the rebellions were driven by two internal factors. While there were external factors that contributed to the start of the collapse of the communist system in Bulgaria, it was also driven by internal factors that paved the way for the democratisation process. These factors include:

- The Emergence of the first anti-communist groups (dissidents). How the first opposition groups emerged and how they united under the roof of the Union of the Democratic Forces will be discussed. Due to the fact that Bulgaria was far from the democratic countries of Western Europe and that the communist regime was completely dependent on the Soviet Union, pro-democracy opposition formed in the country too late. Despite this delay, the opposition was able to gather under one roof and steer the democratization process. Although the communists had the system in their hands during the transition to democracy, the popular movement of the democratic opposition forced the communists to make important reforms.
- The bankruptcy of the assimilation policies implemented by the communist totalitarian regime against minorities, particularly the Turkish community, and at the same time the Turks' revolts against the regime will be discussed. Although there are different ethnic groups in Bulgaria, the collapse of the communist system and its transition to democracy have been quite peaceful. In this context, the prudent action of the Turks prevented the country from entering a deep ethnic crisis. Therefore, while the peaceful demonstrations of the Turks triggered the anti-communist opposition also to upraise against the regime, their joint movements caused the opposition to become stronger.

The Dissident (Дисидентция)

Dissident is a term that describes opposition to a particular doctrine, ideology or idea that is being enforced through pressure to conform. Particularly following the 1940s, it became utilised as a political notion opposing the imposed communist ideologies of the Soviet Union. During the Soviet Union's domination in Central and Eastern Europe from 1944 until its dissolution in 1989, political dissidents were typically opponents of

communism, as noted by Zhelev⁶⁶ (2010, p. 223). Some of these dissidents were also members of the communist parties, but they did not support the party's direction and thus were included in this group.

Political dissidents (дисиденция) have often demonstrated resistance to the limitations on human rights and freedom of speech. This tendency is especially noticeable in dictatorships and totalitarian regimes, making it more apparent in such political systems. The intellectual group assumed a prominent role in the formation of the political opposition. The intelligentsia (интеллигенция) is a term commonly used to describe people who work to spread spiritual values and who have superior character and knowledge. This is usually the group that forms the factions of the dissident movement. While the dissident movement progressed swiftly, mainly in oppressive totalitarian regimes, and generally adopted a silent oppositional stance, in some countries were formed a certain oppositional community and attempted revolutions⁶⁷ and coups against oppressive systems. As a result, political dissidents have often been subject to government persecution, repression, boycotts, and some have been killed. In post-World War II Europe, which was predominantly under communist rule, the number of political dissidents and groups dramatically increased, particularly after the Gorbachev-led “Perestroika and Glasnost” reform movement. These dissidents played a crucial role in the process of democratization in Central and Eastern Europe. The formation of the dissident groups in Bulgaria and their contributions to the democratization process will be examined in the following section.

2.7.1.1. The Dissident Groups in Bulgaria

During Bulgaria's transition to democracy, dissident groups played a prominent role in the initial stages of the process. Dissident groups arose in Bulgaria between 1988 and

⁶⁶ Zhelyu Zhelev (Желю Желев) is a prominent dissident figure in Bulgaria who held a critical stance towards state politics during the communist era. Upon the establishment of the communist government in Bulgaria, Zhelev joined the Bulgarian Communist Party. However, he was later expelled from the party due to political reasons during the 1960s. This expulsion caused important revolutions in political thoughts of Zhelev. Zhelev's popularity surged in the 1980s due to his book on Fascism. However, the book was removed from publication because it compared fascist governments to the communist system. He played a key role in the revolution that toppled the communist regime and paved the way for the country's transition to democracy. Following the establishment of the democratic system, Zhelev was honoured to become Bulgaria's first democratically-elected president. He has significant articles regarding the dissidents.

⁶⁷ In this context, we can cite the revolutionary events that occurred in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968 during the communist era.

1989, specifically, preceding the beginning of the democratization process and throughout the final years of the communist regime. The establishment of dissident groups in Bulgaria was significantly delayed compared to other communist countries in Europe due to the heavy suppression of anti-communist opposition during the formation of the communist system. The suppression of anti-communist opposition during the establishment of the communist system is highlighted in the tables below, indicating the cause for this.

September-October 1944	26 850 people killed without court sentences
1945 – 1962	Killed in concentration camps: 640 people

Table 4: Killing of People Without any Legal Procedure or the Sentence Being Pronounced After Their Assassination

Source: (Sharlanov and Genev, 2010, p. 6)

Note: In this table, the crimes committed in Bulgaria by the communists against the people during and after their coming to power are exhibited. Generally, people who lost their lives were punished by the communist because they did not want to accept the communist system and rule or because they opposed it in some way.

1945 – 1985	Arrested: 485 200 people
1944 – 1962	Imprisoned in 82 concentration camps: 89 430 people
1946 – 1986	Political prisoners: 36 500 people

Table 5: Inhuman Treatment and Torture Especially in Concentration Camps, Prisons and Detention Centers and Especially Against Political Prisoners and Detainees

Source: (Sharlanov and Genev, 2010, p. 7)

Note: This table shows the communist system's techniques for suppressing political opposition. After the Second World War, when the communists took the government in Bulgaria, all the anti-communist opposition was followed up, and many opposition leaders were killed, imprisoned or exiled. During the Todor Zhivkov era, this pressure increased and the state security was given full authority to suppress opposition. The main reason why the opposition in Bulgaria was formed close to the transition period and was very weak is due to the fact that the communist system did not have any tolerance for the opposition. As previously discussed, July Concept has been excellent opportunity⁶⁸ for the anti-communist opposition in particular. Independent associations and organizations were legalized, while abruptly free and up-to-date discussions were allowed in the press. The

⁶⁸ Establishing dissident organisations or groups independent of the state in Bulgaria was not accepted in the communist system. Upon the release of the July Concept, the state was compelled to permit independent formations. Nevertheless, initial formations remained under strict state supervision. By 1989, independent groups grew stronger due to the global changes and participated in the uprising against the communist regime.

old communist political cadre began to be replaced by a wider range of young and more liberal-minded generations. The opposition was quick to seize the opportunity. It began organising independently in different parts of Bulgaria. Since people could not think freely in such an oppressive totalitarian system, “The July Concept” became a hope for the democratization and liberalization of the Bulgarian political system and a green light for political opponents to create their own organizations.

The dissident groups and organizations formed in Bulgaria were generally influenced by the assimilation policies made against Turks and minorities and developed in the context of the protection of more weighty human and minority rights, and some groups under the protection of ecology (Јаков, 2014, p. 8). In the aftermath of the Chernobyl⁶⁹ accident, a number of dissident groups have been formed, specifically in the realm of environmental protection.

The opposition in Bulgaria started to get organised only in the years before the communist system was overthrown (Јаков, 2014, p. 8). Oppositional organisations formed during this period differed in terms of their ideas and thought structures. There was no clear ideological connection between the various opposition groups. At the same time, they were different from the political opposition structures⁷⁰ that were found in the other communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

The opposition groups in Bulgaria have been divided into two distinct categories. These dissident groups were separated from each other in terms of both ideology and objectives. The classification of the groups is as follows:

“The first group was formed by individuals who had been associated with the Communist Party and who, for a variety of reasons, had been subjected to repression by the government. This group of individuals was distinguished by its position within society and its intermittent opposition to the ruling authorities at one time or another. The group held distinct views on the nature of the required changes compared to the influential dissident groups in other Central European

⁶⁹ During an experiment in 1986, as a result of an accident at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant, a large radioactive contamination occurred around it. The effect of this accident lasted for many years. The gravity of the situation became clear a few days after the accident. It went down in history as one of the biggest nuclear accidents.

⁷⁰ The aim of opposition groups, particularly in Central Europe, has been to establish a democratic system. These countries have been influenced by democracy because of their proximity to democratic states. Additionally, it's noteworthy that in these nations, there has always been opposition to communist systems, in contrast to Bulgaria. As a result, the transition to democracy was rapid, due to the existing opposition. Hungary and Poland can be seen as exemplary cases.

countries. In the majority of cases, these opponents of Zhivkov's form of communist leadership were not seeking radical change but favoured a more vague 'humanisation' of the system along the lines of Gorbachev's 'perestroika' in the Soviet Union." (Јаков, 2014, p. 85).

The first group was communists who took the side of the anti-communist opposition. The main goal of this group was to remove Todor Zhivkov from power and make essential reforms within the communist system. The conceptual framework and intellectual approach of this group was fundamentally distinct from those of the pro-democracy opposition. The individuals who held significant influence in this particular anti-communist opposition were those who had previously offended or lost their positions within the communist party and the state. With regards to the second group of dissidents:

"The second group was composed of individuals who espoused ideological opposition to communism and the existing socialist system in the country. The majority of its members had previously been political prisoners and individuals who had suffered severe persecution and oppression at the hands of the system. Nevertheless, they were relatively less well-known in Bulgaria, which resulted in the formation of organisations that remained on the periphery of society, with only a few members and a relatively limited scope of influence." (Јаков, 2014, p. 85).

The second opposition group was composed entirely of individuals who held an anti-communist stance. These individuals were persecuted and imprisoned by the long-standing communist secret service and police for their political opinions. In the process, their ideas were set in stone and they took clear steps towards achieving their goals. According to the second group, their position was that the communist system should be completely dismantled and a democratic system should take its place.

Although the dissident groups had different wishes, targets and goals, they moved together opposing a common cause⁷¹ to some extent. However, as they approached a certain distance, natural breaking points emerged and the two groups diverged in separate directions. The categorical division of the dissident groups in the case of ideology and targets was an influential reason, why democracy faced some difficulties in the establishment period in Bulgaria, as will be elaborated further in the following section.

⁷¹ To reform or change the oppressive communist rule

2.7.1.2. Formation of the First Dissident Groups

In Bulgaria, informal civil society organizations were the trade unions, human rights and environmental types and emerged and flourished between January 1988 and November 1989. On December 7, most of these non-governmental organizations were united under the Union of Democratic Forces⁷² (Желев, 2010, p. 239). Now let's examine these different formations one by one.

The Independent Society for Protection of Human Rights in Bulgaria was established on 16 January 1988 in the city of Septemvri on the initiative of Iliya Minev (Јаков, 2014, p. 85). The most important goal of this group was generally to try to protect the rights of Bulgarian citizens violated by the totalitarian communist system, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁷³ was used as a manifesto of the organization (Желев, 2010, p. 239). The leader and members of this organization had been suppressed by the communist regime for a long time and tried to be stopped by state security, but with the steady stance of the members, the organization expanded across the country in a short time. It should be emphasized that in the beginning, The Independent Society for Protection of Human Rights had the opportunity to spread more in the places where the Bulgarians lived densely rather than in the regions where the Turks located.

As the Turkish wing of The Independent Society for Protection of Human Rights organization, the League of Human Rights was established by Hristofor Sabev and Nikolay Kolev- Bosiya. In 1989, hundreds of Turkish citizens in Bulgaria participated in hunger strikes⁷⁴ under this organization, and these events forced the government to put the dissidents' movement on the agenda (Желев, 2010, p. 239).

On 8 March 1988, the Public Committee for Ecological Protection of Ruse was founded in the city of Ruse and Georgi Mishev, a writer, was elected as its chairman. The formation of this committee was driven by the objective fact that the communist government in Bulgaria prioritised heavy industrialisation for economic advancement

⁷² Съюз на Демократическите Сили "CDC"

⁷³ It is a 30-item statement on human rights prepared by the United Nations Human Rights Commission in 1948. In a comprehensive way, human rights and law are listed in articles. This declaration was used frequently in the struggle of the democratic opposition in Bulgaria against the communist oppressive regime and references were made from the declaration.

⁷⁴ The Bulgarian Communist system has oppressed and deprived the Turkish minority community of their rights for a prolonged period. Before the collapse of the communist regime, the Turkish community took every opportunity to rebel against the system, to fight for their rights and to join all the organisations and groups against the system. The struggle took various measures including the renowned hunger strikes held nationwide.

without considering the detrimental impact this would have on the environment. In Ruse, a historic Bulgarian city, the level of air pollution has risen dramatically due to the impact of heavy industry, causing an unbearable situation. Therefore, the society organised themselves and expressed their dissatisfaction with the communist regime concerning the problem. The Public Committee for Ecological Protection of Ruse has rapidly gained popularity and attracted a significant number of members. Among these members were a number of personalities who played an important role in the democratisation of Bulgaria. The Public Committee for Ecological Protection of Ruse initially aimed to preserve nature by campaigning against the emission of waste gases, which polluted Ruse's air. However, it eventually developed into a political movement. At the same time, the committee also put pressure on the government because it had failed to mitigate the negative effects of the Chernobyl disaster (Желев, 2010, p. 241).

On 3 November 1989, another notable dissident group, The Club for Support of Glasnost and Perestroika, was established in Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria. Many academics and intellectuals participated in the organization and the movement turned into a powerful group independent of the state (Bell, 1990, p. 419). The main objective of the recently formed opposition group was to secure the right to freedom of expression and to bring about crucial democratic changes in the country (The Washington Post, 1989). The project was initiated by Zhelyu Zhelev, who insisted that the organisation should be more politically oriented and make a decisive impact on the repressive communist system. The Club for Supporting Glasnost and Perestroika brought together numerous pro-democracy and anti-communist adversaries, subsequently becoming the most renowned organization in Bulgaria. They delivered numerous speeches to broadcasters such as the BBC, Deutsche Welle (DW), Voice of America, and Free Europe. It was an attempt to notify the West of the events occurring within the country (Желев, 2010, p. 270). The declaration of The Club for Support of Glasnost and Perestroika says:

“Interested in strengthening the renewal processes in our country, reaffirming their conviction that true publicity is one of the most serious guarantors of the transformation of Bulgaria into a democratic state governed by the rule of law, we insist that repressive measures against members of informal associations be stopped timely and adequate information on all such cases and on the most important domestic political events, to seek a reasonable path to constructive

cooperation and equal dialogue between official institutions and all others fighting for reconstruction, social squabbles and strata” (Club for support of glasnost and reconstruction in Bulgaria; Glasnost and Democracy Club; Federation of Clubs for Glasnost and Democracy; Federation of Clubs for Democracy, 1989⁷⁵).

In the same year, other dissident organizations were founded such as “The Independent Trade Union Podkrepa”, “Eco Glasnost” and “The Committee for Freedom of Conscience”. The main agenda of these organizations was the humanization and democratization of socialism, and their programs did not support a particular political view (Јаков, 2014, p. 9).

In the two years prior to the collapse of the communist system in Bulgaria, numerous opposition organizations surfaced; but most of them were initially suppressed by the state security forces, and the movements were stopped before they could grow and spread across the country. However, the quick organisation of certain opposition groups and their independent emergence in different parts of the country made the work of the communist system difficult and forced the country's rulers to look for alternative ways to save the system.

In an oppressive totalitarian system, as it was in Bulgaria, the appearance of dissident grouping was perceived as the achievement of a difficult task. The Bulgarian regime paid attention to the anti-communist opposition for a number of years and made great efforts to prevent such a movement from occurring. In this context, the influence of leadership was considerable, as individuals who typically led the anti-communist opposition were systematically eliminated by the regime, utilizing imprisonment, threats, murder, and deportation as common methods. As a result, while the pro-democracy opposition in Bulgaria may have been weak, it managed to achieve remarkable achievements in difficult circumstances during this period. As the opposition continued to grow in Bulgaria, some support started to come from outside. This bolstered the opposition movement and strengthened their cause.

2.7.1.3. French President François Mitterrand's Visit to Bulgaria

When French President François Mitterrand visited Bulgaria on 19th January 1989, the country was experiencing international isolation due to the assimilation campaign

⁷⁵ (Клуб за подкрепа на гласността и преустройството в България; Клуб за гласност и демокрация; Федерация на клубовете за гласност и демокрация; Федерация на клубовете за демокрация, 1989)

against the Turks. Meanwhile, dissident groups began to emerge rapidly in the country and their news reached Western Europe. While the communist system in Bulgaria faced challenges such as the presence of several dissident groups, the President of France held a meeting with twelve influential intellectuals at the French Consulate over breakfast. Subsequently, he engaged in conversations with young students at Sofia University (Guineva, 2012). Intellectuals who attended this important morning breakfast with the President of France were: “Blaga Dimitrova, Zhelyu Zhelev, Nikolay Vasilev, Radoy Ralin, Stefan Prodev, Baruh Shamliiev, and Koprinka Chervenkova, Alexey Sheludko, Yordan Radichkov and Ivaylo Petrov, Angel Wagenstein, Svetlin Rusev” (Guineva , 2012).

The political opposition's representatives at the meeting were drawn from a diverse range of backgrounds. Some were writers, artists and academics, while others were philosophers, filmmakers and journalists. During the meeting between the President of France and the dissidents, the discussion centred on the most recent developments. The dissidents requested support from the West for the pro-democracy opposition's struggle against the oppressive communist regime (Starcevic, 1989). President Mitterrand's meeting with the Bulgarian intellectuals in November of the same year was considered a key moment in the overthrow of the Todor Zhivkov regime (Radio Bulgaria, 2019). The conclusion to be drawn from this meeting is that there has been an acceptance by the Western countries of the democratic opposition in Bulgaria⁷⁶.

It is worth noting that while various dissenters were present at this gathering, eight of the twelve participants were from the Club for Support of Glasnost and Perestroika (Желев, 2010, p. 246). In a way, this situation demonstrated that the Club for Support of Glasnost and Perestroika was highly active across the country and was accepted by the Democratic West.

⁷⁶ The visit of the French President to Bulgaria and his subsequent meeting with the opposition has been regarded as a significant milestone in the bilateral relationship between both countries. Primarily, it reinforced the perception of the West's backing for the democratic opposition. Subsequently, France continued providing support to Bulgaria, particularly in its efforts to join NATO and the EU. Although this breakfast may have seemed a simple affair, it carried great significance for the opposition, which was facing pressure from the communist regime at the time. This meeting has given great courage to the opposition and provided them to work on the way to end the regime. Todor Zhivkov was removed from power in November of the same year and the most important obstacle on the way to democracy was removed.

2.7.1.4. Contributions of Dissidents to the Democratization Process

The democratic opposition in Bulgaria did not exist for a significant period following the end of the Second World War. It only took organized action due to notable changes in global politics, such as the abolishment of the Brezhnev doctrine and Gorbachev's announcement of perestroika and glasnost. The democratic opposition or dissidents that emerged during that time in Bulgaria had a diverse range of ideologies and objectives. The fact that there were groups in the democratic opposition with different ideas and objectives slowed down the process of democratisation. However, one of their far-reaching achievements was their endeavour to guide the populace towards democratization and unite them with specific dissident factions. The dissidents' primary objective was not to reform the totalitarian regime but to transition towards democracy. The Opposition struggled and suffered during the communist era, but managed to get established in the last years of the regime. Although established in a short time, dissidents have made significant progress in the democratisation process of Bulgaria. As for the significant achievement of Bulgaria's democratic opposition, it can be summarised as follows:

- First, the formation of the United Democratic Forces (UDF)⁷⁷, a pro-democracy party that united all opposition groups under one roof, is recognized as the commencement of the multi-party system era.
- Second, the united dissidents exerted significant pressure over the communists during the Round Table Talks⁷⁸ held in Bulgaria to support the transition from a communist regime to democracy.
- Third, the opposition played a crucial role in the determination of the first democratic elections and the subsequent adoption of the new democratic constitution⁷⁹.

⁷⁷ The United Democratic Forces Party has united multiple opposition factions with distinct ideologies and goals under its banner. In the era of Bulgarian democracy, the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) arose as the primary Democratic Party and forged its position in the political arena, playing a pivotal role in the fight for democracy.

⁷⁸ The transition from a communist system to democracy in Central and Eastern European countries occurred as a result of negotiations between the democratic opposition and the communist regime. These discussions, known as "round table talks," were pivotal moments where critical decisions were made, shaping the political future of the states. In Bulgaria, round table talks were held between the opposition and the government. Further details regarding these discussions will be explored in the upcoming section.

⁷⁹ The constitution serves as the foundation of a state. Its role encompasses defining the authority and boundaries of the state as well as the limitations of societal liberties. In the aftermath of the shift from

- Fourth, the opposition played a significant role in the collapse of the communist regime and the subsequent transition to democracy in Bulgaria. When the previous system collapsed and a replacement was implemented, it took charge of the democratization process.
- Fifth, the united dissident opposition played another important role in the revival of Bulgaria's long-neglected civil society (Petroff, 2009). Although the opposition did not participate in politics during the early stages of the communist system's collapse, it indirectly influenced communist politicians in a manner reminiscent of a non-governmental organization or civil society.
- Sixth, the opposition has brought pluralism to the forefront and dismantled the walls and barriers inhibiting people's ability to think freely. The emergence of these groups has empowered society to express its ideas and experience newfound freedom. The first major demonstration and protests staged in the centre of the Bulgarian capital dismantled the myth of the indestructibility of the communist regime in people's minds. Concurrently, society has acquired a better understanding of democracy through the opposition's efforts.

Bulgaria is one of the countries with a multi-ethnic population. The Turkish ethnic group constitutes the largest minority population in the country. Turks played an important internal factor role in the collapse of the Communist system in Bulgaria and the transition to democracy. The Turkish minority established opposition groups similar to the dissident groups discussed in this section. However, the Turkish opposition to the communist system began much earlier than other dissenting groups, and to comprehend their role in the democratisation process, it is indispensable to understand the historical evolution of their struggle. Therefore, the historical struggle of the Turks against the oppressive communist regime will be examined in detail in the coming section.

The Role of the Turkish Society in the Transition period

Although Bulgaria's period of transition to democracy had some similarities with those of other Central and Eastern European countries, it differed in one important respect: it underwent a bloodless and peaceful transition despite its diverse ethnic composition.

communism to democracy, amendments to communist constitutions occurred throughout Central and Eastern Europe. In comparison to other states, Bulgaria was one of the first countries to change its communist constitution. The transition from the communist constitution to the democratic constitution in Bulgaria will be examined in depth in the forthcoming section.

The feature that distinguishes Bulgaria from other Eastern Bloc countries is the presence of a high per cent of minorities in the country. This section discusses Bulgaria's peaceful transition to democracy despite having a large Turkish minority. It explores the reasons behind the Turkish revolt against the communist system in Bulgaria, the process of the revolt, and the role played by the Turks in the Bulgaria's road towards democracy. After the Ottoman Empire withdrew from the lands it had ruled in the Balkans, a considerable minority of Turkish and Muslim communities stayed under the governance of the re-established nation-states. Bulgaria has one of the largest Turkish minority communities among the Balkan countries. Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, a significant historical phenomenon of forced migration and assimilation occurred within the newly established state of Bulgaria. The highest stage of this forced migration and assimilation process (named as a The Rebirth Process “Възродителен процес”)⁸⁰ happened between 1984 and 1989 and went down in history as the largest migration wave in Europe after the Second World War.

The formation of a completely homogeneous nation state was the primary reason for this situation in Bulgaria. Two elements play an important role in creation of a nation-state: the first is the culture and the second is the national identity. In the historical context, it is possible to observe that during the establishment of nation-states, the dominant nation showed limited tolerance towards minorities, particularly when minority groups comprised a significant percentage of the population. In such situations, the nation that formed the state typically attempts to assimilate minority communities. If this is unsuccessful, forced migration may become a possibility. This occurred in Bulgaria, where the Turkish community was growing daily and subject to numerous cultural, religious, and traditional restrictions. These restrictions were especially prevalent during the totalitarian communist regime established after the Second World War.

⁸⁰ The Rebirth Process is actually the idea that the Muslims in Bulgaria were Bulgarians who changed their religion forcibly during the Ottoman period, and this is the name of the campaign to bring it back them to their origin.

2.7.1.5. The Assimilation Process Implemented by the Communist Regime against Minorities

In the 1960s, the totalitarian communist regime in Bulgaria, under the Zhivkov administration, initiated an old-style nationalist movement⁸¹ targeting minorities in the country. Despite the considerable weakening of the nationalist movement during the establishment and consolidation of the communist system in Bulgaria after the World War Two, it began to rise again after the communist regime gained power. Todor Zhivkov initially espoused fraternity, tolerance and unity during the early days of his administration. However, it became evident that these values solely pertained to Bulgarian society and were not extended to minority groups.

The Bulgarian totalitarian communist government had developed a plan and strategy⁸² to achieve the concept of a single homogeneous nation within a short period, but this plan resulted in the marginalisation and assimilation⁸³ of ethnic and minority groups in the country.

⁸¹ Following the Ottomans' withdrawal from the Balkans, the newly established states initiated policies of assimilation against minority groups. Bulgarian minorities were subjected to similar government treatment. When the communists took control of Bulgaria after World War II, they endeavoured to treat all peoples equally in the initial years of their administration. However, during the communist regime in Bulgaria, a distinctive bias towards minorities and opposition became apparent. Despite living peacefully for a certain period, minority groups began facing renewed pressure from the communists and the restriction of their rights was an indication that the traditional nationalist policies had been reintroduced into the country.

⁸² The communist government in Bulgaria perceived the increasing numbers and rising birth rates of Turks and other minorities as a threat to national unity. Therefore, either the number of minorities has to be reduced, or they need to be assimilated, and as a result, the assimilation process has begun.

⁸³ Following the fall of the Ottoman Empire, a substantial number of Muslim minority groups remained in the Balkans, leaving the region with a heterogeneous makeup of various nationalities and minorities coexisting within a multicultural and multi-religious society. The diversity of the region provides richness; however, it is regrettable that nationalist movements that emerged during the 19th century resulted in a negative perception of this differentiation. The Balkan states that emerged after the fall of the Ottoman Empire looked to other European nations, adopting nationalism as the foundation for their statehood. Despite the presence of minority groups in Western Europe, these groups have been granted some rights, and states have been established successfully. Although the Second World War was a significant aberration, states typically engaged in hostilities with one another. The Balkans has always struggled with a heterogeneous structure, with nationalism forming the basis of state construction. As a result, minorities in these countries have long been subjected to assimilation, which has taken a considerable amount of time. Bulgaria has also faced similar assimilation policies toward minorities, particularly the Turks, who have been victimized for an extended period. The Pomak and Roma minorities in Bulgaria have also undergone assimilation. Though Bulgaria was not tolerant of minorities, during the Second World War, the Jewish minority was protected and not surrendered to the German army by the then Bulgarian King, Boris the Third.

1984 – 1989	Killed during street mass demonstrations of the Turkish minority: 160 people
1984 – 1989	Turks imprisoned in concentration camp: 1200 people
1984 – 1989	Deportations of Turks to rural areas: 4000 People
1989	Turks forced to leave the country: 300 000

Table 6: Violation of the Right of Ethnic Self-Identification and Involuntary Displacement of People on Ethnic Grounds

Source: (Sharlanov and Genev, 2010, p. 7)

Note: In this table, the crimes committed by the communist totalitarian oppressive regime of Bulgaria against the Turks are documented. As can be seen, the communist system had no tolerance for ethnic minorities and especially Turks, and it carried out a violent assimilation process between 1984 and 1989, during which the Turkish society gave victims. The reasons why the Turks stood up to this oppressive regime and started protests during the transition period in Bulgaria can be understood from this table.

The first assimilation process began to be applied against the Roma people and the Tatar minority in the country and went down in Bulgarian history as the first assimilation experiment. “In 1958, the Communist Party and government implemented the decision taken at the April 1956 plenum to assimilate minorities. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, there was an increasing pressure on the Roma people and Tatars to adopt Bulgarian names” (Crampton, 2007). As there were no revolts due to the assimilation process, which was completed expeditiously, it was time for the assimilation of the Pomaks, another minority group in the country.

In the 1970's a single-nation formation plan entered into force and in a second phase, the names of Pomaks⁸⁴ were changed (Crampton, 2005, p. 204). The community's culture and religion were prohibited, and it was stated that such a group did not exist in Bulgaria. In numerous villages and mountainous areas of the country, the Pomaks engaged in armed conflict with the state's militias. However, the military and police of the communist regime swiftly and brutally suppressed this rebellion. In the middle of August 1989, Bulgarian army units with tanks raided the villages where the Pomaks

⁸⁴ Pomaks are a community living in the southern regions of Bulgaria. This community embraced Islam in time and lived under the Ottoman Empire for a long time. They use their own Old Bulgarian language (пра билгарски език), and they also use some Greek words. With the withdrawal of the Ottoman state from the Balkans, the Pomaks, like many minority groups, also got their share of assimilation policies. Bulgarians regard Pomaks as their own, ignore their differences and claim that Pomaks were forcibly Islamized (Папакочев, 2013). In this context, after the Ottomans withdrew and left the Balkans, a large part of the Pomaks were Christianized in a way and by force. Pomaks currently living in Bulgaria seem to be a self-contained society, often given the appearance of being isolated.

were located in the southern regions, and according to diplomatic sources, at least 15 civilians lost their lives in these attacks (Freedom House, 1990, p. 56).

After the successful renaming of the Pomaks, Tatar, and Roma⁸⁵ people in Bulgaria in the 1980s, the third phase of the assimilation plan commenced. The communist regime employed oppressive policies to create a unified nation, targeting the Turkish Muslim minority (Karčić, 2014, p. 190). The Bulgarian communist regime called the campaign to assimilate and destroy Turkish society “the Revival” or “the Rebirth” process. The reason for the early initiation of the assimilation process against the Turks was the Cyprus operation⁸⁶ conducted by the Turkish Republic in 1974. The Todor Zhivkov regime believed that the Turks in Bulgaria would also seek autonomy, leading to further restrictions and pressures on Turkish society (Груев & Каљонски, 2019, p. 39). While minorities were being subjected to the process of assimilation, propaganda⁸⁷ spread that these groups were of ethnic Bulgarian origin and were forcefully converted to Islam during the Ottoman period (Smilov & Jileva, 2009, pp. 219-220).

Organization name	Founder Name	Formation Year
The Leninist Communist Party of the Turks in Bulgaria	Avni Veliev	1984
The Organization in Momchilgrad	Osman Salifoglu	1984
“The Long Winter”	Mohamed Yuseinov Yusufov Uzunkish	1985
The organization of Halim Pasach	Halim Pasach	1985
The Turkish National Liberation Movement in Bulgaria	Nejmetin Hack	1985

Table 7: The Turkish Resistance Movement in the 1980s

Source: The table is prepared by the researcher using information from: (Иванов, 2009).

Note: After the communist regime increased its pressure and tension against the Turks, resistance movements began to form in the mid-1980s, but these movements were suppressed by state security in the early stages and some of the leaders were imprisoned while some were killed. When it comes to the most important point, these resistance movements inspired anti-communist groups and those who oppose the system such as intelligentsia and between 1988 and 89 civil societies and organizations began to appear and dissident groups were formed. It can be said that the Turks were the spark for Bulgaria to enter the transition period.

⁸⁵ Bulgaria is one of the countries with the highest concentration of Roma people. This community was among the initial ones integrated during the era of assimilation policies.

⁸⁶ In 1974, Turkey carried out an operation in northern Cyprus, resulting in the Turks taking control of 37% of the island.

⁸⁷ The assimilation process was not taking place according to the communist government. They were exclusively returning minority groups to their previous origins.

Since the mid-1980s, Bulgaria has experienced a rise in economic crisis as a consequence of multiple factors. Specifically, the impact of perestroika in the Soviet Union and Moscow's withdrawal of political support from Todor Zhivkov resulted in a weakening of the communist regime, causing it to lose its legitimacy. As a result, the state security agency escalated its numbers and exerted greater political pressure nationwide against the opposition and minorities (Daskalov, 2011, p. 299).

The years between 1980 and 89 were the most difficult years for Turkish society. The communist regime at full capacity focused on the assimilation of this ethnic minority group. In this period, a great political pressure and assimilation process against Turks and Muslims, the so-called “regenerative process” (vuzroditelen protses) started and as a result, a great mass exodus was experienced in Bulgaria (Daskalov, 2011, p. 299). The communist government made new decisions, choosing to divide Turkish families and forcibly migrate them to various parts of Bulgaria.

All the cruelties and injustices did not go unanswered. Despite the difficulties, the Turks secretly began to organise themselves, forming certain resistance groups, and in a short time there were uprisings against the communist regime. Undoubtedly, the actions of the government have prompted Turkish citizens to form collective groups in their resistance against the oppressive measures implemented by the administration of Todor Zhivkov (Иванов, 2009).

2.7.1.6. Turks' Rebellion against the Oppressive Regime

The Turks in Bulgaria have twice organized major revolts against the totalitarian regime. In December 1984; the regime commenced the process of converting the names of all Muslim Turks within the country to Christian names (Şimşir, 1986, p. 339- 341). This campaign lasted from December 1984 to February 1985 and instantaneously the names of all Turks in the country were changed (Иванов, 2009). During the rebirth campaign in Bulgaria, at least 850,000 Turkish Muslim names were forcibly changed in just one winter (Petrova, 2004, p. 166). In this compulsory name change campaign, great repressions were experienced by the Turks in many Turkish villages and some cities. The Turkish revolt was ruthlessly suppressed; crowd of people were sent to prison, and there were people who lost their lives among the injured citizens (Груев & Калъонски, 2019, p. 44). This revolt made Todor Zhivkov uncomfortable, but it also gave hope to

the country's opponents of the communist regime. The period from 1985 to 1989 saw the emergence of some prominent Turkish opposition and nationalist movements, which took steps towards democratisation in coordination with the later emerging Bulgarian opposition groups.

The second surge of rebellion and opposition by the Turks against the despotic communist system occurred between late 1988 and 1989. This resistance movement played a significant role in shaping the transparent civil opposition in favour of democracy against the regime during that era. The Revival Process marked the start of the downfall of Bulgaria's communist regime, resulting in the removal of Todor Zhivkov and his fellow communist leaders (Коруджиев, 2008, p. 238).

Amidst the perestroika reform movement, various pro-democracy movements and groups emerged in Bulgaria that opposed the assimilation campaign and demanded its termination by the ruling regime. In response to this demand, some Turkish and Pomak opposition groups and associations united with pro-democracy opposition groups and in this way, the democratic opposition gained more power. The Turkish organisations arranged extensive rallies, demonstrations, marches and hunger strikes in north-eastern Bulgaria from 19-27 May 1989. The resistance demonstrated the Turkish people's willingness to fight for democracy and human rights. The main aim of the May demonstrations was to capture the interest of the global public and secure a spot on the agenda for the upcoming OSCE⁸⁸ conference scheduled for the end of May 1989 in Paris (Karčić, 2014, p. 191).

In 1989, Bulgaria experienced a potentially explosive ethnic crisis as a result of the assimilation process it enforced on the Turks from 1984 to 1985. This issue was extremely dangerous and occurred concurrently with economic and political crises. All officials were aware of the complex situation and began considering various methods to reduce tension and find acceptable solutions. Eventually, a decision was made to deport Turks from Bulgaria to Turkey.

On 29 May, Todor Zhivkov acknowledged the severity of the situation and delivered a televised speech in which he urged Turkey to open its border gates, allowing Turks living in the country to depart. Although Turkey was preoccupied with its issues, it acquiesced to Bulgaria's request on the 3rd of June 1989. Following this agreement,

⁸⁸ The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Bulgaria promptly authorized Turkish citizens to obtain passports, resulting in over 350,000 Turks leaving the country in a short time (Arndt, 2013, p. 10). This forced migration was called the “Great Excursion”⁸⁹ by the communist regime. Between June and August 1989, 350,000 people immigrated to Turkey. This influx of migrants, occurring in a relatively short period, placed significant strain on the Turkish state, which was unprepared to handle such a large migration. Consequently, the Turkish government closed the borders with Bulgaria on 21 August 1989.

Just two weeks before the overthrow of Todor Zhivkov, on October 26, 1989, the plenum of the central committee of the Bulgarian communist party was held. At the meeting, Zhivkov acknowledged the failure of the ethnic cleansing initiative planned in the early 1980s. Additionally, he stated that Gorbachev did not endorse the assimilation of Turks and minorities in Bulgaria. After these statements, Todor Zhivkov admitted that the end of the totalitarian communist system actually came (ИЕКОВ, 2019).

2.7.1.7. The Role of Turkish Society in the Democratization Process

As mentioned in the introduction section, Bulgarian Turks were subjected to severe oppression during the totalitarian regime period, their names were changed, additionally in 1989, nearly 350,000 Turks were subjected to compulsory detention and immigrated to Turkey. Forced migration has significantly impacted the country's demographic situation, resulting in a decrease in the workforce⁹⁰, which has subsequently led to an economic crisis in Bulgaria.

While the struggle of the Turks against the communist regime was increasing it gained global attention. Consequently, external support for the Turkish cause started to emerge. This external support made it even more difficult for Todor Zhivkov, who was already faced with numerous problems. Encouragement for the Turkish movement came from two sources - the Islamic world and Turkey itself. Despite internal issues, Turkey remained committed to supporting the Turkish minority in Bulgaria. There were a

⁸⁹ The Bulgarian Communist government claimed that the Turkish people who had immigrated to Turkey had done so of their own free will and not under duress. For this reason, the migration is commonly referred to as the "Great Excursion" by communists.

⁹⁰ Turkish people worked in Bulgaria's agricultural sector. However, when forced migration occurred and a significant number of Turks left the country during the summer of 1989, it resulted in abandoned agricultural areas. The migration's timing, which coincided with the harvest season, presented a challenging situation for the country. This has compounded existing difficulties in Bulgaria, which already experienced an economic crisis. As a result of the events that occurred both domestically and internationally, Todor Zhivkov's government came to an end.

number of agreements for resolving emigration issues, reuniting separated families, etc. According to Грѹев and Кальонски:

“Both sides, in addition to relying on the blocs their partners do not miss any opportunity to accuse each other on their respective minority issues and other awkward topics, yes prove their rights in international forums of NATO, Warsaw Treaty, the UN, UNESCO, the Council of Europe, the Islamic Conference organization, in Helsinki, Vienna, Paris, Ottawa, Budapest, Belgrade, etc. support is also sought by the governments of the respective military-political allies of the other side, not to mention the search for lobbyists - scientists, politicians, journalists, etc. both on this side and beyond the Iron curtain” (Грѹев & Кальонски, 2019, p. 49).

The situation imposed on the Turks had fatal and irreversible consequences for the Zhivkov regime. The Bulgarian communist regime has been the subject of a profound moral and political crisis, which has resulted in international isolation. In the international forums and conferences of the period, Bulgaria was shown as the country that violated human rights in the most disastrous way (Желев, 2010, p. 269).

The effect of these events has come to such a state that Bulgaria has been excluded even by the Soviet Union, additionally; the economic situation has also begun to deteriorate. It is pertinent to highlight that the Bulgarian economy was significantly reliant on the Soviet Union, rendering it infeasible to operate independently.

Considering the developments mentioned above, it becomes clear that Turks played a very important domestic factor role in the collapse of the communist system in Bulgaria and the country's turn towards democracy. To summarise, the contribution of Turks towards the downfall of the communist system and the transition to democracy in the country can be enumerated as follows:

- The first major revolt against the Todor Zhivkov regime in Bulgaria was carried out by the Turks, and this movement encouraged the other anti-communist opposition.
- When the struggle of the Turks began to be supported by the outside world, the Todor Zhivkov regime was subjected to international isolation in return.
- The deportation of 350000 Turks from Bulgaria to Turkey in the summer of 1989 further increased the economic crisis in the country. Since the Turks were working in the fields or in heavy industry, there was a shortage of workers after this deportation.

- When the Turks and other anti-communist dissidents began to act together in 1989, the opposition toward the totalitarian regime became stronger.
- During the discussions and negotiations between the United Democratic Forces (UDF) and the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP), the Turkish hunger strikes, protests and marches served as external or public support for the UDF.
- After the transition to democracy, in The Round Table Talks between the democratic opposition and the BSP Turks again provided strong external support for the democratic opposition. This contributed to the talks' success in promoting democracy.
- During the transition period towards democracy, Turkish citizens established their own political party, known as the Movement for Rights and Freedoms Party (MRF). This party played a pivotal role in maintaining equilibrium within the governments that were formed until the country's admission into the EU. The role of MRF had a significant impact on the realization of democratic initiatives in Bulgaria.

In conclusion, minority issues are a highly sensitive topic within democratic systems, and significant efforts have been taken to address them. In Bulgaria, especially after the 1980s, Turkish nationalism increased and caused uneasiness in the country. When this subject is examined in depth, the connection between the effect of totalitarian communist Bulgarian nationalism and the emergence of the reaction of Turkish nationalism⁹¹ (Иванов, 2009) can be determined. During the Ottoman era, there was relatively tolerant treatment towards minorities and other societies in the Balkans. This led to a period where Turks and Bulgarians lived together in the same towns without facing any major issues. However, once nationalism became a part of Bulgaria's ideology during the state establishment, this cordial relationship transformed into a policy of assimilation and expulsion against minorities.

⁹¹ To make it clear that the resistance of Turks and Pomaks against the assimilation policies of the Totalitarian Communist Regime took place in different levels and forms in different periods. While calm and spontaneous resistance was shown by the pomaks in the 1970s, the increase in Turkish nationalism was observed in the mid-1980s and a more organized resistance process was started (Иванов , 2009) . During these periods, bombs were detonated in different parts of Bulgaria and some civilians lost their lives (Иванов , 2009) . Although these events were attributed to the defense movements created by the Turkish society, later allegations were made that these events were carried out by the state security services. It is very natural that the Turks, who were subjected to a harsh and relentless attack, felt the need to defend themselves in response to this and increased their resistance even more.

To conclude the Turks had a significant impact on the democratization process in Bulgaria. This is evidenced by the large protests led by the Turkish community, which in turn, inspired other marginalized opposition groups throughout the country. The names of Turkish individuals residing in Bulgaria have been altered while their cultural, religious, and traditional practices have been proscribed. Consequently, they perceive themselves as having nothing to lose. The Turkish populace is seen as the group that dared to challenge the communist system, risking all in the process. The rebellion of the Turks has brought the country close to a dangerous point in which the threat of an ethnic conflict looms large. The communist administration at the same time facing economic crises and international isolation policies followed this process and sought solutions. With the initial international changes highlighted before, including perestroika and glasnost reforms in the Soviet Union and Gorbachev's pledge to leave Central and Eastern European countries to their own devices, combined with internal factors such as the Turkish uprising and organization of dissident groups, a significant development occurred in Bulgaria. Todor Zhivkov was ousted from power via an internal party coup.

Internal Coup in Bulgarian Communist Party (BKP)

The strict communist regime in Bulgaria did not collapse with street demonstrations⁹² as in Romania, Czechoslovakia and East Germany. In Bulgaria, this process took place with an internal coup by anti-regime and reform-oriented Mr Mladenov and other party members (Honan, 2000). The pro-reform opposition against Todor Zhivkov, which had formed within the Bulgarian Communist Party for years, responded to Gorbachev's call for reforms in Bulgaria. As Huntington emphasized, the opposition formed within the authoritarian regime took power, removed the former leader and started liberalization in Bulgaria (Huntington, 2011, p. 147). This significant event provides an insight into why

⁹² An examination of other CEE countries reveals that the Bulgarian Communist regime was entirely controlled by Todor Zhivkov and his inner circle, causing concern among party members who had been previously expelled or ousted from the centre. During Todor Zhivkov's rule, an opposition faction emerged within the Bulgarian Communist Party in opposition to him. However, due to unfavourable circumstances, their influence was not apparent. Gorbachev's call for reforms like Perestroika and Glasnost in all communist nations was not well-received by certain long-serving leaders. The communist opposition within the party took advantage of this situation to act against Zhivkov and remove him from office, using the demonstrations of the Turkish and democratic opposition as an excuse.

Bulgaria's process of democratization differed⁹³ from other communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe.

On the 7th of October 1989, discussions began in Bulgaria's capital city of Sofia regarding the potential dismissal of Todor Zhivkov, who held positions as both the leader of the BCP and the head of state at the time. On 10th October, Zhivkov delivered a speech during The Politburo meeting, in which he urged for a vote on his continued tenure within the administration or his resignation. However, an unforeseen occurrence resulted in Zhivkov's removal from the party management and state leadership on that day, similar to the dismissal of other communist leaders in Central and Eastern Europe. (Troxel, 1993, p. 386). On the 10th of October, the official beginning of democracy in Bulgaria was marked. Petar Mladenov, who had been previously removed from his position as foreign minister, assumed office in place of Zhivkov. While Petar Mladenov became the head of state, Andrey Lukanov⁹⁴ was appointed as the prime minister, and Alexander Lilov⁹⁵ was appointed as the head of the BCP.

After Todor Zhivkov was removed from power, communist leaders who assumed control of the government stated that Bulgaria was facing a challenging financial situation, owing 10 million dollars in foreign debt (Bell, 1990, p. 429). The situation indicated that Bulgaria would encounter various crises for an extended period. After the intra-party coup, the country underwent a significant transformation⁹⁶. Thousands of citizens took to the streets of the capital, Sofia, and chanted "elections" as a slogan, questioning the communist constitution. This event marked the emergence of the first political factions and the initial demands for democracy were voiced (Михайлова, 2012, p. 55). Developments suggested that Bulgaria was entering an important political

⁹³ While the first regime changes and democratic transitions in Central and Eastern Europe (Poland, Hungary, Romania, Czechoslovakia) were carried out by the pro-democracy opposition, in Bulgaria the communists instigated transformation. This situation also influenced the subsequent process.

⁹⁴ Andrey Lukanov played a significant role in communist politics as the head of the reformist faction within the party. Following Todor Zhivkov's removal from power, he assumed the position of the first Prime Minister of Bulgaria.

⁹⁵ Although Alexander Vasilev Lilov held the position of the second-in-command in the Bulgarian communist regime until the early 1980s, he was stripped of this power after 1983. Nevertheless, following a coup within the party, he was elected as the chairman of the BCP in place of Todor Zhivkov.

⁹⁶ The coup-instigating communists identified Todor Zhivkov as the primary issue and sought his removal while maintaining the existing system with the implementation of reforms. However, the society's long-term experience of oppression led to a desire for a different direction, wherein the struggle was not for the reforming of the old regime, but rather for a complete transition to a democratic order. Taking into account the desires of the society, already discontent with the communists, the transition to democracy was accomplished, rather than reforming the system, even though it posed a challenge.

period: democratizing its political order. Divergent attitudes between the populace and the government concerning future political orientation would unquestionably unsettle the government and necessitate the adoption of new measures.

The influence of the communist nomenclature was noteworthy during the beginning stages of the transition period in Bulgaria. “This system was a means of maintaining the communist elite's monopoly on the legal use of political force” (Kostova, 1994, p. 33). In order not to lose its power in the state monopoly, the communist elite were prepared to use any means necessary. Precautions and measures have been taken in advance to prevent the democratic opposition from taking the initiative in the transition period.

During his initial term, Petar Mladenov implemented significant changes that influenced politics in Bulgaria. Under the new cabinet, reforms have been implemented in three areas:

- Firstly, the revision of the BCP
- Secondly, reforms in the communist system
- Thirdly, addressing the issue of minorities in the country.

In the early 1990s, an assembly was organized by the BCP which resulted in significant reforms within the party. One of the key modifications made by Mladenov was to alter the name of the party from the BCP to the Bulgarian Socialist Party.

As a second step, he initiated the multi-party period to ensure the survival of the communist system and alleviate public pressure. The opposition was granted permission to form a party and participate in the elections.

In order to alleviate the mounting pressure on the system from the Turks, it was imperative to cease the assimilation policies that had brought the country to the brink of ethnic conflict. As a third step, Mladenov terminated the assimilation process that had been initiated against the Turkish population in the country.

The BCP, headed by Mladenov, ceased⁹⁷ their assimilation policies⁹⁸ towards Turks in December 1989. This allowed Turks to participate in politics. Following a series of

⁹⁷ The cessation of the assimilation process results in the restoration of minorities' original names and the return of their curtailed rights and liberties. Moreover, guaranteeing minority rights is a crucial element of a democratic system.

⁹⁸ The Bulgarian Communist Party did not clearly outline the type of system it intended to implement. The people's marches, protests and wider democratic opposition have proved fruitful. In response to external pressure, the government abolished their assimilation policy towards the Turks (Bideleux & Jeffries, 2007, p. 93). However, the totalitarian communist regime prohibited the return of Bulgarian Turks who were deported to Turkey, to their own country. This ban was lifted by the new President

positive developments, the Turkish community commenced organization efforts, culminating in the establishment of the Rights and Freedoms Movement, led by Ahmed Doğan, on January 4th, 1991 (Daskalov, 1999, p. 11). The MRF have played a key role in the governments established many times in Bulgaria.

In 1989, significant political and economic changes occurred in both the global political system and the political landscape of Bulgaria, which continued to evolve throughout the 1990s. Following Todor Zhivkov's removal from power in Bulgaria, the democratic opposition grew in strength until it received the backing of the people. This ultimately forced the communist administration to attend the Round Table Talks, significantly accelerating the democratization process.

During the same era, when the BCP (BKP) relinquished its legitimacy in the view of the pro-democracy community, it was compelled to pursue reforms and modify its name to the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP). Following the initial democratic elections, measures were implemented to establish a new democratic constitution. Finally, as part of the democratization process, Bulgaria shifted its orientation entirely from the East to the West, thus commencing its journey towards Euro-Atlantic membership. In the coming sections, the internal and external factors and their role in the post-communist era in Bulgaria will continue to be examined. How these issues have developed will be discussed in the next chapter.

Mladenov and the pressure of the democratic opposition on the new government was successful in this case.

CHAPTER 3: THE CHANGE OF THE COMMUNIST SYSTEM AND THE ESTABLISHMENT PERIOD OF DEMOCRACY IN BULGARIA BETWEEN 1990 AND 2001

3.1. The Formation Period of Bulgarian Democracy

As the Soviet Union began to fall behind in the Cold War to the Western capitalist block, particularly due to pressure from Gorbachev, the Union's leaders opted to restructure the communist system with extensive reforms and grant greater societal freedoms (Михайлова, 2012, p. 55). The decision was not accepted by the communist leader of Bulgaria, Todor Zhivkov. As a result, the relationship between Bulgaria and Soviet Russia deteriorated. The disagreements and conflicts between Gorbachev and Todor Zhivkov over the perestroika and glasnost reforms to be applied in Bulgaria led the Soviet Union to adjust its relations with Bulgaria, ultimately resulting in Todor Zhivkov's removal from power (Daskalov, 1999, p. 9).

During the last years of Bulgaria's communist regime, Todor Zhivkov dismissed several significant political figures whom he saw as rivals for his power. Todor Zhivkov's actions led to the emergence of a new opposition⁹⁹ within the communist party. The emergence of this new opposition wing occurred in 1989, a period of significant transformation within the political landscape. This wing assumed a pivotal role in the internal party revolution. The communist opposition to Todor Zhivkov exhibited significant potential for resistance within the Bulgarian Communist Party. However, they were dissatisfied with the politics of Todor Zhivkov and aligned themselves with the pro-democracy opposition. Therefore, as a consequence of the Soviet Union's decision as an external factor and the mobilisation of internal factors, Todor Zhivkov was ousted¹⁰⁰ from power and the leadership of the party. November 10th, 1989 marks the inception of democracy in Bulgaria. The fall of communism, triggered by the ousting of Todor Zhivkov in an intra-party coup, facilitated the democratization process leading to Bulgaria's full NATO and European Union membership.

⁹⁹ Many individuals in the opposition participated in partisan movements against fascism during the World War Two and subsequently impacted the state administration.

¹⁰⁰ The dismissal of the communist leader Todor Zhivkov in Bulgaria took place as an internal party coup and the opposition had no effect there. But the reformists saw the existence of the opposition as an opportunity and used it as an external pressure device, and the complete lack of support of Todor Zhivkov from the inside and outside facilitated the intra-party coup (Petroff, 2009).

It was unclear how Petar Mladenov, who took power after Todor Zhivkov's removal, would decide between reforming the previous regime or making a direct transition to a democratic system. However, as a result of popular protests¹⁰¹ from the democratic opposition and society, Mladenov made a number of significant decisions with regard to the liberalisation of the system. "One significant measure was the elimination of Article 1 from the constitution, which had asserted that the Communist Party was the exclusive guiding power in society" (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p.338).

However, the Mladenov government failed to take concrete steps towards democratising the system and did not provide a clear plan or strategy for the future of the Communist Party and the Communist system (Maria, 2010, p. 404). As a result, the democratic opposition began suppressing the new government even further, with fruitful outcomes for their efforts. For these reasons, the opposition favouring complete change of the communist system and the acceleration of the democratization process attempted to exert pressure on the new government through peaceful protests and public discontent.

In January 1990, the BCP held an extraordinary meeting. At this meeting, several key decisions were made, as follows:

- Firstly, the discussion centred on the possibility of incorporating multi-party elections in the upcoming years.
- Secondly, it was concluded that the economic system should be liberalised, prompting a transition towards a market-based system with privatisation as a priority (Bideleux & Jeffries, 2007, p. 93).

Since the newly established government by Petar Mladenov was not chosen by the people through regular political elections, the opposition against the communist system revolted. As a result, both the state ruling party BSP and the democratic opposition agreed to initiate the National Round Table Talks.

The Roundtable Talks signalled the end of the communist era and the advent of a new democratic era. The talks were initiated due to a legitimacy crisis faced by the pro-communist government from both society and the pro-democracy opposition. This crisis

¹⁰¹ The new leader Petar Mladenov desire to just reform the communist system and continue as before led to a strong reaction from the united dissident groups. As a result of bitter response, the planned reformation process was abandoned and the decision for a soft transition period to democracy started. In other words, in this process, the unification of the opposition groups and their standing as the only power against the communist regime had a great impact and the existing system to transition to democracy.

ultimately resulted in the departure of communist leaders and the establishment of a new political government through democratic elections.

This chapter focuses on the end of Bulgaria's transitional period following the collapse of the communist system. It examines the role of domestic factors in the establishment of the democratic system and its institutions. This section analyses the internal factors that influenced the democratization process following the collapse of the communist system and the establishment of democratic institutions between 1990 and 2001.

3.2. Internal Factors

In light of external and internal influences, Bulgaria entered a new era, marking a transition from a communist system to democracy. Bulgaria completed the transition period between 1989 and 1990 and proceeded to a second period, the establishment of the democratic system in the country. A variety of internal factors also influenced the course of the second period. In this section, the internal factors that left their mark on the period were identified and their effects on the process were determined through in-depth analysis. The internal factors that were effective are:

- **Round Table Talks.** The Round Table Talks were a key moment in Bulgaria's transition to democracy. Unlike other communist countries in Europe, the Round Table Talks in Bulgaria took a long time and there were difficulties in making decisions. The communists tried to keep the democratic opposition completely out of these talks and intended to sit with the groups they saw close to themselves, but as the democratic opposition triggered the people outside in the streets and the tension of the protests increased, the communists were compelled to sit with them. The decisions taken in the Round Table discussions determined the fate of the democratization process in Bulgaria.
- **The establishment of new political parties.** The transition to the multi-party system, which is a significant element of democracy, occurs with the formation of different parties and their participation in competitive and fair elections. In the process of the collapse of the communist system, a multi-party system was quickly adopted in Bulgaria and new parties were formed.
- **The first democratic elections in 1990 and 1991.** With the participation of these newly formed parties in the first democratic elections, the democratic period officially started in Bulgaria.

- Creation of the democratic constitution. The creation of a democratic constitution is worth mentioning as important internal factor in the democratization process in Bulgaria. The official democratic constitution of Bulgaria was written by the parliament, which was formed on completely democratic foundations. The change in the constitution caused communism to be officially removed from the system as an ideology, and at the same time it became the main bone in the establishment of democratic institutions in the country.

“Round Table Discussions” and the Loss of Legitimacy of the Communist Regime

The reform process in Bulgaria following the removal of Todor Zhivkov from power was affected by the persistent dominance of the BCP and the limited power of the pro-democracy opposition, the United Democratic Forces UDF. The ex-communists sustained their power within the system and continued to exert their influence in forthcoming political reforms. The Bulgarian Communist Party played a significant role in the regime change compared to other socialist states amidst the current circumstances. The establishment of democracy in Bulgaria occurred under the communists' supervision, and negotiations and bargaining with the democratic opposition in various periods were the outcome that laid the foundation for the new system. As Przeworski states:

“It is crucial to acknowledge that the transition to democracy is a process that is negotiated. Some of these transitions involve representatives of the previous regime, while others involve pro-democratic forces seeking to establish a new system. Although negotiations are not invariably required to disengage society from an authoritarian regime, they are an indispensable element in the construction of democratic institutions. It cannot be asserted that democracy is a form of government that can be imposed; rather, it emerges from a process of negotiation between opposing parties” (Przeworski, 1991, p. 80).

In the period after 10 November 1989, there was political polarization in Bulgaria. Generally, the society went into a phase of the struggle between the sympathizers of the reformation of the old regime and the parties who wanted to take radical decisions and to establish a democratic system in Bulgaria.

To resolve discrepancies between these perspectives, National Round Table discussions were held to determine the outcome, following the example of other Central European countries that had transitioned from a communist to a democratic system.

During the Bulgarian transition to democracy, roundtable meetings¹⁰² were held, as in Poland, Hungary and other Eastern European countries. The round table discussions were between the government, a proponent of communist ideology, and a group of pro-democracy opposition leaders. The main reason for the National Roundtable Talks was due to the changing social and political situations in the country (Михайлова, 2012, p. 55).

Country	Duration of Round Table Negotiations	Date of National Elections
Poland	6 Febr. 1989-5 Apr. 1989	4/8 June 1989
Hungary	13 June 1989-18 Sept. 1989	25 Mart/8 April 1990
CSSR	26 Nov. 1989- 31Jan. 1990	8/9 June 1990
GDR	7 Dec. 1989- 12 Mart 1990	18 Mart 1990
Bulgaria	22 Jan 1990- 14 May 1990	10/17 June 1990
Romania	27 Jan. 1990- 1 Feb. 1990	20 May 1990

Table 8: Round Table Negotiations and National Elections in CEE

Source: Prepared by the researcher.

Note: It is seen in this table that Bulgaria and Romania were late in organizing round table talks from other Central European countries. Another important point is that the round table talks took a long time in Bulgaria and the first democratic elections were held late than in other post-communist countries. The reason for this was that the transition period started under the rule of the communist party (the top-down process) and the democratic opposition was very weak at that time.

3.2.1.1. Round Table Discussions

At the end of 1989 and the beginning of the 1990s, Bulgaria was in a political dilemma. Legitimate political institutions have lost their representativeness and the existing communist administration has been unable to take decisions without the newly emerged democratic opposition which was representing half of the society (Михайлова, 2012, p. 55). There were two ways to find a solution, either the communist system would take the risk of conflict (Melone, 1994, p. 259), where it would be highly likely to inflict great losses, or would sit with the opposition and try to resolve the political stalemate through dialogue. According to Przeworski:

“The most unfavourable outcome for all parties is chaos. Political actors have determined that any potential gains in their own welfare from a more favourable

¹⁰² The roundtable meetings took place between the pro-democratic opposition and the communist government during the times when communism went into collapse in eastern European Countries, and this name was given to the meetings where important decisions about the future political and economic system of given states were taken.

institutional framework are outweighed by the risks inherent in continued conflict”

(Przeworski, 1991, p. 85).

The communist regime chose the second option and set a date for negotiations with the democratic opposition. A National Round Table was established, but there was significant debate over how to determine its members¹⁰³. The communists scorned the democratic opposition and tended to set up a round table without them.

As the Bulgarian Socialist Party did not take concrete steps towards democratization and refuse to sit at the table with the democratic opposition, the opposition mobilised the people, leading to large protests across the country. Meanwhile, the country came nearly to the brink of civil war as pro-government supporters organised counter-protests in the capital city. The politicians who dealt with this situation chose to meet with the opposition as a necessary step to discuss the political future of Bulgaria. As a result, the Socialist party was compelled to engage in dialogue¹⁰⁴ with the democratic opposition (Crampton, 2005, pp. 212-213). After difficult negotiations, the Bulgarian Socialist Party, representing the state, was on one side, and the democratic opposition, representing the people on the street¹⁰⁵, was on the other (Михайлова, 2012, p. 56).

The round-table discussions gave a voice to the opposition, but they also legitimised and rehabilitated the Bulgarian Socialist Party as an important factor in the political life of the country, thereby increasing its power rather than diminishing it (Giatzidis, 2002, p.

¹⁰³ The Bulgarian Socialist Party chose to convene at a round table to maintain its legitimacy. However, instead of engaging with the democratic opposition, they planned to involve non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as interlocutors. The round table was open to the public. However, the seriousness of the situation was revealed when the democratic opposition triggered protests, forcing the communists to negotiate with them.

¹⁰⁴ There is a sentence by the Famous Physic Albert Einstein, who very truly says that “problems cannot be solved by the same level of thinking that created them” (Le Moyne, 2009, p. 6) which means that there is a need to have dialogue among each other for finding new ideas. Dialogue is coming from the Greece language which means the “flow of words” or “meaning” (Ropers, 2017, p. 6). Many people are mixing dialogue with debate or discussion but there are huge differences between each other’s as a definition and practice. Dialogue is the relationship between two or more people who are trying to understand each other’s needs in case mutual benefits but debate or discussion is more based on competition or oppositely responses (Ropers, 2017, p. 6). We can say for dialogue is based on a constructive conversation between two or more people, organizations, groups in all manners etc. In dialogue, there are no winners but people are sharing experiences and perspectives and in this way, they are finding new ideas (Le Moyne, 2009, p. 3) which can bring changes in their life or solutions for the conflicts among them. To have a successful dialogue it should be face-to-face interaction, respect for each other’s opinions, and trying to understand what says to have inspiration for new changes (Ropers, 2017, p. 7).

¹⁰⁵ These events demonstrated the democratic opposition leaders' ability to efficiently mobilise society, prompting communist leaders to reconsider the opposition's demands. During the early stages of the democratization process, the people's harsh stance played an effective internal role, and whenever there was a break in the process, the people tried to overcome the situation, at least through street protests and marches

50). Unlike other Central¹⁰⁶ and Eastern European countries, the communist government in Bulgaria arranged the agenda and planning of the Round Table Talks and determined the attendees. The factor that caused the communists to be superior in negotiations was due to the weakness¹⁰⁷ of the opposition.

The Round Table Talks began on January 3rd and continued on various dates until May 15th, 1990, lasting for a period of five months (Crampton, 2007, p. 390). The meetings and talks held at the Round Table were broadcast on both national radio and television. This allowed the public to witness the proceedings in their entirety. The opposition's tactic was to exert psychological pressure on the representatives of the previous regime, both from within and outside¹⁰⁸. Communist representatives had to make concessions on many issues, indicating the opposition's success.

At these meetings, political issues were discussed and decisions were made regarding Bulgaria's political future. The most vital features of The Round Table talks were:

1. The Round Table played a crucial role in facilitating joint decision-making between the opposition and the government regarding Bulgaria's political process.
2. During the negotiations, the Bulgarian Socialist Party relinquished its monopoly of power over the state¹⁰⁹. In exchange, it secured a role in the future politics of Bulgaria.
3. Bulgaria's political system was determined.
4. A national agreement was signed to facilitate a peaceful transition to a democratic political system (Желев, 2010, p. 326).
5. As the National Assembly was not considered a representative body, the responsibility was transferred to the Round Table, which acted as a parliament.

¹⁰⁶ For instance the Round Table Talks in Hungary and Poland were organized by the pro-democracy opposition and the weight of decision-making remained in the hands of the opposition (Linz & Stepan, 1996, p.338).

¹⁰⁷ The opposition attempted to unify the various groups under one banner and sought public support beyond the urban areas. Bulgaria's lack of opposition history and political experience resulted in a dearth of individuals capable of forming and managing a dissident movement.

¹⁰⁸ While the roundtable discussions were underway, people outside were prepared to take immediate action and protest against the communist elites should the Democratic Opposition's request for a direct transition to democracy be rejected by the communists.

¹⁰⁹ When the UDF was established, the opposition took a significant decision according to which the Communist Party needed to be totally separate from the state apertures, including both structural, financial and personnel aspects for the sake of democratization to begin (Boyadjiev, 1990, p. 48).

3.2.1.2. Results of the Round Table meetings

During the transition period, a free environment was created, particularly at the Round Table Meetings. This atmosphere facilitated discussions on all issues related to Bulgaria's political future (Özügürü & Gülpınar, 2020, p. 39). As a result of the National Round Table Talks, a national agreement decision was made, which guaranteed the transition process to continue towards peaceful democratization of the political system. (Михайлова, 2012, p. 56).

On March 12, 1990, Bulgaria took a significant step towards democratization. After 45 years of oppressive communist totalitarian rule, state officials and the political opposition reached agreements for the first time (Желев, 2010, p. 326). Following negotiations between the communist regime and the democratic opposition at the Round Table, a series of decisions were made and documented. These written agreements were as follows:

- “- The abolition of Article 1 of the old constitution,
- Disbandment of the political police (part of the former State Security),
- Depoliticisation of the army, police, judiciary, prosecution and diplomacy,
- Dissolution of the PA organizations at the place of work.
- The State Council has been abolished and a presidential institution has been established in its place.
- A decision was made to convene the 7th Grand National Assembly to draft a new constitution” (Epicenter, 2020).

The Round Table Discussions focused primarily on Bulgaria's political future, with no mention of the economic crisis or its resolution. The discussions centred on how to achieve the democratization process and significant decisions were made towards this goal.

From the perspective of the parties involved in the Round Table Discussions, significant developments have occurred.

- Firstly, the Bulgarian Communist Party maintained its position and transformed into the Bulgarian Socialist Party without dissolving entirely, continuing to play a role in Bulgaria's political life during and after the democratization process.
- Secondly, during the Round Table Talks, the pro-democracy opposition, initially weak and scattered, united and became the dominant force.

- Thirdly, the communists were compelled to abandon their perestroika reforms, leading Bulgaria towards the democratization process.

The Round Table Talks played a significant role in the transition from the old regime to a democratic system in a country where political changes were previously achieved through violent means¹¹⁰. The meetings provided an opportunity for supporters of the old regime and the pro-democracy movement to present their differing views and engage in constructive criticism. This helped to move the country away from a conflict environment and provided a solid foundation for a peaceful transition.

Thanks to this internal factor, Bulgaria experienced a smooth and peaceful transition period, during which the communists and the opposition took steps towards the future without conflict. As a result, the BCP (BKP) lost its legitimacy and was compelled to reform itself and adjust to new democratic political developments.

Although Bulgaria experienced extreme polarization, the democratization process in the early 1990s occurred peacefully due to the sensible approach of political actors. The democratization process required reconciliation between the previous regime and the democratic opposition. This approach was taken during the Round Table Talks, which gradually removed obstacles to the transition period. According to Huntington (1991), Bulgaria's transition to democracy was achieved through the use of agreement, negotiation, and reconciliation between the old regime and the democratic opposition. Both the politicians and elites from the old regime and the democratic opposition played an active role in creating democratic institutions. As a result, the old regime was replaced by a new democratic system. The Round Table discussions played a crucial role in achieving reconciliation between supporters of the old regime and the democratic opposition.

In just four months, through dialogue and conversations, a communist system and structure that had been in place for over forty years were dissolved. This demonstrates the success of the Round Table Talks, despite the weak opposition. Upon reviewing the decisions made at the end of the roundtable meetings, it is evident that a project aimed at reconstructing the post-communist Bulgarian state has emerged.

¹¹⁰ Bulgaria is famous for the bloody policies carried out by the governments established after the First World War in Europe. Governments have changed with successive coups, and political murders have followed each other in this process. This bloody policy continued in the communist regime which was established after the Second World War and destroyed all political opposition with repression.

The Round Table Meeting in Bulgaria adhered to the principles of the “Transition Theory”, which had been previously discussed. State officials, who aimed to avoid conflict, and the opposition, who sought to terminate the communist system and transition to democracy, came together at the Round Table. They made significant decisions by making concessions on both sides for the sake of national interests. The transition from the communist system to democracy in Bulgaria occurred in accordance with the leadership of the elites and the resulting consensus. It was determined that a democratic system should be established in accordance with the pact formed between the elites. The fact that Bulgaria's transition to democracy occurred in a relatively short period of time and with the agreement of the elites is consistent with the features of the Transition Theory.

One of the most significant decisions made during the Round Table Talks was to hold the first democratic elections¹¹¹. Since elections are essential for democracy, any change in the system through elections can be considered an indication¹¹² of a democratic system.

Bulgaria was under a long-term oppressive communist regime, resulting in the Communist Party being the only winner of the elections. However, the decisions made at the Round Table came into effect quickly, and newly formed parties participated in competitive elections. Additionally, elections were held to amend the communist constitution, opening the way for the formation of a democratic constitution. These significant developments played a crucial role in Bulgaria's democratization process. These internal factors will be evaluated separately in the following sections.

First Democratic Elections

Society participates in politics through elections, which are a fundamental aspect of a liberal democratic political system. Electoral processes allow citizens to choose their leaders and vote on changes to the political system. During the five-month-long Round Table Discussions in Bulgaria, one of the most crucial decisions made was to replace

¹¹¹ During the Round Table Talks in Bulgaria, there were discussions regarding the transition to the democratic system and the new electoral system, while the UDF wanted a proportional representation electoral system, the BSP stood for the single-member district system (Ishiyama, 1997, p. 109). As a result, a mixed electoral system was determined by making certain concessions on both sides.

¹¹² Previously, we examined the views of Schumpeter and Huntington. They argue that the presence of elections in a country is evidence of democracy in that country. Elections are a crucial component of the minimalist democracy perspective.

the communist constitution¹¹³ with a democratic one. Following intense discussions between the BSP and the UDF, the GNA was tasked with forming Bulgaria's political structure in the post-communist period (Crampton, 2005, p. 215). The initial and crucial step towards amending the constitution was the conduction of the first democratic elections in Bulgaria, aimed at establishing a democratic GNA.

After the first democratic elections in Bulgaria, a clear polarization emerged between the government and the opposition, which had a lasting impact on politics. To comprehend the situation, Bulgaria's first democratic elections will be analysed.

Elections for the 7th Grand National Assembly June 10-17, 1990

Bulgaria held its first fair and free parliamentary elections on 10 June 1990. This event was a critical test of the democratization process that began after Todor Zhivkov was removed from power. The significance of this election lies in the fact that it was intended to elect a constituent assembly to amend the communist constitution in the country. The decision to hold democratic elections, which was made during the Round Table Negotiations, came into effect with the election of the Constituent Assembly. Consisting of 400 seats; the constituent assembly has undertaken the task of voting for a new democratic constitution and ensuring the transition to a multi-party political regime (Mandacı, 2020, p. 73). On 3 April 1990, changes were made to the constitution. Later that year, on 10 and 17 June, the National Assembly of the democratic period was established through general elections (Ekinci, 2018, p. 13; Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1990).

Prior to the first democratic elections, there was political polarization among the society, and politics became a competition between the BSP known as the 'Red' party, and the UDF, known as the 'Blue' party. Other parties and groups participating in the elections defined themselves based on the ideologies of the group they perceived as aligned with either of these two extremes (Gerganov et al, 1995, p. 737- 738).

¹¹³ The collapse of the communist regime and the transition to democracy in Bulgaria developed in a distinctive manner compared to other CEE countries. As opponents in the Central European communist countries played a significant role in leading the democratisation process, the first democratic elections were related to the formation of a government. However, as the democratic opposition in Bulgaria was not particularly strong, their main objective was to weaken the power of the communist party and establish a new government. The BCP's power was enshrined in the constitution, rendering the party equal to the state. The opposition initially attempted to replace the communist constitution with a democratic one. To achieve this, the GNA had to be established. For these reasons, the establishment of the GNA was crucial for Bulgaria's first democratic elections during the transition period. Subsequently, the constitution was amended and new democratic elections were held to establish the government..

A mixed electoral system was used in the elections for the GNA, half of the seats (200) were from single-member constituencies and another half of the seats were from the regional lists (Ishiyama, 1997, p. 109). More than 25 parties and coalitions took part in the GNA elections and it resulted in victory for the Bulgarian Socialist Party which received the majority votes (Chary, 2011, p. 161). In the Constituent Assembly elections, the BSP received 53 % of the votes and formed the majority in the parliament with 211 seats. The UDF received 36 % of the vote and obtained 144 seats. The MRF has exceeded the 4 % threshold and won 23 seats in the parliament by receiving 4 % of the votes.

In the first democratic elections held in the CEE post-communist countries of that period, only the Bulgarian Socialist Party in Bulgaria won¹¹⁴ the elections with the majority (Koulov, 1995, p. 241).

Party	Proportional Seats	Proportional %	Majoritarian seats	Total	%
BSP	97	47.15	114	211	53
UDF	75	36.20	69	144	36
MRF	12	6.03	11	23	4
BANU	16	8.03	0	16	6
Fatherland Union	0	0.00	2	2	
Fatherland Labor Union	0	0.60	1	1	
SDP-non-Marxists	0	0.05	1	1	
Independent Candidates	0	0.00	2	2	
Total	200		200	400	

Table 9: Results of the Elections for the Bulgarian GNA on 10 - 17 June 1990

Source: (Koulov, 1995, p. 246).

Note: The inaugural democratic elections in Bulgaria were held for the 400-member GNA, which was tasked with drafting a new democratic constitution. The BSP emerged as the clear winner, securing an overwhelming majority in the elections.

Nevertheless, the opposition reacted to the election results and assumed cheating; however, foreign observers confirmed that the election process was valid and fair (Chary, 2011, p. 161). Although the BSP was the winner of the elections, these elections

¹¹⁴ In 1989, Bulgaria, like other CEE countries, began its transition from a communist system to a liberal democracy and an open free-market economic system. For ten years, it struggled with political and economic crises. At the start of the transition period, due to the communist government, Bulgaria did not receive the expected aid from the US and other Western democratic countries. As a result, the democratization process was left to face political and economic crises for an extended period (Марков & Беновска, 1993, p. 12).

were considered a great success in the democratization process of Bulgaria, since there were no free and competitive elections for nearly half a century (Gerganov et al, 1995, p. 737).

The BSP won the first democratic elections and remained in power due to several factors. These included the nature of the previous regime, the lack of a strong democratic opposition at the beginning of the transition period, the weakness of the opposition during the democratization process, the significant role played by the BCP in the transition period, and the institutional continuity that the BSP chose to maintain (Spirova, 2008, p. 482).

Parliament	Government Period and Prime Minister	Parties in Government and Seat Share in Parliament (%)	Parties in Opposition and Seat in Parliament (%)
Grand National Assembly (1990–1991)	1990 Lukanov (BSP) 1990–1991 Popov (IND)	BSP 211 (53) Caretaker	SDS 144 (36) MRF 23 (5.75) BZNS 16 (4)
36th National Assembly (1991–1994)	1991–1992 Dimitrov (SDS) 1992–1994 Berov (IND) 1994 Indjova (IND)	SDS 110 (46) DPS ¹¹⁵ 24 (10) DPS 24 (10) BSP 106 (44) Caretaker	BSP 106 (44) SDS 110 (46)
37th National Assembly (1994–1997)	1995–1997 Videnov (BSP) 1997 Sofianski (SDS)	BSP 125 (52) Caretaker	SDS 69 (28), BZNS–DP 18 (7.5), DPS 15 (6.3) BBB 13 (5.4)
38th National Assembly (1997–2001)	1997–2001 Kostov (SDS)	ODS 137 (57)	BSP 58 (24) DPS 19 (8) EvroLef 14 (5.8) BBB 12 (5)
39th National Assembly (2001–2005)	2001–2005 Sakskoburggotski (NDSV)	NDSV 120 (50) DPS 21 (8.75)	ODS 51 (21.25) BSP 48 (20)
40th National Assembly (2005–2009)	2005–2009 Stanishev (BSP)	BSP 82 (34) NDSV 53 (22) DPS 34 (14)	Ataka 21 (8.75) ODS 20 (8.3) DSB 17 (7) BNS 13 (5.4)

Table 10: Parliaments and Cabinets Formed in Bulgaria from the Beginning of the Democratization Process to European Union Membership, 1990-2007

Source: (Spirova, 2010, p. 410).

¹¹⁵ The MRF supported the UDF cabinet in parliament but did not take office in the government (Spirova, 2010, p. 410).

Note: In this table, it is observed that between 1990 and 1997, the governments remained in the administration for a short time and the power changed hands between the BSP and the UDF. Another important point is that the MRF, which represents the ethnic Turks, is observed inclusion in all governments and plays a stabilizing role in Bulgarian politics. Finally, it is observed that the governments formed between 1997 and 2009 were stable and completed their term of office until the end.

The loss of the first democratic elections by the democratic opposition UDF in Bulgaria was influenced by several crucial mistakes:

- Regarding the first mistake, the opposition accepted the elections to be held in June and acted hastily as a result (Желев, 2010, p. 344). The democratic opposition failed to properly identify itself in the periphery, resulting in the loss of this community due to the early elections.
- The villagers were not well-informed about the activities of the democratic opposition and its ideology, as the media was controlled by the communists. Objective reporting was lacking, making it difficult for them to comprehend the opposition's goals.
- UDF was established during the transition period of Bulgaria, and it was created as a party from the top down, thus in the beginning, did not have a high electorate (Kaldor & Vejvoda, 1997, p. 69).
- The UDF's lack of experienced political leaders was a significant factor in their loss of the first democratic elections for the GNA (Велико Народно Събрание) (Kaldor & Vejvoda, 1997, p. 69).
- The democratic opposition assumed that everything would change easily, quickly and much more smoothly in the days of accelerated political change (Димитров, 2020), so it put pressure on the existing communist government both at the Round Table Discussions and in the streets to hold the first democratic elections quickly. However, the failure of the opposition to win the first democratic elections led the opposition leaders to change their strategy.
- The opposition has acknowledged that communists still hold key positions in all state institutions, and that the administration is under their control. This has contributed to the Bulgarian Socialist Party's strong performance in the elections.
- According to Zhelyu Zhelev, the people in the last demonstrations before the election were divided into two groups: democrats and communists (Димитров, 2020). Zhelev acknowledges that this division was a tactic used by the communists

to weaken the opposition. This division has had a long-standing impact on Bulgarian politics, with political discussions and conflicts frequently arising between the two opposing sides.

- Another factor contributing to the loss of the first democratic elections was the lack of understanding of the democratic system by society¹¹⁶. The BSP won the multi-party election held for the first time after transition period. The opposition emerged in the last years of the communist era but failed to organize and create a politically conscious society. With the addition of rapidly and dynamically developing political changes, the democratic opposition entered the elections completely unprepared but with high expectations.

During the democratization process, the leaders of parties that had been prohibited by the communist system re-formed their parties. They warned the UDF multiple times and recommended holding the elections in the late 1990s based on their experience (Пенчо, 2014). They believe that extending the election period will help to spread awareness of democratization to a wider audience and that this will tire out the communists.

According to Zhelev, major mistake regarding the first democratic elections was that it was the election of the GNA and the enactment of the new constitution (Желев, 2010, p. 344). In other Central European countries that have undergone political transition (Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland), the first elections were held for the normal assembly and they generally entered the political, economic and social reform process after these elections (Желев, 2010, p. 345). In Bulgaria, on the contrary, due to the attempt to create a new constitution, the political and economic reforms that needed to be made were delayed and for this reason, Bulgaria experienced great crises, especially between 1992 and 1997.

The GNA commenced its activities following the elections in the summer of 1990, and the first democratic decision-making process began after the end of the communist regime. However, the failure of the democratic opposition to win the elections made the political process difficult.

¹¹⁶ The long-term living of the Bulgarian people in a communist totalitarian system caused difficulties in the formation of the democratic political culture, and the expected efficiency could not be achieved at the beginning of the democratization process. The salient features of the communist system were the formation of a strong state, intervention in the market and economy, and inequality in income and gender while imposing severe restrictions on political freedom (Fuchs-Schündeln & Schündeln, 2020, p. 189).

With the passing of the elections, there was deep discontent in the country because of the BSP's victory¹¹⁷. Protests have erupted nationwide, coinciding with the opposition's expression of dissatisfaction with the post-election situation.

Meanwhile, an old cassette was released to the media, which accelerated the uprisings in the country. The tape allegedly contained President Petar Mladenov's orders to suppress the protesters in front of the parliament by bringing the tanks in 1989. Following the release of this videotape, protests and demonstrations increased in the country, ultimately leading to Mladenov's resignation on June 6, 1990 (Crampton, 2005, p. 215).

While observing the events, Zhelyu Zhelev recognised that the changes would take a considerable amount of time. Thanks to his leadership skills, he promptly mobilised the people, and large demonstrations were organised to indicate that the elections would not be accepted. With the communists winning the elections on June 10, 1990, great protests started by the pro-democracy people in the country, tent cities were established, and civil disobedience emerged (Желев, 2010, p. 353). After the resignation of Mladenov¹¹⁸, Zhelyu Zhelev on 1 August of the same year was elected with a large majority of votes as the first democratic president of Bulgaria.

In September 1990, the newly formed constituent assembly approved Andrey Lukanov's Prime Ministership. Lukanov tried to establish a national coalition government with the cabinet, mostly consisting of the BSP. However, the UDF gave a rough response to the idea of a coalition and refused to take part in a government with the former communists. BANU¹¹⁹ and the MRF did not agree with the idea of a coalition. The formation of Andrey Lukanov's government failed to alleviate the complex situation and instead exacerbated the crisis.

The victory of the BSP in the elections posed a significant challenge to Bulgarian democracy, leading to civil disobedience, uprisings, and protests throughout the country. November 1990 Strikes and protests again were declared by the United Democratic Forces and the trade unions, and after this severe situation that lasted for

¹¹⁷ Both the opposition and pro-democracy groups were concerned because the former communists had won the election and would play a major role in drafting the new democratic constitution. Following the election, BSP gained even more power and became a legal representative, which was deemed unacceptable by the Democratic opposition. As a result, there were disruptions in the political process.

¹¹⁸ Petar Mladenov resigned due to the tape issue. This was seen as an important step towards democratization by supporters of democracy.

¹¹⁹ The Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (BANU) (Български земеделски народен съюз).

weeks, Lukanov and his cabinet were forced to resign. Following this resignation, a multi-party coalition government consisting of BSP, UDF, BANU and independents in the parliament was established under the leadership of Dimiter Popov¹²⁰ (a former independent judge). With the formation of the new government, the tension in the country began to decrease.

Communist rule ended with the establishment of the government of Dimiter Popov, and the era of democratic government began. It is commendable that UDF mobilized the people in the establishment of this government and carried out the process within a completely democratic framework. The Bulgarian democracy went through a process with ups and downs, and the reason for this was explained as the country's limited historical experience with democratic governance.

Party	1990	1991	1994	1997	2001	2005
BSP and Electoral Alliance	47.2	33.1	43.5	22.5	17.1	30.95
UDF and Alliance (ODS)	36.2	34.4	24.2	53.2	18.2	7.68
BANU	8.0	3.9	-	-	-	-
MRF	6.0	7.5	5.4	7.7	7.5	12.81
Bulgarian Business Block (BBB)		1.3	4.7	5.0	0.0	-
Popular Union (NS) of the Agrarian National Union (BZNS) and the Democratic Party (DP)			6.51	With ODS	With ODS	-
Bulgarian Euroleft (BEL)	-	-	-	5.6	1.0	1.25
NDSV	-	-	-	-	42.7	19.88
Ataka	-	-	-	-	-	8.14
Democrats for a Strong Bulgaria (DSB)	-	-	-	-	-	6.44
Bulgarian National Union Alliance (BNS)	-	-	-	-	-	5.19
New Time (NV)	-	-	-	-	-	2.95

Table 11: Parliamentary Elections in Bulgaria between 1990 and 2005

Source: (Spirova, 2008, p. 482).

Note: The table presents the following information: the parliamentary elections held between 1990 and 2005, along with a list of the parties that achieved a minimum of 4% of the vote and were thus eligible to enter the parliament. With the collapse of the communist system in Bulgaria and the transition to the multi-party period, the rate of political participation in the country has increased. With the transition to the multi-party era, many new parties were established until the 2000s, but the BSP, UDF and MRF took the biggest role in the main political scene. In the later period, this equation changed and new parties formed governments, such as the NDSV, the party created by the Simeon II.

¹²⁰ Dimiter Iliev Popov is a significant political figure in Bulgaria. He distanced himself from the communist party and became the first democratically elected Prime Minister after the resignation of Andrey Lukanov's government. Popov played a crucial role in the formation of the first democratic constitution and the organization of the first democratic general elections.

The multi-party elections of June 1990 were an indication of Bulgaria's transition to a pluralist political system and a sign of the establishment of democracy in the country. These elections were held with high participation which reached a rate of 90.79% of the people who have the right to vote. With the successful election of the constituent assembly, two important steps took place: firstly, the replacement of the communist constitution with the democratic one and secondly, the election of the national assembly followed. The following sections will discuss the amendment of the communist constitution and the creation of a democratic one.

Amending the Communist Constitution

Bulgaria has had four constitutions since gaining independence from the Ottoman Empire. The first, known as 'the Constitution of Tarnovo', was democratic and liberal in nature but was abolished by the communists after they came to power in the mid-1940s. The second and third constitutions were created during the communist era and had socialist-communist content. This section focuses on the formation process of the 4th democratic constitution, which underwent changes and additions at various points in time.

During the transition from a one-party communist system to a multi-party system in Central and Eastern Europe, it was necessary to redesign laws and state institutions, as well as amend the communist constitution (Ramet, 1996, p. 98). The democratic opposition in Bulgaria recognized the importance of that and prioritized the constitutional amendment at the outset of the democratization process, successfully achieving this goal in 1991.

At the start of the democratization process, the democratic opposition prioritised amending the constitution. As a result, Bulgaria became the first country among the CEE transition countries to adopt a democratic constitution. The new constitution laid a solid foundation for democracy in Bulgaria.

The question arises as to why most CEE transitional countries focused on political and economic reforms at the beginning of the transition period, while Bulgaria pursued the constitution-making process. The constitution from the communist era guaranteed the position and future of the BCP and granted it inviolable rights. As the leaders of the democratic opposition during the transition period were aware of the issue, they initially

sought to amend the constitution. This effectively separated the Bulgarian Communist Party from the previous system and initiated a stable process of democratization.

One of the most important decisions in the Round Table Discussions was the election of the Constituent Assembly and the creation of the new democratic constitution. After the elections of the GNA was the time to change the communist constitution with a new democratic one. The victory of the BSP in the elections to the GNA was a major factor in its influence on the sketching of the new constitution. As a result, objections were raised by the conservative wing of the UDF coalition, and new elections were proposed as a solution. After the demand was rejected, 39 members of the UDF initiated a hunger strike, and protests resumed nationwide (Chary, 2011, p. 162). Although there were an acrimonious debate¹²¹ between the communists and the democratic opposition in the newly elected Constituent Assembly, an agreement was finally preformed on the time and content of the constitution's amendment.

During the democratic constitutional process, there were numerous discussions between the communists and the democratic opposition, and a final conclusion was reached by a majority vote rather than by consensus among all the representative deputies. In the process of sketching the new constitution, the issue of minorities caused disagreement among the representatives and the term minority and their rights were not included in the constitution while individual rights were emphasised. This situation made the minority representatives uncomfortable and disagreements arose.

On 12 July 1991, Bulgaria's new democratic constitution was accepted with 309 affirmative votes and only 5 against, among the 400 deputies in the GNA, which then completed its task (Hain, 2016, p. 148, Tzvetkov, 1992, p. 475).

On 13 July 1991 Bulgaria enacted its new constitution (Hein, 2016, p. 146), which was accepted by the 7th Grand National Assembly. The democratic constitution laid the foundations for Bulgaria's political system. The newly created democratic constitution has incorporated a separation of powers, a fundamental aspect of liberal democracy. Its creation accelerated the democratization process and led to the establishment of functional legislative, executive, and administrative institutions. The new constitution states:

¹²¹ Initially, the democratic opposition disagreed due to the communists' overwhelming victory in the elections and their significant role in the formation of the democratic constitution. However, they later had to accept the situation.

“The nascent Bulgarian state was to be founded on the principles of democratic rule and the rule of law, with a clear separation of powers between the legislative, executive, and judiciary branches. The President of the Republic of Bulgaria was to be elected for a term of five years by direct popular vote. A constitutional court was to be established, and the legislative branch was to be a “subrange” of 240 representatives elected through proportional representation, with an electoral threshold of 4 percent of the national vote” (Crampton, 2005, p. 218).

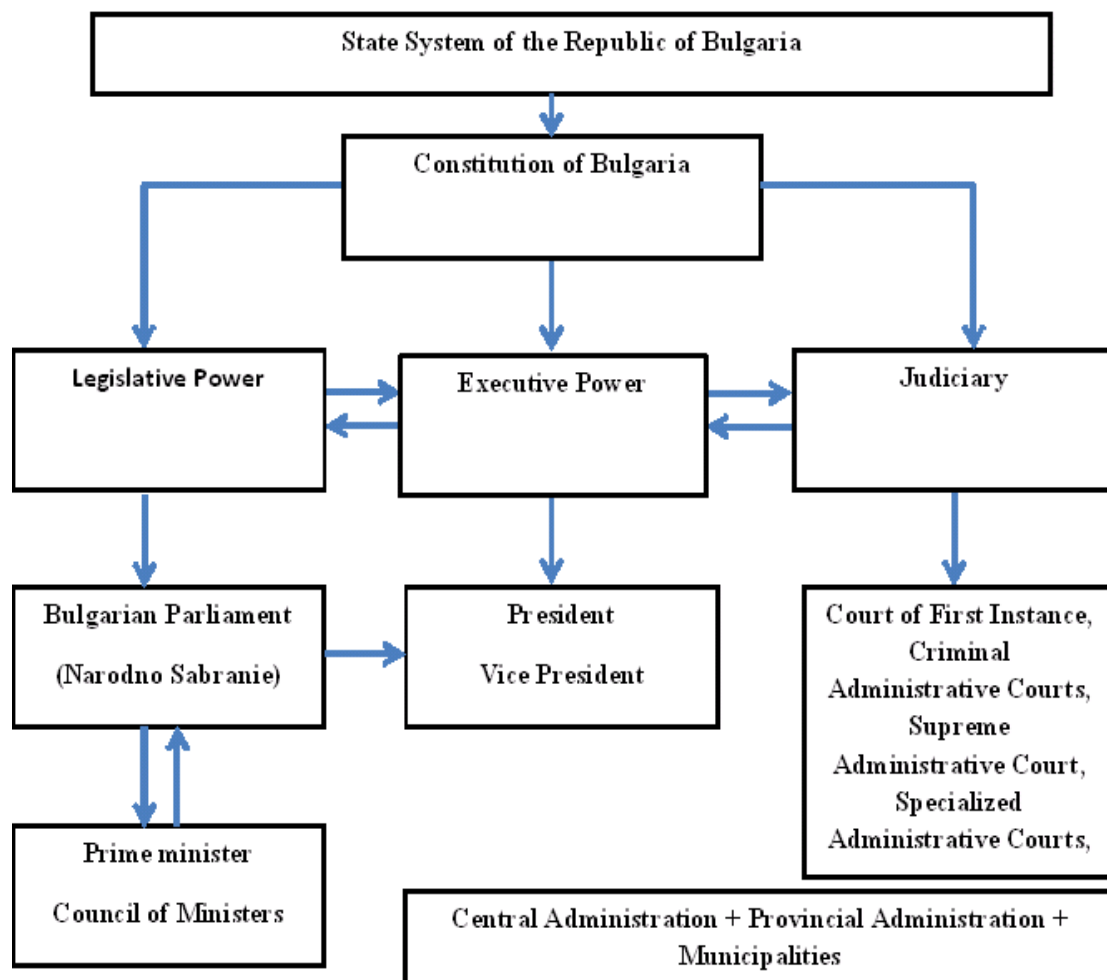


Figure 4: Constitutional Form of Government and Political Organization of the Republic of Bulgaria

Source: (Çaşkurlu, 2020, p. 333).

Note: According to the newly created democratic constitution, Bulgaria was transformed into a parliamentary republic, separation of powers was ensured in the country, a constitutional court was established and a multi-party competitive system was adopted.

The creation of a democratic constitution has been counted as a success of the democratisation process in Bulgaria (Hain, 2016, p. 146). The creation of the new democratic constitution and its contribution to the process as an internal factor was considered as:

- Following the ratification of the new Bulgarian constitution, the Constitutional Court has assumed a significant role as an arbitrator (Evans & Whitefield, 1995, p. 498).
- The constitution created and accepted in 1991, reflects the refusal of the political forces in the country to continue the path of socialist development (Peicheva, 2018, p. 58).
- The new Bulgarian Constitution guaranteed freedom of expression for all citizens (Raycheva, 2016, p. 164). The 1991 constitution also guaranteed the rights and freedoms of Bulgarian citizens, most of which were inspired by the “Tarnovo Constitution”, the first Bulgarian constitution (Smilov & Jileva, 2009, p. 220).
- According to the new constitution, all citizens are equal in front of the law. The constitution guarantees a multi-party system, and Bulgaria is now a parliamentary republic. Discrimination based on religion, race, or any other factor is prohibited. The rights and freedoms of the people are protected by law.
- With the creation of the new democratic constitution, the democratization process in Bulgaria proceeded within the constitutional framework. The Bulgarian constitution is considered one of the most successful steps of the transition period, as it firmly established democracy in the country.

During the period of constitution-making, there was a debate regarding whether Bulgaria should be a republic or a monarchy. This led to a desire to hold a referendum. Eventually, the name 'Democratic Republic of Bulgaria' was accepted by the GNA under the rule of law (Chary, 2011, p. 162).

After the constitution-making process in Bulgaria, the political elites demonstrated their commitment to the constitution by respecting it and attempting to solve political issues in accordance with it. This constitutional loyalty was primarily due to Bulgaria being governed by a long-term constitutional government (Dryzek & Holmes, 2004, p. 210, Dimitrov, Kabakchieva, and Kiossev, 1996).

Although there are various approaches to democratic constitutions, the Bulgarian parliament has accepted it as a result of reasonable concessions and a subsequent move towards progress in democracy. The democratic constitution ensured the irreversibility of the communist system and pioneered the creation of new democratic institutions. The Constitution is one of Bulgaria's most significant achievements after Todor Zhivkov's removal from power. The creation of a democratic constitution has been a key internal factor in the advancement of the democratic process in Bulgaria.

The democratic opposition's goal from the beginning was to create a new democratic constitution. Once the Constitution came into force, the first general democratic elections were held to establish the first democratic government. The following section will examine the first general democratic elections.

Bulgarian National Assembly Election, 13 October 1991

After the creation of the new democratic constitution, the GNA was dissolved and a regular assembly was formed. General parliamentary elections were held on October 13, 1991, with a high turnout of 83.9%. Unlike the GNA, the National Assembly has only 240 representative seats. The recent parliamentary elections were conducted using the proportional representation system instead of the mixed electoral system. The country was divided into 34 electoral zones, and the 4% threshold requirement was implemented. In these elections, as in previous ones, there was a high level of contestation, with 42 parties and coalitions participating.

Foreign observers, supported by the USA, as well as an expert sent by England and The Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly, closely monitored the elections. Observer delegates were also formed in Bulgaria. Great effort was made to ensure that the elections were held smoothly and in a democratic atmosphere. The parliamentary elections in Bulgaria were crucial for the country's democracy. Therefore, the democratic West has placed significant importance on them. Although Western observers were present during the elections for the Constituent Assembly, it is believed that the elections were fraudulent. This is why the UDF mobilised the public for the general elections. To prevent similar incidents during general parliamentary elections, the West has implemented more stringent measures.

The BSP entered by forming a coalition with different small parties, but expected success as in the first elections was not achieved. In the parliamentary elections, the

UDF received the most votes with 34.4% and won 110 seats. BSP and its coalition received 33.1% of the votes and deserved 106 seats. The third party that received high votes and entered the parliament was MRF which received 7.6% of the votes and 24 seats.

During the process of drafting the new constitution in 1991, the UDF experienced disagreements and significant divisions. Many important members of the UDF left the party and formed new parties¹²². The UDF contested the parliamentary elections independently and received a high number of votes despite being fragmented. As for the reason for getting high votes, UDF was seen as the only anti-communist party in the parliament. Despite being an old and well-established party, BANU¹²³ experienced internal divisions and failed to secure a parliamentary seat due to low voter support.

Party	Share of the vote (%)	Seats
UDF	34.4	110
BSP	33.1	106
MRF	7.6	24
Total	75.1	240
Parties that failed to pass the 4 per cent threshold for representation in parliament:		
Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (United)	3.9	
Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (Nikola Petkov)	3.5	
UDF (centrists)	3.2	
UDF (radical liberals)	2.8	
Kingdom of Bulgaria Party	1.8	
Business Bloc	1.3	
Others	7.5	
Total	23.8	

Table 12: Results of the Bulgarian National Assembly Elections on 13 October 1991

Source: (Bideleux & Jeffries, 2007, p. 99).

Note: The UDF, which lost the first democratic elections for the GNA, prepared itself for the next elections by learning from its mistakes and won the parliamentary elections held in 1991 and formed the first democratic government. However, this government did not last long because it coincided with a political and economic turbulent period.

Since the UDF and the BSP had almost equal seats in the parliamentary elections, two opposite poles were formed in the legislature. In order to form a government, the UDF

¹²² As a result of the disagreements within the UDF, the two new parties that were formed after leaving the party became the UDF (radical liberals) and the UDF (centrist).

¹²³ As a result of the disagreements within the BANU, the two new parties that were formed after leaving the party became the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (United) and the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (Nikola Petkov).

had to enter into a coalition with the MRF, which received the third-highest number of votes.

Filip Dimitrov¹²⁴, who was a young lawyer, took office in the 36th UDF coalition government when his mandate as Prime minister was approved by the national parliament. The BSP was kept out of the government and for the first time after a long period, a government without communist representatives was established.

During the Dimitrov government, the economic crisis and unemployment rate in the country increased. Investigations against ex-communists raised and many of them lost their positions. Due to the successive events¹²⁵, the discontent of both the MRF inside the government and the public outside in the streets caused Dimitrov's resignation on October 28, 1992. The UDF failed to make major reforms after it came to power by forming a coalition with the Movement for Rights and Freedoms. One of the main reasons for the failed reforms was that it remained in power for a short time between October 1991 and November 1992 (Daskalov, 1999, p. 204).

Following Dimitrov's resignation, the UDF and BCP were unable to form a government. As a result, a new government was established at the end of December 1992 under the Prime Minister Lyuben Berov¹²⁶, with the nomination of the MRF. Berov managed to stay in power for two years with the strong support of the BSP. Subsequently, the people fell into despair due to the failure of the first democratic governments, in the elections in December 1994; the Bulgarian Socialist Party came to power with a large majority of votes (Daskalov, 1999, p. 205).

Following the first general democratic elections in Bulgaria, stable governments could not be established for a certain period of time. The inability of the newly established governments to overcome the political and economic crises that the country faced resulted in a loss of trust within society. This was primarily due to political polarization, with the new governments alternating between UDF and BSP without reaching any compromise between the two poles. Although there are negative aspects,

¹²⁴ Filip Dimitrov is a Bulgarian politician who participated in the UDF. He served as the Prime Minister of the 36th government and was the first democratically elected Prime Minister.

¹²⁵ In contrast to other Central European countries, Bulgaria did not assume power directly by seizing control of the parliament during the transition period. Instead, the trial of communist officials was left to the newly established democratic government. However, while this government should have questioned the communist politicians and referred them to court, it was unable to do so due to the economic crisis. Consequently, the public and pro-democracy politicians were dissatisfied with this situation.

¹²⁶ Lyuben Berov is a prominent economist who served as Prime Minister of Bulgaria between 1992 and 1994.

the fact that the government changes hands¹²⁷ through elections is considered a positive development for strengthening the democratic order in the country.

The following section discusses the main parties formed during the democratisation period, the elections in which they participated and their performance during the period.

Re-formation of parties in Bulgaria

Political parties played a significant role in the democratization process of Bulgaria (Карасимеонов, 2006, p. 10). One of the most significant indications of the democratisation process and the cessation of the communist regime in Bulgaria was the transition to a multi-party system and the emergence of new political parties and organisations (Карасимеонов, 2006, p. 26).

Party System Indicators in Bulgaria						
Indicator	1990	1991	1994	1997	2001	2005
Number of participating parties	42	38	49	41	56	22
Number of effective parties in the system	2,75	4,197	3,88	2,89	4,54	5,8
Number of parties in parliament	6	3	5	5	4	8
The number of effective parties in the parliament	2,42	2,41	2,73	2,53	2,92	4,8

Table 13: Participation and Number of Political Parties in Bulgaria According to Parliamentary Election Years

Source: (Mandaci, 2020, p. 112).

Note: In this table, the number and achievements of the parties established with the transition to the multi-party system in the 1990s are summarized. This political participation also appears as an indicator of the development of democracy in Bulgaria.

A country can be considered democratic if parties with different ideological views participate in competitive elections and accept the results. The conviction of people, as members of certain parties, that political, social, and economic problems in a country can only be solved by democratically elected parties indicates the strengthening of democracy in that country.

This section will provide a broad analysis of the main parties that played a vital internal factor role in the democratization process of Bulgaria as an internal factor.

¹²⁷ Although short-term governments were established and the government changed hands between socialists and democrats during the process of establishing the democratic system, this change occurred through elections. During this process, no party considered remaining in the government or taking over the government by resorting to power. Despite Bulgaria's lack of democratic history, the fact that the parties struggle with democratic means is admirable and has been an important plus for Bulgarian democracy.

Under the half-century rule of the BCP, other political parties and formations were prohibited¹²⁸ from participating in political processes in the country. Bulgaria took part in the democratization process that followed the global collapse of the communist system. With the transition to a multi-party political system, the previously banned parties were re-formed. The opposition, which played a role in the collapse of the communist system in Bulgaria, seized the opportunity to transform into political parties and implement their thoughts and ideas in political life.

The main parties that played a significant role in the democratization process of Bulgaria are the following:

- The “Bulgarian Socialist Party”, which was an extension of the Bulgarian Communist Party
- The “Union of Democratic Forces” formed by the democratic opposition
- The “Movement for Rights and Freedoms Party”, which generally represented the Turkish minority

The Bulgarian Agrarian National Union BANU generally represented the peasantry and those engaged in agriculture. The party existed during the old communist regime and re-established itself, taking on important roles in the first years of the democratization process. However, it lost power in the following years. The following sections analyse the three main parties in the democratization period.

3.2.1.3. Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP)

During the 1980s, significant global changes occurred. The socialist bloc faced political, economic, and social crises and stalemates, while the Cold War dominated the agenda and course of the period. Consequently, the communist system in Bulgaria experienced a major crisis. However, what distinguishes Bulgaria from other CEE countries experiencing regime changes is the significant weight and influence of the Bulgarian Communist Party¹²⁹ in both the changes and the protection of the authoritarian regime (Иванов, 2019, p. 266).

¹²⁸ During the communist era, The Bulgarian Agrarian National Union BANU, an established political party representing peasants, participated in general elections, but the Bulgarian Communist Party consistently emerged victorious. BANU's involvement in the elections was an attempt to demonstrate that the country was not under a repressive regime.

¹²⁹ At that time, the number of members of the BCP comprised 10 % of the society and represented considerable power. Although the democratic opposition dominated the streets, a rapid transition to

To gain a better understanding of the democratization process, it is necessary to analyse the Bulgarian Communist Party. In the mid-1980s, party members with pro-democracy views emerged and participated in the democratic opposition that arose between 1988 and 1989. Despite the appearance of a unified communist party, it is evident that three distinct factions formed within its internal structures.

- The first group within the communist party was guided by Aleksander Lilov¹³⁰ and pursued a left reformist policy as a target tried to act in the direction of maintaining the socialist system and democratizing that system (Иванов, 2019, p. 267). But the “democratic socialism” led by Alexander Lilov failed because the pro-democracy opposition reacted sharply to this political view and acted to establish a pure democratic system. At the same time, the existence of factions within the Bulgarian Socialist Party caused this idea not to be realized.
- The second group clustered around Georgi Atanasov¹³¹ and generally favoured the continuation of the old system without any reformations and represented the conservative wing of the party (Иванов, 2019, p. 267). However, the events took place around the world and the political conjuncture disproved this idea from the very beginning and did not allow it to be implemented.
- The third group was guided by Andrey Lukanov¹³² and supported the reform of the socialist system and the transition to a capitalist economy, but it was in favour of keeping the power in the hands of the communist political elite at that time (Иванов, 2019, p. 267).

In an intra-party referendum held at the beginning of 1990, it was decided to change the name of the Bulgarian Communist Party to the Bulgarian Socialist¹³³ Party. The main

democracy was not experienced since the rural bureaucracy, important administrative staff of the state and rural areas were in the hands of the communist party. A certain amount of time and pro-democracy leaders were needed to resist such a power, but since there were groups with different ideas within the democratic opposition, it was not easy to stand against the communists in the first stage. This factor also prolonged the transition to democracy, which caused the communists to gain time.

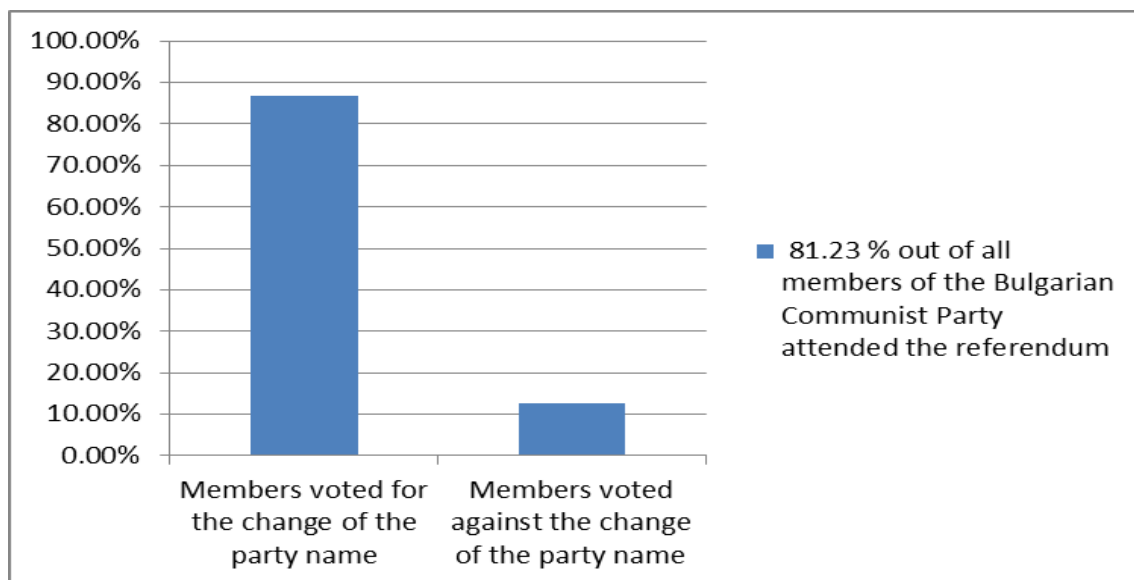
¹³⁰ Aleksander Lilov graduated from Bulgarian Philology and assumed the post of chairman of the first-term Bulgarian Socialist Party. He was involved in politics for a long time in the communist era and also served in important state positions.

¹³¹ Georgi Atanasov, who is a historian, has been involved in politics for a long time in the communist era between 1981 and 1989, pioneered the assimilation policies against the Turks in Bulgaria, and supported the removal of Todor Zhivkov from power (Иванов, 2019, p. 267).

¹³² Andrey Lukanov finished international relations in Moscow and was appointed as the minister of foreign relations and foreign trade in the 1960s during the communist regime in Bulgaria.

¹³³ The communists adopted a strategy of changing the name of their party, making it easier to integrate into the new political system. During the communist era, societal and minority oppression was primarily

reason name change decision was to expand the intra-Bulgarian and international connections (Първанов, 2021, p. 23).



Graph 1: Results of the Referendum for Rename the BCP to the BSP

Source: The graph is prepared by the researcher. The source of information is: (Първанов, 2021, p. 24).

In this referendum 726 000¹³⁴ people took part, which is 81.23 % of all members, 629 552 people voted for the new name, that is, 86.71 % of the participants and 91 973 people voted against, that is, 12.66 % of all participants (Първанов, 2021, p. 24). Upon examining the aforementioned figures, it becomes apparent that the Bulgarian Socialist Party holds significant influence, which explains its prolonged tenure in power. The BSP's fixed electoral cadre, mostly composed of elders and peasants, has also contributed to its survivability (Daskalov, 2018, p. 12).

The BSP is characterised by a well-organised and disciplined bureaucracy, both domestically and internationally, during Bulgaria's democratisation process (Daskalov, 2018, p. 13). The BSP officially came to power at the very beginning of the democratization process in the country and won the government in 1990-1991 and 1994-1997. Additionally, Bulgarian Socialist Party was the largest supporter of the interim government from 1991-1994 (Dolenec, 2016, p. 137). Socialists took part in

associated with Todor Zivkov, and secondarily with the BCP. The transformation of the BCP into the BSP was a strategy to distance themselves from their past.

¹³⁴ On January 1, 1990, the number of members of the BCP was 983 899 people. This figure reveals how much stronger was the communist party in early Bulgaria's democratization process than the Communist Parties in other CE countries. That's why the BSP won the first democratic elections and extended its stability to one year more.

different administrative positions in the country, both locally and nationally units, until 1997 (Dolenec, 2016, p. 137).

As for the basic policies of the BSP, it has been redefined as “Democratic Socialism” and “socially-oriented market economy” and these decisions were taken especially at the extraordinary congress of the Bulgarian Communist Party (Ekinci, 2018, p. 56). From the establishment of the BSP to the EU membership between 1990 and 2007, four leaders have changed. The table below shows the party leaders and the time they remained in the administration:

Name of the Politician	Length of stay at the Administration
Aleksandar Lilov	1990 – 1991
Zhan Videnov	1991 - 1996
Georgi Parvanov	1996- 2001
Sergey Stanishev	2001- 2014

Table 14: The leadership of the BCP from its founding in 1990 until it accedes to the European Union in 2007

Source: The table is prepared by the researcher. The source of information is: (24chasa, 2022)

Note: In this table, the heads of the BSP and the years of their presidency are indicated. BSP presidents were generally educated at universities in Russia and were generally pro-Russian foreign policy supporters.

One of the major successes of the BSP after winning the first democratic elections¹³⁵ for the GNA was the 1994 general elections. Even though the 1994 general elections had a very low turnout, the BSP won the majority. BSP had a high share of votes in the elections and deserved 125 seats in the parliament. In January 1995, Zhan Videnov¹³⁶ was tasked with forming the cabinet by President Zhelyu Zhelev (Mandaci, 2020, p. 78). In the table below, the course of the general elections held in 1994 and the gains of the parties are presented:

¹³⁵ The election of the Grand National Assembly has been thoroughly examined in the preceding sections.

¹³⁶ After Alexander Lilov, Zhan Videnov was the chairman of the BSP from 1991 to 1996. As one of the youngest politicians of the period, he assumed the duty of the Bulgarian prime minister. He was more in favour of reforming the old communist system and improving relations with Russia.

Party	Votes	% votes	Seats	% seats
The coalition of the Democratic Left	2,258,249	43.42	125	52.08
UDF	1,260,374	24.23	69	28.75
Popular Union	338,478	6.51	18	7.50
MRF	283,094	5.44	15	6.25
Bulgarian Business Bloc	244,695	4.70	13	5.42
Parties Below the 4 % National Threshold				
Democratic Alternative for The Republic	196,807	3.78		
Bulgarian Communist Party	78,370	1.51		
"New Choice"	77,641	1.49		
Coalition - Patriotic Alliance	74,350	1.42		
Coalition "Kingdom of Bulgaria"	73,096	1.41		
Others	316,228	6.09		
Total	5,201,382	100.00	240	100.00

Table 15: Results of the Bulgarian National Elections on 18 December 1994

Source: (Bell, 1997, p. 390).

Note: The BSP won the elections in 1994 and formed its own government. The society was not satisfied with the short-term governments established by the democratic opposition UDF and again supported the socialists. Although this seemed like a victory for the socialists, it later turned into a major defeat. During the Videnov government, the economic crisis deepened even more and became inextricable. However, early elections were held after the resignation of Prime Minister Zhan Videnov at the end of 1996, before the socialist government could complete its term of office.

After the elections, communists came to power under Zhan Videnov's Prime ministership. Since Zhan Videnov¹³⁷ was a follower of Alexander Lilov, he advocated more democratic socialism and was in favour of improving relations with Russia (Тодоров, 2019, p. 101). The Bulgarian Socialist Party pursued a policy of improving relations with Russia by opposing privatization and expressing hostility towards Bulgaria's membership in NATO.

Concerning the role played by the BSP in Bulgaria's transition to democracy, it is evident that the party played a significant role in this process.

- Following the renaming of the BCP as the BSP, the party played a pivotal role in Bulgaria's transition to democracy by abstaining from advocating for the immediate reform of the communist regime during the roundtable discussions.

¹³⁷ Zhan Videnov was compelled to resign due to mounting public pressure, largely as a result of his inability to effectively address the economic crisis that Bulgaria faced during the winter of 1996. The government established by the Democrats, who succeeded him, completed its term for the first time, marking a positive shift in Bulgaria's democratic trajectory.

- This concession, which effectively negated the previous party's stance, not only secured the party's place in the nascent democratic system but also represented a significant gain for the party.
- Furthermore, the BCP's abandonment of the pursuit of reforming the existing regime and its endorsement of the transition to democracy had a pivotal influence on Bulgaria's seamless transition.

Under the leadership of Georgi Parvanov (1996–2001) and especially Sergei Stanishev¹³⁸ (2001–14), the BSP began to move toward West European social democracy (Ganev, 2018, p. 95). During the presidency of Georgi Prvanov¹³⁹, major changes were observed in the policy of the BSP. Bulgaria became a full member of NATO in 2004 and joined the EU on 1 January 2007, during the prime ministerial term of Stanishev, following the policy of intensified membership of the EU and NATO.

3.2.1.4. The Union of Democratic Forces (UDF)

Following significant political changes in Bulgaria in 1989, the communist system began to collapse. The climax of the transition period towards party pluralism in Bulgaria was the establishment of the Union of Democratic Forces as a coalition of different factions struggling for a democratic system (Карасимеонов, 2006, p. 27). Although the Bulgarian Communist Party still maintained its position, the anti-communist opposition that started to emerge led the big street demonstrations in the country and began to be effective in accelerating the changes. Since the opposition was gathered under different dissident organizations and acted dispersedly during that period, its effect was limited. Short-term meetings were held between the leaders of different opposition and dissident groups to unite and stand up against the communist regime, along with the final decision was taken to be established one democratic front (Желев, 2010, p. 259). With the gathering of different pro-democracy opposition groups under one roof, the first organized democratic opposition on 7 December 1989 “The Union of Democratic Forces” was formed (Желев, 2010, p. 239).

¹³⁸ He was the 48th Prime Minister of Bulgaria and the General Chairman of the BSP after Georgi Prvanov.

¹³⁹ Георги Седефчов Първанов (Georgi Prvanov) was born on June 28, 1957, graduated from Sofia University, department of history and completed his doctorate in the same field. In 1996, he was elected as the general chairman of the BSP. He won both the presidential elections held at the end of 2001 and the elections in 2006, and he was the president of Bulgaria until 2012 (Omda. bg, 2018).

Under the umbrella of the UDF that emerged after Todor Zhivkov's overthrow on 10 November 1989, many unofficial associations and re-formed traditional parties gathered and united around the keyword “democracy” (Иванов, 2019, p. 275). The main goal of the opposition was to dismantle the totalitarian communist regime and replace it with a new state system that complies with the principles of democracy. Owing to that the opposition did not support the reformist approaches of the Bulgarian Communist Party (Иванов, 2019, p. 275).

With the start of the democratization process in Bulgaria, the most outstanding party has been the UDF According to Fish and Brooks the UDF: “was not only the strongest party in Bulgaria; but it was arguably the mightiest right-centre party in post-communist Europe” (Fish & Brooks, 2000, p. 64).

Since the UDF was a combination of many different factions, there have been conflicts between the leaders in many political decisions. Although these leaders struggled for democracy, some of them continued their left-oriented views and thoughts, and some of them displayed as a careerist and opportunists. For that reason, splits took place within the democratic coalition (Daskalov, 2018, p. 14-15). In the election time, UDF voters had different reasons for supporting the party. Some were pro-democracy, while others were anti-communist. During the vote for the new constitution¹⁴⁰, 39 deputies left the parliament, leaving the UDF in a difficult situation due to their lack of control over their members (Daskalov, 2018, p. 15). The situation caused the party to weaken against the ex-communists.

The UDF was led by a National Coordination Council under the leadership of Zhelyu Zhelev, and its members were leaders of the reconstituted old parties and some democratic opposition activists (Желев, 2010, p. 369).

¹⁴⁰ The inaugural elections for the Bulgarian Constituent Assembly were held, with the communist party emerging as the victor. Given the dominance of communists in the constitution-making process, some politicians from the UDF opposed the outcome. As the process of constitution-making continued, these politicians ultimately left the UDF.

№	Party and Associations established UDF
1.	the Club for Support of Publicity and Reconstruction
2.	the Independent Association "Ecoglasnost"
3.	the Confederation of Labor "Support"
4.	the Independent Society for the Protection of Human Rights
5.	the Committee for the Protection of Religious Rights
6.	Freedom of Conscience and Spiritual Values
7.	Club of the Illegally Repressed after 1945
8.	Independent Student Association
9.	Civic Initiative Movement
10.	Bulgarian Social Democratic Party
11.	Agrarian Union - Nikola Petkov
12.	the Radical Democratic Party
13.	the Green Party joined the union
14.	Democratic Party
15.	New Social Democratic Party
16.	United Democratic Center
17.	Democratic Front

Table 16: Associations, civil society groups and parties united under the umbrella of the UDF

Source: The table is prepared by the researcher. The source of information is: Omda. bg (2018). The Union of the Democratic Forces (Съюз на демократичните сили /СДС/). Retrieved 8 March, 2022, from <http://www.omda.bg/public/bulg/news/party/sds.htm> (Omda. bg, 2018).

Note: The anti-communist opposition in Bulgaria started to form two years before the beginning of the transitional period. The opposition was made up of very different factions and different groups and united under the name of the UDF. The fact that the opposition was composed of such different groups affected the next political steps, and there was no consensus within the group, and over time, splits emerged from the party. Despite this, the contribution of UDF in the democratization process of Bulgaria should not be ignored. If there was a bloodless transition in Bulgaria, the balanced steps of UDF in the turbulent period can be counted as one of the reasons for that.

The UDF lost the first democratic elections for GNA, and in the process of making a democratic constitution, conflicts occurred within the coalition. Between 1991 and 1996, various groups and parties left the UDF coalition to form new parties.

In mid-1996 Bulgaria faced a major economic and financial crisis and Zhan Videnov, the Prime minister from BSP of the time, resigned on 21 December (Kormusheva, 2003, p. 436). The Bulgarian Socialist Party has decided to establish a single-party government again. Meanwhile, the UDF have united all opposition towards the BSP and have joined the protests alongside other labour unions and student marches (Kormusheva, 2003, p. 436). After a month of marches and protests, the government was dissolved and it was scheduled to hold early general elections.

On April 19, 1997, the fourth parliamentary election took place after the collapse of the Bulgarian totalitarian system (Crampton, 1997, p. 560). Before elections on January 19, 1997, Petar Stojanov¹⁴¹ from UDF was elected as the second president of Bulgaria in the democratization period, replacing Zhelyu Zhelev (Otfinoski, 2004, p. 37).

Party Name	Distribution of Votes	Seats
the UDF (ODS)	52.3	137
The Democratic Left (DL)	22.1	58
The Union for National Salvation (ONS)	7.6	19
The Euro-Left Coalition (KE)	5.5	14
The Bulgarian Business Bloc (BBB)	4.9	12
Parties Below the 4 % National Threshold	7,6	
The BCP (BKP)		
The Union for the Monarchy (OTs)		
The Liberal Forum (F)		
Total	100	240

Table 17: Results of the Bulgarian National Assembly Elections on April 19, 1997

Source: (Crampton, 1997, p. 562).

Note: The 1997 parliamentary elections went down in history as one of the turning points for Bulgaria in terms of the democratization process. For the first time, a strong democratic opposition government was established in Bulgaria, which had been struggling with political and economic turmoil for a long time. Under Ivan Kostov's prime ministership, this government accomplished great things and played an important role in the opening of Bulgaria's path to NATO and European Union membership. During this period of UDF, steps were taken toward political and economic stability inside the country.

Before the 1997 elections, major changes were made in the UDF under the management of Ivan Kostov¹⁴². In order to get the votes of young people, studies have been started for them and clubs have been established in different fields (Fish & Brooks, 2000, p. 64). With the intention to unite the opponents of the BSP, the United Democratic Forces coalition (ODS) was formed as an ancestor of the UDF.

The United Democratic Forces (ODS) won the 1997 parliamentary elections. 2 223 714 people voted for UDF, which corresponds to a rate of 52.26 per cent (Спасов, 2004, p. 245). The UDF won 137 seats in the parliament and increased its votes to 963 340 people after the 1994 elections (Спасов, 2004, p. 245). As for the communists, they suffered a great defeat and lost 1 323 635 votes compared to the 1994 elections. The BSP won only 58 seats in parliament in these elections.

¹⁴¹ Petar Stefanov Stojanov served as the President of Bulgaria from 1997 to 2002. He succeeded Zhelyu Zhelevin and became the second democratically elected president of Bulgaria.

¹⁴² During Bulgaria's transition to democracy, Ivan Kostov joined the UDF. He served as the 47th Prime Minister of Bulgaria from 1997 to 2001.

One of the most significant challenges that Bulgaria has faced in the transition from a totalitarian regime to a democratic system has been the privatization process. This process started when the UDF passed the restitution law in 1991 in the parliament, and the restitution process continued from 1992 to 1997 (Houbenova-Delissivkova, 1998, p. 73). The restitution process included the return of the lands taken from the people during the communist era to their real owners. In 1991, related to the privatization program, the Land Act was passed in the parliament. The Land Act was tried to be banned by the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), which came to power in 1994, for the sake of establishing agricultural cooperation as a target, but they could not succeed (Houbenova-Delissivkova, 1998, p. 74).

The Ivan Kostov government, formed by the UDF that came to power in 1997, accelerated the privatization process and a successful way was covered in that government period. The privatization process has been a significant for the democratization process in Bulgaria for leaving the central planning economic system and integrating into the open market economy. However, the communists' staying in power for a long time interrupted the privatization process at certain intervals. Nevertheless, when the UDF government consolidated its power in 1997, success was achieved in the privatization.

3.2.1.5. Movement of Rights and Freedoms (MRF)

With the transition of Bulgaria to the democracy, the previously banned parties came to life again, and new parties began to be formed. The democratic constitution, which was established following the abolition of the communist one, prohibits the formation of political parties based on ethnicity, religion, or minority status.

“The Constitution stipulates that there shall be no political parties on ethnic, racial or religious lines, nor shall there be any parties which seek the violent seizure of state power. This is set out in Article 11 (4).” (Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, 1991, Art. 11 and 44, Stefanova, 2012, p. 772).

Despite the article in the constitution, parties were formed whose leaders were predominantly Turks and whose electors were from the Turkish minority group. Some of these parties were in existence for a relatively brief period, while others have continued to operate since their inception. The party Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) is one of them and has been in existence since democratic transition.

The Movement for Rights and Freedoms is a party founded on January 4, 1990, a few months after the removal of Todor Zhivkov from power. The establishment of the MRF straightaway in short time has been an indication that the Turks in Bulgaria organized quickly and entered politics successfully.

During a meeting of the BCP in 1989, Andrey Lukanov discussed the pros and cons of creating a political party¹⁴³ to represent the Turkish minority group in Bulgaria. He emphasized that the democratic West had such a will; otherwise, Bulgaria would not be able to be recognized by the West (Янов, 2009, p. 124). Subsequently, the communists decided to allow the Turks to establish a political party. This would enable the Turks to obtain their rights through peaceful means, represented by leaders in parliament, rather than resorting to violence and demanding autonomy.

After the establishment of the MRF, they applied for registration as a political party. This move received a strong reaction from both nationalists and communists in parliament, who attempted to deny the party's legitimacy by accusing it of being an ethnic and religious organisation (Eminov, 1999, p. 6). On October 8, 1991, 93 members of the Bulgarian GNA (almost all belonged to the BCP), asked the newly formed Constitutional Court to declare unconstitutionally the MRF because according to them the party was an ethnically Turkish party (Ganev, 2004, p. 66). However, the desired decision was not accepted.

The MRF played an important role in the democratization process by participating in the elections for the Grand National Assembly and other parliamentary elections. Ahmed Doğan¹⁴⁴ has been appointed as the leader of the party. As MRF represented the Turks in Bulgaria during the first post-communist era, it generally had fixed and stable voters, which secured its place in parliament in the long term (Daskalov, 1999, p. 205). The involvement of ethnic groups and minorities in politics has been a significant achievement for Bulgaria in terms of strengthening democracy and meeting European Union standards (Stefanova, 2012, p. 767). Since its establishment in 1990, the “MRF

¹⁴³ The reason for the discussion within the BCP was considered preferable for the Turks to pursue legal avenues, namely through the party in parliament, rather than resorting to force to reclaim the rights they had lost as a consequence of the assimilation process implemented by the Communist system.

¹⁴⁴ Born on May 29, 1954, Ahmet Doğan graduated from Sofia University, Department of Philosophy. Doğan, who was imprisoned before “the Democratic Revolution” in Bulgaria, played a role in the organization of the Turks who were fighting for their rights. At the beginning of 1990, he founded the MRF Party and was elected as the general president (Omda. bg, 2018).

has served as a crucial element in structuring the factors that make ethnic peace possible in Bulgaria” (Ganev, 2018, p. 94).

In the transition period, the MRF took part in different government coalitions and became a balancing element between the communists and the democratic opposition (Stefanova, 2012, p. 768). In the first democratic election on 10 and 17 June 1990, two-round elections for the GNA, the MRF gained 23 deputies in the parliament. During the formation of the first democratic constitution, the MRF emphasised their commitment to politics based on liberal norms such as equality and tolerance, rather than ethnicity or religion (Ekinci, 2018, p. 82).

In the general parliamentary elections in 1991, MRF received 7.6 % of the votes and was able to get 24 deputies. In 1992, the MRF, which was a partner in the government, withdrew its support and in this way, the first democratic government in the post-communist era collapsed. Subsequently, neither the UDF nor the BSP could form a government, this time the MRF again nominated a candidate and a new government was established by Lyuben Berov¹⁴⁵ (Eminov, 1999, p. 7).

In the 1997 general elections, the MRF formed the “Alliance for National Salvation” coalition with the monarchist parties and some groups that left the Union of Democratic Forces and was able to exceed the 4 per cent threshold (Daskalov, 2018, p. 16). “Since its inception in 1990, the MRF has consistently fulfilled the role of a coalition mediator and behind-the-scenes operator” (Dedominicis, 2011, p. 448).

With the beginning of the democratization process, only the MRF survived as a representative of the minorities and continued to play a key role in Bulgaria's political life, and the role was seen clearly in the period of Bulgaria's NATO membership and integration into the European Union.

With the establishment of the MRF, the Turkish minority group in Bulgaria got successfully involved in politics, which prevented future ethnic conflicts and Turks tended to obtain their political rights in the parliament. At the same time, an ethnic conflict was prevented in Bulgaria and the country managed an efficacious democratization process. The establishment of MRF and its auspicious management of

¹⁴⁵ Lyuben Berov was born on October 6, 1925, in Sofia. He graduated from the department of economics at Sofia University and became a professor in 1971. Berov was the economic advisor to Zhelyu Zhelev, the first democratic president of Bulgaria. He served as the prime minister between 1992 and 1994 (Omda. bg, 2018).

the process appear as an important internal factor in the democratization process of Bulgaria.

The establishment of political parties, such as the MRF, has facilitated the integration of Turkish society into politics. The party's participation in various governments has also allowed for the integration of ethnic groups, particularly the Turks, in the democratization process. Considering the Balkan countries, the absence of such an internal factor in the disintegration of Yugoslavia, in particular, caused ethnic and civil wars to arise, and war crimes were committed, including genocide. In this regard, it was observed that Bulgaria followed a successful soft transition to democracy after the end of the old communist regime.

3.3. Conclusion

Although Bulgaria's political history has seen governments change hands through bloody coups, such a situation was not observed during the transition from the communist system to democracy. The elites negotiated the transition, acting rationally and taking national unity into consideration, resulting in a peaceful regime change. The change of regime in Bulgaria, resulting from negotiations between elites with opposing ideas and ideologies, is in line with the “Replacement” method of transition to democracy proposed by Huntington.

Following negotiations between the relevant elites, both sides made certain concessions, leading to an important agreement. As a result of the bargaining, the BSP, which was an extension of the BCP, retained its place in Bulgarian politics. This was a concession made by the UDF. However, BSP's decision to abandon attempts to reform the communist system and agree to a complete transition to a democratic system was a concession made by the party.

Bulgaria underwent a transition to democracy through a political pact among the elites. This transition yielded positive results, with the prompt establishment of democratic institutions and implementation of democratic practices in the country.

The Bulgarian democratization process was driven by a model of elite bargaining, in addition to internal factors such as elections and the new democratic constitution.

To conclude, the round table negotiations played a crucial role in Bulgaria's transition from a communist to a democratic system, facilitating a peaceful change. During The

Round Table meetings, representatives from the communist regime and the democratic opposition engaged in face-to-face discussions regarding Bulgaria's political future. The successful transition in Bulgaria was due to calm agreements made by the elites of the two opposing sides, rather than the result of long historical developments. It is crucial to highlight that the elite played a pivotal role and served as a guiding force. In other words, the actors worked together to achieve the success of the regime change, despite having different opinions. The fact that the elites were responsible for managing the process and that Bulgaria's transition from the communist system to democracy occurred as a result of the pact between the communist and democratic elites is entirely consistent with the Transition theory.

The decision to change the system through elections rather than by using force was considered a significant success for democracy in Bulgaria. Holding democratic elections and subsequently replacing the communist constitution with a democratic constitution established a solid foundation for democracy in Bulgaria. During the transition to democracy, actors such as the BSP, the UDF, and the MRF played an active role in the process. The trend towards democracy in Bulgaria began with external factors, but internal factors also contributed to its positive direction. While important developments were rapidly taking place, two external factors emerged that affected Bulgaria's democratization process: NATO and the EU. NATO and the EU have an impact on countries seeking membership. They have also influenced the establishment of Bulgaria's democratic system.

During the communist period, Bulgaria maintained close relations with the Soviet Union and pursued a Eurasian policy. However, with the establishment of a democratic system in the country, it shifted towards a Euro-Atlantic orientation and prioritised NATO and EU membership. Bulgaria has fulfilled the conditions for membership on its way to becoming a member of NATO and the EU. As a result of the fulfilment of the membership requirements of both organisations, the democratic situation in the country has automatically been strengthened. The process of becoming a member of NATO and the EU has been a long one and has passed through several stages.

In the next chapter, the democratic transition in Bulgaria is described through the prism of Bulgaria's path to membership in NATO and the EU.

CHAPTER 4: BULGARIA'S DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS- THE ROAD TO THE NATO AND EUROPEAN UNION 2001- 2007

4.1. The Role of the NATO and European Union as an External Factors in the Democratization Process of Bulgaria

Bulgaria has undergone various challenges and successes in its path towards democratization since 1989. However, since the 2000s, a more stable balance in domestic politics has been achieved. Between 2001 and 2007, Bulgaria entered a new period, that of consolidation of democracy. The liberal wing's establishment of the government in 2001 has led to significant progress towards NATO and EU membership. The democratization process has set the Euro-Atlantic road as its target. This section presents the dominance of liberals in Bulgaria's domestic politics and the path towards NATO and EU membership.

Two significant external factors influenced the consolidation of democracy in Bulgaria: NATO and the European Union. Given that Bulgaria lacks a democratic tradition, its membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) has addressed two key deficiencies. Firstly, it has provided a means of safeguarding the country's nascent democracy. Secondly, it has facilitated the consolidation and deepening of democratic processes.

The conclusion of the Cold War resulted in an unparalleled geopolitical situation in Europe, which jeopardised the continent's security and integration (Popova, 2020, p. 80). In addressing this geopolitical issue, the primary objective was to integrate the Central and Eastern European countries, transitioning from communism to democracy, into NATO and the European Union. This integration was a significant factor in the evolution of these countries (Popova, 2020, p. 79). While the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has played a role in securing the democracies of its member countries, the European Union (EU) has contributed to political integration and the strengthening of democracies.

At the end of the 1980s, the Cold War ended, resulting in a shift in the balance of power. The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact led to the democratization of communist systems in Central and Eastern Europe. Despite the rapid

political changes taking place, NATO and the European Community acted to fill the void left by the Soviet Union.

NATO's establishment and enlargement strategy is essentially based on the argument: “a necessary form of American commitment to the defence of Europe” (Тодоров, 2021, p. 102). The Central and Eastern European countries that gained independence from communist regimes quickly applied for NATO membership to protect their national security and democratization process.

In 1990, NATO initiated the Partnership for Peace program for the CEE countries that declared their independence from the collapsing USSR and formed the North Atlantic Cooperation Council. These initiatives were considered as attempts to peacefully integrate the newly independent CEE countries from the influence of the USSR into NATO through political and military cooperation.

To ensure the continuation of the democratization process in Bulgaria, it was necessary to prioritize security, which was realised through NATO membership. From a NATO perspective, Bulgaria's membership was an important opportunity to protect Europe's eastern borders¹⁴⁶ and the Black Sea region¹⁴⁷.

The primary focus of this chapter is on the implications of Bulgaria's membership in both the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU) for the country's democracy. Additionally, the chapter examines the influence of two external factors on Bulgaria's democratic development. The initial discussion focused on the implications of Bulgaria's NATO membership, with particular attention paid to its potential impact on the country's future EU membership and the state of democracy within Bulgaria. Subsequently, the implications of Bulgaria's EU membership process for the country's democracy were considered. Firstly, the impact of Bulgaria's NATO membership on the country's democracy will be evaluated, with particular attention paid to the role of NATO as an external factor.

¹⁴⁶ As for the other crucial issue, the territory of Bulgaria has turned into a logistic piece of land for NATO to open towards the Middle East (Rozoff, 2010) and American bases have been established there.

¹⁴⁷ Bulgaria was under Russian influence for an extended period, resulting in a strong bond between the two countries. However, with the collapse of the USSR, Russia's influence decreased. As Russia dealt with its internal problems, its ability to influence other countries was further weakened by economic and political crises. Nevertheless, in the 2000s, Russia regained its strength. In response to this situation, NATO expedited its policy of integrating CEE countries that were formerly under communist rule. Bulgaria's strategic location was a factor in its accelerated accession to NATO, which aimed to limit Russia's influence in the region.

4.2. The role of NATO as an External Factor and the implications of Bulgaria's NATO Membership Process.

Professor Ivan Batakliiev¹⁴⁸(1937) argued that Bulgaria's geographical position plays a crucial role in its development and existence. While this provides advantages, it also brings dangers, which form the basis of the strength and weakness of the Bulgarian state (Mihaylov, 2013). Following the end of the Second World War, Bulgaria fell under the geographical sphere of influence of the Soviet Union. It later joined the Warsaw Pact. The Warsaw Pact was created for strategic action and mutual defence among communist countries. Bulgaria has invested significantly in its military and has developed a strong military capacity through the acquisition of weapons from the Soviet Union. The Bulgarian military was ideologically aligned with communism and acted in the interests of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe.

In the final years of the 20th century, Bulgaria underwent a transition from an oppressive communist regime to a democratic system. During this period, the country attempted to implement a novel foreign policy, accompanied by shifts in its domestic politics. In replacing the institutions of the communist system with democratic ones in domestic politics, the country severed its ties with the USSR and the Warsaw Pact. It began to pursue a policy oriented towards NATO and EU membership.

Zhelyu Zhelev, the first president of the democratization period and the chairman of the UDF, had a clear orientation towards NATO and the EU. He also pursued a policy of fostering good relations with neighbouring countries. Bulgaria's two neighbours, Turkey and Greece, have been long-term members of NATO. It was hoped that improving relations with them would facilitate Bulgaria's path to NATO membership. However, Bulgaria's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact left the country with a security gap. The only viable solution for Bulgaria, which was striving towards democracy, was to become a member of NATO. The process was delayed by the continuing communist influence in the country. However, the changing domestic political balance later accelerated the steps towards membership. "Zhelev made several visits¹⁴⁹ to the West,

¹⁴⁸ Ivan Batakliiev is a Bulgarian historian and geographer.

¹⁴⁹ After a long period of communist rule, Bulgaria sought to improve its relations with Western democracies through Zhelev's visits. The assimilation process applied to minorities in Bulgaria during the communist period had a negative impact on the country's international image. The visits also helped to correct this bad image.

including Western Europe, the United States and Japan in 1990-91 to demonstrate the country's reorientation away from Moscow” (Tashev, 2004, p. 4).

During his visits, Zhelev, who was on a mission to establish good relations with Western states, sought support for the democratisation process that was taking place in Bulgaria after the collapse of the communist system. However, contrary to the new president's Western orientation, the Bulgarian Socialist Party opposed this plan¹⁵⁰ and strategy, especially the intention to join NATO, and sought to protect Bulgaria's national unity, emphasising that this would be done by continuing political ties and relations with Russia.

The Bulgarian Socialist Party¹⁵¹ did not show a favourable attitude to Bulgaria's integration into NATO. For this reason, the relationship with NATO did not develop in a progressive manner at the beginning of the 1990s¹⁵².

Due to Bulgaria's historical military ties with the USSR and its communist ideology, significant military reforms were necessary prior to joining NATO. These reforms included replacing Soviet armaments with Western weapons and equipment, reducing the number of soldiers, and providing NATO-oriented training for military command staff. The reforms necessary for the Bulgarian accession to NATO in 1991 were not implemented because of opposition from politicians in parliament and military officials¹⁵³ (Бачков et al, 2020, p. 275).

The UDF won the parliamentary elections in 1991 and was able to establish a coalition government with the MRF. The establishment of a democratic government meant the

¹⁵⁰ During the initial years of the democratization process in Bulgaria, short-term governments were established. Due to ideological differences and debates between the parties, a stable orientation towards NATO and the EU was not possible.

¹⁵¹ Following the collapse of the communist system, the BCP underwent a significant internal transformation. This was spearheaded by the pro-reform wing, which led to the renaming of the party as the BSP. The BSP went on to win the first democratic elections and maintain its influence in Bulgarian foreign policy.

¹⁵² Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the declaration of independence by the Russian Federation in 1991, Bulgaria recognised this independence and decided to maintain its political relations with Russia. During this period, debates between the BSP and the opposition in the Bulgarian parliament centred on the choice between aligning with the East or the West. Although the communists attempted to maintain strong relations with Russia, the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia's internal political and economic crises, and the democratic opposition's strong pressure led to a growing interest in orienting towards the West.

¹⁵³ During the period of transition to democracy in Bulgaria, the Bulgarian military and communist party officials adopted a pro-Russian stance, which resulted in a prolonged NATO membership process. However, following the formation of a democratic government, significant reforms were implemented within the military, and the Bulgarian state participated in NATO missions, thereby accelerating the NATO membership process.

improvement of relations with the democratic West and its organisations NATO and EU. In this period, political steps on the way to NATO membership accelerated.

Although NATO relations have been running slowly, in 1994 Bulgaria joined NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) program. The purpose of the program was to prepare individually the countries that are on the NATO and Euro-Atlantic membership path. As for NATO's next plan: "The NATO Enlargement Study, published in September 1995, placed a strong emphasis on the democratisation of candidate countries, the protection of individual freedoms, human and minority rights, and the pursuit of legitimacy" (Jeffrey, 1998). The implementation of a democratic system was emphasized as a prerequisite for a country's membership in NATO and Euro-Atlantic institutions. It was also reiterated that NATO assumes the role of defending the democratic system.

In 1994, the Bulgarian Socialist Party's re-election and rise to power caused a significant setback in NATO relations¹⁵⁴. As a result, Bulgaria decided to withdraw from the talks on NATO integration (Jeffrey, 1998, p. 94), and agreements were made with Russia for the purchase of new military equipment (Gallagher, 2004, p. 6). The years between 1990 and 1997 were determined as the seven lost years¹⁵⁵ in Bulgaria's NATO integration (Jeffrey, 1998, p. 94).

UDF Period Bulgaria NATO Relations

In 1996, the United Democratic Forces (UtdDF)¹⁵⁶ coalition was formed, comprising the UDF, the Bulgarian Social Democratic Party (BSDP), and the People's Union (PU) party. The coalition came to power under Prime Minister Ivan Kostov after the general elections held on 19 April 1997 (Harper, 2003, p. 336). Ivan Kostov had a background in economics and took significant steps to get Bulgaria out of the crisis and signed new agreements with the IMF.

¹⁵⁴ While the Bulgarian Socialist Party was in favour of European Union membership, it was opposed to NATO membership. The rationale behind this stance was to establish and maintain good relations with Russia.

¹⁵⁵ The transfer of power between the Bulgarian communist and democratic governments resulted in alterations in domestic and foreign policies. During the democratic government's tenure, there was a growing inclination towards integration with the EU and NATO. Conversely, when the communists took over, there was a shift towards closer ties with Russia. As a result of changes in government policy, integration into NATO and the EU has been delayed for some time.

¹⁵⁶ The Union of Democratic Forces (UtdDF), formed by eleven different political groups, adopted a completely anti-BSP stance and set a target for membership in Euro Atlantic institutions such as NATO and the EU as a political orientation. The UtdDF established a coalition government by showing outstanding success in the elections in 1997.

Following the victory of the United Democratic Forces (UtdDF) in the 1997 elections, internal democratic changes gained momentum, as did developments in the country's western-oriented foreign policy. With the new government, foreign policy shifted towards NATO and EU membership in order to ensure national security and continue the democratisation process.

The Kostov government experienced major changes on the road to NATO membership. At the 1997 NATO Summit in Madrid, the idea of enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe prevailed. This was the hope of the newly formed democratic government¹⁵⁷ in Bulgaria for NATO membership.

Between 1998 and 1999, the Kosovo War broke out.¹⁵⁸ Western borders of Bulgaria were in danger¹⁵⁹ and urgent steps have been taken regarding the Kosovo war. The Declaration was adopted by the Bulgarian Parliament on 23 October 1998 and contained clear decisions on how to approach the on-going Kosovo war and how to develop relations with NATO. (Kочов, 2019, p. 367). The majority in parliament was in favour of the Euro-Atlantic side of the argument, and this was the starting point for Bulgaria's future path¹⁶⁰.

On 18 April 1999, NATO asked Bulgaria to open its airspace¹⁶¹ to them indefinitely and this request was accepted by the Bulgarian government (Kочов, 2019, p. 368). When the Russians made the same request, the request was rejected and it was granted for a later period, subject to certain conditions.

¹⁵⁷ Bulgaria's EU and NATO membership process accelerated, especially when pro-EU and pro-reform parties came to power after the 1997 parliamentary elections. (Petrovic, 2008, p. 124).

¹⁵⁸ Kosovo was a province in Serbia. In 1996, the Albanians demanded the independence of Kosovo, which eventually turned into an armed conflict between the Albanians and the Serbs. The war was stopped in 1999 by NATO intervention in Serbia. Kosovo was placed under the protection of the UN, and already in 2008, Kosovo declared independence.

¹⁵⁹ At the outset of 1990, Bulgaria's departure from the Warsaw Pact precipitated a significant security gap. This prompted the country to pursue NATO membership as a means of addressing this vulnerability. Bulgaria's security concerns were similarly heightened during the Kosovo War. Consequently, the Kostov government of that era demonstrated unwavering support for NATO's requests, perceiving the conflict as an opportunity to join the Alliance. The Kosovo War period represented a pivotal moment in Bulgaria's history, marking a significant improvement in its relations with NATO.

¹⁶⁰ The Kosovo war was closely followed by NATO and Russia. Bulgaria's proximity to the war zone revealed its importance to both sides. NATO's decision to intervene in the war also affected the Bulgarian position regarding the war. Bulgaria has clearly shown its side by supporting NATO.

¹⁶¹ NATO intervened in the Kosovo war on 24 May 1999. Prior to this intervention, it had some requests from Bulgaria, in particular to open its airspace to NATO aircraft, which Bulgaria accepted. Bulgaria's opening of its airspace has facilitated NATO's work. As a result, the road to NATO membership has become easier.

NATO and the EU have welcomed these positions of Bulgaria, the first NATO membership has been realised and the path to EU membership has been accelerated. Due to its geo-strategic location, Bulgaria's membership of the European Union was preceded by its membership of NATO. Once Bulgaria was strategically and militarily secured from Russia's sphere of influence, the path to EU membership improved significantly.

According to Solomon Passy¹⁶² the shortest and most certain way to join the European Union was through NATO membership, as these two structures are closely linked (Паси, 2017, p. 24). He emphasised that Bulgaria's prestige would increase with NATO and EU membership. This is because member states have the right to veto, allowing them to determine their own destiny (Паси, 2017, p. 24). For the UtdDF government, becoming a member of both the EU and NATO was a vital target. This was to ensure the continuation of the democratization process and to provide security and freedom of action.

In 1999, NATO began the enlargement process towards Eastern Europe, opening a new chapter. While Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Poland were the new members of NATO, Bulgaria has started to stabilize its progress on the integration path. The United Democratic Forces (UtdDF) government, which established a supra-ministerial committee, started to work on changes at the request of NATO.

The Kostov Government worked well under difficult conditions and made sure that Bulgaria was on the right path to becoming integrated into the European democratic community. During the reign of King Simeon, who came after the Kostov government, the fruits of these efforts began to be seen.

The National Movement Simeon II Period Bulgaria NATO Relations

In 2001, Bulgaria was preparing for new parliamentary elections. Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha¹⁶³, the former king of Bulgaria, returned from exile in Spain with the aim of

¹⁶² Solomon Passy was born on 22 December 1956. "2001 - In the parliamentary elections in June, he participated with the list of National Movement Simeon II and became a deputy in the 39th National Assembly. He entered the office of Simeon of Saxe-Coburg as Minister of Foreign Affairs" (Омда, 2004). Solomon Passy had a significant impact on Bulgaria's admission to NATO and its inclusion in Euro-Atlantic institutions.

¹⁶³ Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha became the tsar of Bulgaria at a young age between 1943 and 1946 during the Second World War, following the death of his father. After the communist revolution that took place in 1946, he was exiled to Spain with his mother and brothers. Returning to Bulgaria in 2001 and establishing a party, Simeon received high votes in the parliamentary elections and became the prime minister from 2001 to 2005 as a result of forming a coalition government.

entering politics. Simeon focused himself on the upcoming parliamentary elections and founded the National Movement Simeon II (NMSII) party (Сакскобургготски, 2014, p. 239). Simeon set the party goals as “decisive economic growth, rapid membership to the EU and NATO, and abolishing bribery from the country”, and in this direction, he welcomed the coalition with the parties that share the same ideas (Сакскобургготски, 2014, p. 243).

Parties and groupings	Votes	% Votes	Seats
Coalition NMSII	1,952,513	42.7	120
UtdDF (UDF, BSDP and PU)	830,338	18.2	51
CB (Coalition led by BSP)	783,372	17.2	48
MRF	340,395	7.5	21

Table 18: Results of the parliamentary elections held on 17 June 2001

Source: (Harper, 2003, p. 338).

Note: This table summarizes the results of the parliamentary elections held in 2001. The newly formed NDSV party by Simeon II won these elections. These elections became a second turning point in the democratization process of Bulgaria and the polarization process in politics (communist anti-communist split) ended and for the first time, a party that did not attach much importance to ideology won the elections. During the NDSV government period, Bulgaria became a member of NATO and as a result, the way to EU membership was opened.

The parliamentary elections were held on 17 June 2001. Simon's party won 43% of the vote and 120 of the 240 seats in parliament. Although the Coalition of the UDF did not perform well in the elections, the BSP also experienced a decline. The MRF received 7.5% of the vote in the elections and gained 21 seats in parliament. They formed a coalition with the NMSII, resulting in the formation of a coalition government¹⁶⁴.

In October 2001, the parties were preparing for the presidential election, which was planned to be held in November, and six candidates were determined (Karasimeonov, 2002, 109). As a result of the presidential elections, Georgi Parvanov, the leader of the BSP, won the presidency. Bulgaria's NATO membership was realized during the terms of President Georgi Parvanov and Prime Minister Simeon.

Simeon's tenure coincided with the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq by the United States and its military coalition. While these events created an opportunity for Bulgaria to become a member of NATO, it was necessary to send soldiers to NATO missions in different countries as a condition of membership in the coalition. Simeon had a difficult

¹⁶⁴ The competition between the red and blue parties came to an end, and a coalition with a liberal orientation was established for the first time in Bulgaria following its entrance into the democratisation period. This paved the way for Bulgaria's membership in NATO and the European Union.

time in the decision-making process regarding sending troops to Iraq and expressed this in his own words, “We had to follow America to become a member of NATO” (Сакскобургготски, 2014, p. 243).

Additionally; Bulgaria was required to implement military reforms on the way to NATO membership, and within the scope of these reforms, it was envisaged to restructure and deploy the military, as well as to reduce the military number to a certain number (Nikolov, 2004, p. 71).

Bulgaria's NATO Integration

Bulgaria's strategic location in the Black Sea region makes it a key player in the area. Russia has maintained political and economic relations with Bulgaria to maintain its influence in the region. Therefore, in order to be protected from Russian influence¹⁶⁵, Bulgaria first had to become a member of NATO. According to Prime Minister Simeon: “NATO was above all a treaty for the mutual protection of countries that shared the same values”, while the EU did not have a military sector (Сакскобургготски, 2014, p. 270). In April 2004, Bulgaria joined the NATO alliance as a result of its efforts towards Europeanization (Сакскобургготски, 2014, p. 267).

The establishment of NATO was to protect democratic values¹⁶⁶, create an environment of trust for its members, and prevent potential conflicts. Bulgaria became a NATO member in 2004 and gained some significant benefits:

- Bulgaria faced a security crisis upon leaving the Warsaw Pact and resolved it by joining NATO.
- Due to Bulgaria's strategic location and its border with the Black Sea, NATO membership has prevented the potential for increased influence of different powers, particularly Russia, in Bulgaria.

¹⁶⁵ Since the tsarist period, Russia has sought to expand its influence in the Balkan Peninsula. This policy was accelerated in later periods, particularly after the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-1878, which resulted in the Ottoman withdrawal from the Balkans. The Russians attempted to protect the Orthodox people and, as a result, increased their influence in the region. On the same date, the Black Sea came under Russian control. This region has always been strategically important to Russia. Bulgaria's location in both the Balkans and the Black Sea region has made it an important state for Russia. Russians have increased their long-term influence in the country by using their religious and linguistic affiliation in Bulgaria. Bulgaria's separation from Russian influence occurred with its NATO membership. During the process of EU membership, the country underwent internal political changes.

¹⁶⁶ Bulgaria's NATO membership resolved its security crisis. Additionally, the EU aided in the replacement of remnants of the communist system with democratic institutions on the path to membership. The NATO and EU membership process has had an indirect external influence on Bulgaria's democratisation process.

- Prior to NATO membership, Bulgaria was a military and technological breakaway from Russia. As a result, Russia's influence in the country decreased, and the path to membership was expedited.
- NATO membership has helped resolve political disagreements in Bulgaria regarding Euro-Atlantic membership, leading to the stabilization of democratic rule.
- Bulgaria underwent a transition to democracy following the collapse of the communist system. Its path towards EU membership was facilitated by its NATO membership.
- The fact that NATO is composed of democratic countries and has a policy of spreading democracy has been instrumental in strengthening the democratic institutions in Bulgaria.
- Bulgaria's NATO membership has helped to protect and secure democracy across Europe, from its western to eastern borders.

Bulgaria's membership in NATO is considered one of the most significant achievements since the democratization process began. NATO played an essential role in Bulgaria's democratization process. Despite the lengthy integration process, Bulgaria eventually became a NATO member, which facilitated its path towards EU membership.

During the transition period, Bulgaria pursued a peaceful and gradual approach to democratization, with a strong focus on domestic policy. The democratization process in Bulgaria was significantly influenced by external factors, particularly the European Union. This section will examine the impact of the EU on the democratization process in Bulgaria.

4.3. The role of EU as an External Factor and Bulgaria's Accession Process to the European Union

The end of the Cold War led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the subsequent collapse of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe was also perceived as a positive development. This allowed these countries to begin the process of transitioning to democracy. However, the disintegration of Yugoslavia resulted in civil wars and ethnic conflicts, which threatened the stability of Europe.

The European Union¹⁶⁷ has acted to prevent potential crises in Eastern Europe and the Balkans and to avoid further conflict. The expansion of the European Union in Central and Eastern Europe has occurred simultaneously with the expansion of NATO¹⁶⁸. The European Union, as a supranational organization, has the mechanisms to restructure and transform the internal politics and political institutions of member states¹⁶⁹. As a result, the transition to democratic systems and their consolidation in these countries has been successful.

One of the main policies of the European Union is to remain open to further enlargement. Countries seeking membership in this process must meet specific conditions before being admitted. The European Union prepares the country for membership by ensuring it meets the necessary conditions and monitoring its progress. Some Central and Eastern European post-communist countries have met the conditions for European Union membership and been approved, while others have undergone a longer membership process.

The initial enlargement of the European Union was primarily driven by economic causes and development. This was particularly evident in 1989, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, when Central and Eastern European countries began the process of transition from communism to democracy and applied for membership in the European Union. After the 1990s, the enlargement policy of the European Union became more political¹⁷⁰, particularly with the inclusion of the Central and Eastern post-communist countries. During this period of enlargement, NATO membership was granted to ensure military and security guarantees for these countries. As a result, it became easier for these countries to join the EU.

¹⁶⁷ The European Community was established as a supranational organization after the Second World War with the mission of uniting Europe economically. After 1993, it transformed into the European Union. It represented democracy during the bipolar Cold War period. With the end of the Cold War, the EU made intense efforts to integrate the post-communist Central and Eastern European countries under its own umbrella. Bulgaria had the opportunity to develop its democracy during the process of becoming an EU member.

¹⁶⁸ NATO places a greater emphasis on the security of member states, whereas the European Union (EU) is more concerned with the democratic evolution of domestic policies.

¹⁶⁹ To become members of the European Union, countries must fulfil the conditions for EU membership. Member countries have attempted to apply EU membership conditions to their internal systems to strengthen the democratic systems they established following the collapse of the communist system.

¹⁷⁰ The expansion of the European Union in Central and Eastern Europe occurred at a slightly faster pace. The countries in this region aimed to avoid falling under the influence of Russia.

Following the European Union Treaty, countries seeking membership must adhere to the democratic principles of the EU and pledge to implement these principles in their domestic policies. In 1993, the European Commission established criteria for countries seeking EU membership. These criteria, known as the Copenhagen criteria, require aspiring members to meet certain standards (ec. Europa, 1993).

“In accordance with the Copenhagen criteria, the candidate country must demonstrate the existence of stable democratic institutions, respect for the rule of law and respect for human rights. The EU's foreign policy adds value by promoting democratic principles and values as a means of resolving international conflicts. The European diplomatic model is based on democratic dialogue and cooperation, and connections with third countries are seen as a mechanism to stimulate the process of their democratisation” (Корнажева & Станчева, 2013, pp. 68-69).

The European Union provided technical assistance to the newly independent Central and Eastern European countries and evaluated their political and economic developments according to the Copenhagen Criteria. The Copenhagen Criteria brought member countries under control and led to internal political changes and transformations. The criteria for countries wishing to become members of the EU are as follows:

- “Stable institutions are those that guarantee democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities ¹⁷¹;
- A functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competition and market forces within the European Union;
- The capacity to assume, fulfill, and execute the obligations of membership, including compliance with the objectives of political, economic, and monetary union.

Furthermore, the EU must be capable of integrating new members” (ec. Europa, 1993).

In the 1990s, the states in the European Communities were parliamentary democracies with a multi-party system. Bulgaria, like other post-communist European countries, aimed to become a member of the democratic society and took the first steps towards that goal (Костов, 2019, p. 99).

¹⁷¹ These points have become the four cornerstones or pillars of the EU.

Bulgaria's EU Membership Process

In the two-round parliamentary elections held on 10 and 17 June 1990, the Bulgarian Socialist Party remained in power. They emphasized their commitment to the goal of European Union membership, despite their pro-Russian stance (Noutcheva & Bechev, 2008, p. 117; Mitropolitski, 2013, p. 374). The Bulgarian Socialist Party which won the first democratic elections in Bulgaria kept its distance from NATO membership, but it accepted the membership of the European Union¹⁷². Since the transition from communism to democracy in Bulgaria, the country has been committed to pursuing EU membership. While attempting to participate in the EU enlargement policy, Bulgaria has endeavoured to implement the Copenhagen Criteria in its domestic policies.

In December 1990, the Bulgarian parliament has set its sights on full membership of the European Union. This decision was accepted, indicating the political and economic elite's eagerness for such membership (Özen, 2020, p. 263). In the same year, Bulgaria participated in PHARE¹⁷³, a program established to provide aid from the European Community to the transition countries of Eastern Europe (Noutcheva & Bechev, 2008, p. 118). On 20 March 1992, the Council of Ministers in Bulgaria established an interdepartmental commission for cooperation with the European Communities Association (Костов, 2019, p. 99).

Considering the internal politics of the period, Bulgaria's desire to become a member of the European Communities can be explained through several reasons:

- Bulgaria's communist regime past and assimilation policy towards the Turks have resulted in international isolation of the country. However, the country has taken a significant step towards ending this isolation by engaging in association negotiations.
- Bulgaria has made efforts to integrate into democratic societies. As a result, it has targeted becoming a member of the European Union.

¹⁷² The integration of a country into the European Union is often seen as a way to unify the European identity and increase prosperity and peace. This was the case for the country in question, which was already facing economic and political crises.

¹⁷³ The PHARE program has been one of the aid tools in the process before the central and eastern European Countries joined the European Community. Later, this program was replaced by the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) (ec. Europa, 1990).

- In the early 1990s, Bulgaria underwent a transition period marked by an economic crisis¹⁷⁴ that lasted until 1997. To overcome this difficult situation, the country required foreign aid and investors. As a result, Bulgaria initiated the application process to join the European Communities, which was considered the most reliable supranational organization.
- Bulgaria requires democratization experiences and oversight from Western European democratic communities.

Bulgaria joined the Council of Europe in May 1992 and subsequently came under its supervision in the adoption of new laws. Following its accession, Bulgaria signed Association Agreements with the European Union between February and March 1993 (Petrovic, 2008, p. 130). After signing an association agreement, the governments established by parties with different ideologies shared a common goal: membership in the European Union. This became the primary focus of politics in Bulgaria. Upon signing the EU accession criteria, Bulgaria was left with no choice but to align its political and economic system with the standards set by the EU.

After the democratization process began, Bulgaria aimed to strengthen its European identity. As a result, it participated in Central European and regional cooperation, including the Central European Initiative (CEI), which it joined in 1994 (Bechev, 2009, p. 216).

On 18 December 1995, the democratic government formed by the UDF and MRF coalition in Bulgaria applied for full membership to the European Union. However, the application was not accepted due to political and economic reasons¹⁷⁵. Despite these adversities, Bulgaria continued to be kept within the framework of the EU enlargement

¹⁷⁴ The collapse of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), the beginning of the Persian Gulf War, the wars that broke out in the former Yugoslavia (Troxel, 1993, p. 387) and the embargo imposed worsened the Bulgarian economy. Bulgaria lost its former economic partners, especially with the collapse of the Soviet Union (Troxel, 1993, p. 388), which put the country in an economic deadlock and led it to seek new economic aid and partners, especially from the Western democratic world.

¹⁷⁵ The Bulgarian political landscape underwent a series of short-lived governments during the period of transition to a democratic system. Each new government introduced a unique approach to the democratisation process, which ultimately failed to stabilise the political landscape. In terms of the economy, the country's new governments adopted disparate strategies, which proved ineffective in resolving the country's economic crisis. Consequently, the European Union (EU) membership process was accelerated only when the country achieved a balance between its political and economic systems. The process commenced with the election victory of the United Democratic Forces in 1997, which resulted in the fulfilment of the mandate until its conclusion. This was in contrast to the actions of other governments.

policy. With the establishment of the new democratic government in 1997, the steps towards EU integration accelerated.

In 1999, Bulgaria joined the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA)¹⁷⁶. The primary objective of this regional organization was to liberalise trade and facilitate the flow of goods in the region. This could provide economic ties between the regional states (Bechev, 2006, p. 29).

Bulgaria's Entry into CEE

In the mid-1990s, Bulgaria and Romania became members of the Central and Eastern Europe group (CEE). The European Union developed a specific enlargement policy and group-specific participation strategy for this group (Demetropoulou, 2002, p. 91). Different groups of countries have received varying levels of assistance and different approaches have been employed. The European Union harmonised the political situation of post-communist Central and Eastern European countries that intended to become members of the Union. This was achieved through the application of conditionality principles, which also encouraged modernisation, economic growth, and social development (Spendzharova, 2003, p. 144). The European Union supported the Central and Eastern European countries in two ways. Firstly, it provided financial assistance to improve the economies and social standards of these countries. Secondly, the EU provided guidance on specific issues to help them reach the level of member states (Grabbe, 2002, p. 253).

¹⁷⁶ CEFTA is an international trade agreement that includes South-eastern European countries as its members. Following the collapse of the communist system, CEFTA played a crucial role in improving economic relations and increasing trade between post-communist countries. It also facilitated the transition from a communist to an open economy.

First Step	Europe Agreements			
Second Step	Copenhagen criteria			
Third Step	Essen Pre - accession Strategy	Europe Agreements		
		PHARE Programmed		
		White Paper		
		Structured Dialogue		
Fourth Step	Agenda 2000- Reinforced Pre-accession Strategy	European Conference		
		Accession Negotiation Process		
		Accession Process	Accession Negotiations	
			Screening of the Acquis	
			Review Procedure	
			Reinforced Pre-accession Strategy	Europe Agreements
				Accession Partnerships
				Pre - accession Aid and PHARE

Table 19: The EU Enlargement Policy and Conditionality for Central-East Europe

Source: (Demetropoulou, 2002, p. 93)

Note: This table includes the programs that the EU has implemented for Central and Eastern European countries that want to become members of the Union. While important changes were taking place in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1990s, communism collapsed and this became an important opportunity for the European Union to realize the dream of forming a united Europe. Since the European Union is a supra-nation and supra-state organization, certain conditions have also been set for the countries that will become members while enlarging it. The EU has controlled the membership process with conditionality rules and has provided support for democratization and economic development to the countries. Meanwhile, the EU has contributed to these programs with financial aid.

The table above shows the required conditions and steps for Central and Eastern post-communist states including Bulgaria and Romania in their European Union Membership procedure.

Prior to commencing the enlargement process of the European Union, the countries that transitioned from communism were categorised based on political, economic, and social factors. Each group was approached differently. These groups were Visegrad Four¹⁷⁷ (the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia), and Baltic Cooperation Countries (Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia) (Bojkov, 2004, p. 518). While Slovenia, Albania and the

¹⁷⁷ It is an organization formed by the four Central European states (the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia). The main goal of the countries in this group was to develop military, political, economic and cultural cooperation among themselves and to become a member of the European Union. Currently, these countries have become members of the EU and NATO.

former Yugoslavia states constitute the Western Balkan group, Bulgaria and Romania were included in the South-eastern European group (Bojkov, 2004, p. 518).

The Central European states completed the process swiftly, but Bulgaria and Romania faced delays due to economic problems and high corruption issues¹⁷⁸. The EU membership plan for Bulgaria was in 2004¹⁷⁹ but membership took place on the first of January 2007 due to not fulfilling certain conditions on time (Andreev, 2009, p. 390).

On June 10, 1999, The European Union initiated to establish the Stability Pact for SEE (SP) for South-Eastern Europe. The primary aim of the Pact was to prevent war and maintain stability in the region, particularly after the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the escalation of the Kosovo war. Bulgaria quickly joined the Pact and became a member (Bechev, 2006, p. 34).

The Stability Pact aimed to promote democracy, protect human rights, and foster economic ties between countries. Cooperation can strengthen ties among the countries of South-eastern Europe and help avoid war and instability. The regional initiatives of the European Union were steps taken to create close ties between countries that would become members in the future. Bulgaria has occasionally taken a leading role in initiatives aimed at accelerating the democratization process and strengthening membership, such as initiating the South-East European Cooperation Process (Özen, 2020, p. 264).

The European Council meeting at the Helsinki Summit, which was held on 10 and 11 December 1999, was productive, resulting in remarkable decisions regarding Eastern Europe's enlargement. The Helsinki Summit was a significant event for Bulgaria, as it marked the beginning of negotiations for European Union integration. In the early 2000s, negotiations between Bulgaria and the EU commenced.

¹⁷⁸ While Bulgaria was required to implement constitutional amendments regarding the judiciary, transient governments were unable to resolve this issue, and these amendments became a matter of concern for the EU as well. The liberal government that assumed power in 2001 initiated a process of constitutional reform and made notable progress in this regard in a relatively short period of time. The constitutional amendments have facilitated the acceleration of Bulgaria's EU membership process.

¹⁷⁹ Central and Eastern European countries' full membership date to the European Union was planned for May 1, 2004, and the membership of ten countries (Poland, Malta, Cyprus, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Hungary, Lithuania and Slovakia) has been realized in that date, but the membership of Bulgaria and Romania to EU took place three years later.

In the 2000s, as the economic situation began to stabilise¹⁸⁰, Bulgaria's progress towards European Union membership accelerated. As a result, Bulgaria was granted the right to travel visa-free in both EU member states and the Schengen area (Crampton, 2007, p. 243). During this period, Bulgaria was not under significant pressure, but it aligned itself with the programs and policies of political leaders and parties related to European integration. Bulgaria underwent rapid reforms, particularly after 2001, which facilitated the Europeanization process in terms of institutions and rules (Özen, 2020, p. 264).

Parliamentary Elections in Bulgaria before EU Membership

Following Bulgaria's entry into the democratization process, governments formed until the 2000s alternated between the pro-democracy opposition, the UDF, and the BSP, which represented the communists¹⁸¹. In the 2000s, significant changes occurred between the two political poles, resulting in a significant break¹⁸² in the party system in Bulgaria. While the opposition on the democratic right has adopted a more pragmatic and moderate policy, the leftists have taken a sharp turn towards the West and become advocates for integration with the European Union and NATO (Todorov, 2010, p. 77).

After the parliamentary elections held in 2001, rapid progress was made towards EU integration. Bulgaria was preparing for its final parliamentary elections before joining the EU, as progress was being made in solving issues related to minorities and military restructuring¹⁸³. The last parliamentary elections of Bulgaria before becoming a member of the European Union took place in 2005.

¹⁸⁰ Brussels has put pressure on Bulgaria regarding organized crime during the EU membership process (Holmes, 2009, p. 274). Organized crime in Bulgaria, and the groups involved in these activities, was largely a product of the communist era and caused significant issues in Bulgaria from 1990 to 1997. During this period, Bulgaria faced economic crises and news reports frequently covered incidents such as homicides, mafia domination of cities, and involvement in various crimes. However, since the government took action in 1997, the state has become stronger, the police have been given more power, and organized crime has significantly decreased since the early 2000s (Holmes, 2009, p. 275). The decrease in organized crime has had a positive impact on Bulgaria's democratization and EU membership process.

¹⁸¹ This period saw the highest level of polarization between the red communists and the blue democrats, with the government changing hands and the emergence of different political approaches.

¹⁸² The power transfer between democrats and communists lasted until the 2000s, and then the liberal-leaning NDSV party founded by Simeon II ended this period. Simeon's party took important steps towards the EU upon coming to power.

¹⁸³ During the communist period in Bulgaria, the military was heavily involved in politics and became an integral part of it. In democratic countries, the military is a mechanism that protects the security of the state and has no relation to politics. However, this situation has become a major problem on Bulgaria's path to NATO and EU membership. The military had to be reorganized, and its boundaries had to be defined. Important steps were taken in this regard. This issue will be analyzed in detail below.

The 2005 election campaign started on May 25, one month before the elections. While the unifying feature in the campaigns of the parties prepared to participate in the elections was the subject of EU integration, at the same time, the development of the economy, revision of the judiciary, healthcare and education and social security issues were also kept on the agenda (Spirova, 2006, p. 618, Tzvetkova, 2005).

In the period leading up to the elections, particularly after NATO membership, extreme nationalists who were against this membership established populist parties. As a result, the ATAKA party was formed.

The newly established ATTACK¹⁸⁴ Party (ATAKA party) also participated in these elections. The Attack Party, located in the Centre-Right and with a populist ideology, made an impact during the period by opposing NATO and conducting a negative campaign against minorities. The party attracted a large following of ultra-nationalist individuals who were resentful of the ruling parties.

Party Name	Votes	Distribution of Votes	Mandates
BSP	1129196	33.98 %	82
NDSV	725314	21.83 %	53
DSB	234788	7.07 %	17
BNS	189268	5.70 %	13
ATAKA	296848	8.93 %	21
MRF	467400	14.07 %	34
ODS UDF	280323	8.44 %	20
Total	3323137	100 %	240

Table 20: Results of the Bulgarian Parliamentary Elections on 25 June 2005

Source: (Централна Избирателна Комисия¹⁸⁵, 2005)

Note: This table summarizes the results of the 2005 elections. The 2005 elections were won by the BSP and after a long hiatus, a socialist government was re-established. During this government period, Bulgaria achieved full membership in the European Union. It should also not be forgotten that in Bulgarian politics, coalition governments were formed rather than single-party governments, and in this way, the political balance was achieved.

The June 25, 2005 elections were the elections with the lowest turnout in 15 years, with 55.7 per cent. As a result of the elections, the parties could not have enough votes to form a government alone. While BSP received 33.98% of the votes and won 82 seats in the parliament, NDSV had a big fall and gained only 53 seats while receiving 21.83% of the votes. In the 2005 parliamentary elections, MRF again achieved good results and by

¹⁸⁴ ATAKA is a political party formed by extreme nationalists in 2005. Founded by Volen Siderov, the party has a Euroatlantic stance. It has carried out a discriminative policy against minorities in the country.

¹⁸⁵ Central Election Commission

getting 14.07% of the votes, it increased the vote level and gained 34 seats in the parliament. The newly established ultra-nationalist and populist ATTACK Party won 8.93% of the votes in the first elections, won 21 seats, passed the four-percent threshold and gain a right to enter the parliament. DSB got 7.07% of the vote, BNS 5.70% and ODS UDF got 8.44% of the votes and all of these parties entered the parliament.

In the parliamentary elections, seven parties were eligible to enter the parliament. The June 2005 elections resulted in the most fractional parliament in the history of Bulgaria's democracy up to that date, despite a low voter turnout (Spirova, 2006, p. 620). The Bulgarian Socialist Party was the party that received the most votes in the elections, and formed the government with the MRF and the NDS. A coalition government of BSP, NDSV and MRF was formed in mid-August (Spirova, 2006, p. 620).

With the establishment of the new government, the EU membership process has once again become a prior item on the political agenda. In 2006, the Maastricht criteria came to the fore in the agenda of Prime Minister Sergey Stanishev¹⁸⁶ in order to organize policies compatible with the EU. Although Bulgaria was not initially considered ready for full EU membership, concerns were raised when Germany, the Netherlands, and France expressed their disapproval of the membership. However, despite this negativity, the membership took place on January 1, 2007, as planned. Bulgaria has achieved its second most important goal, EU membership, which it has pursued since the transition to democracy. This accomplishment follows its integration into NATO.

The Impact of EU Membership on the Democratization Process in Bulgaria

Bulgaria underwent institutional and legal changes¹⁸⁷ upon applying for European Union membership. The goal was to replace the communist system with democratic institutions and rules, and to meet European Union standards. The European Union has had a huge impact on the democratisation of Bulgaria, particularly in the areas of constitutional reform, minority rights, de-politicization of the army in Bulgaria.

¹⁸⁶ Sergey Stanishev is a Bulgarian politician who served as the chairman of the BSP. He also held the position of the 49th Prime Minister of Bulgaria. Under his leadership, Bulgaria became a member of the EU.

¹⁸⁷ With Bulgaria's European Union membership application, institutional and legal changes and transformations have been experienced in the country. The aim was to dissolve the communist system that Bulgaria has implemented for many years and to transform it into a system in which democratic institutions and rules are applied; additionally it was foreseen to reach a level in line with the European Union standards.

a) EU impact on the Constitutional Reform

Replacing Bulgaria's communist constitution with a democratic one in 1991 was a significant and successful step in the country's democratization process. Bulgaria was the first among Central and Eastern European countries to adopt a democratic constitution. However, due to the Bulgarian Socialist Party's dominance¹⁸⁸ in its creation, some articles were later revised. The political polarization that existed between 1990 and 2001 prevented the implementation of the requested changes to the constitution for an extended period. Constitutional changes in Bulgaria were implemented due to two significant factors.

- First, with the establishment of the NDSV government¹⁸⁹ in 2001 and the end of polarized politics, it became easier to amend some articles in the constitution.

When the NDSV government came to power, it was decided to accelerate the steps towards EU membership. Action was taken in line with the reform requests of the EU.

- Second, the European Commission's request for institutional reforms as part of Bulgaria's path to EU membership (Hain, 2016, p. 152).

Bulgaria's accession to the European Union required harmonisation of its constitution with the founding agreements of the European Communities. Constitutional changes were deemed important for accelerating the path to EU membership. In this way, the EU indirectly influenced the changes to the Bulgarian constitution.

The European Union has significantly influenced Bulgarian constitutionalism¹⁹⁰ and democratization policies (Smilov, 2010, p. 96). At the outset of the democratization process, the Bulgarian government made significant changes to facilitate EU membership. To comply with EU standards, Bulgaria has amended certain articles at different times to ensure a democratic constitution.

The Bulgarian Constitution of 1991 provides four types of immunity: for the President, Members of Parliament, Judges, and Members of the Constitutional Court (Танчев, 2002, p. 9). Restricting or abolishing the immunity rights of MPs and judges has been a

¹⁸⁸ BSP, an extension of the BCP, won the majority in the Grand National Assembly elections and became the dominant party in the formation of the democratic constitution. Although a small part of the opposition protested against the BSP's dominance in the drafting of the constitution, the majority went along with it. However, although some articles in the new democratic constitution were later changed, no significant long-term changes were made.

¹⁸⁹ During Bulgaria's journey towards EU membership, the government in power in 2001 identified and addressed delayed changes required in the constitution by making amendments to certain articles.

¹⁹⁰ The EU has played a crucial role in enhancing the democratic nature of the Bulgarian constitution.

long-standing topic in domestic politics. The importance of this change lies in enabling the questioning of MPs and judges and preventing corruption in the country. Meanwhile, Bulgaria was required to make adjustments to its judiciary. However, this constitutional amendment was necessary for Bulgaria to achieve full membership in the EU. As a result, the democratic constitution was amended only after the 2000s.

1) First constitutional amendment in 2003

The first constitutional amendment was made in 2003 by the coalition of NDSV. The Bulgarian democratic constitution underwent significant change in the Judiciary section, the sixth chapter of the constitution. The changes were made to certain articles (Hain, 2016, pp. 152-154). The first significant change was the limitation of judges' immunity actions. The immunity of judges may be revoked by the Supreme Judicial Council upon the decision of one-fifth of the judicial members or at the request of the Chief Prosecutor (Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, 1991, Art. 131-132¹⁹¹). The second amendment in the constitution states that judges will become irremovable only after working for five years instead of three. This situation will have to be positively evaluated by the Supreme Judicial Council (Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, 1991, Art. 129, sec. 3-4¹⁹²). The third change in the judiciary is that those in judicial positions will no longer be appointed for life. Instead, they will be appointed to a five-year term until they are appointed to another position (Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, 1991, Art. 129, sec. 5-6¹⁹³).

¹⁹¹ "Art. 132. (amend., SG 85/03) (1) When exercising the judicial function, the judges, prosecutors and investigating magistrates shall bear no civil or criminal liability for their official actions or for the acts rendered by them, except where the act performed constitutes an indictable intentional offence" (Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, 1991).

¹⁹² "Art. 129. (Amend., SG 85/03, Suppl., SG, 100/15) Having completed a five year term of office as a judge, prosecutor or investigating magistrate, and upon attestation, by decision of the Judges' College and the Prosecutors' College of the Supreme Judicial Council respectively, the judges, prosecutors and investigating magistrates shall become irremovable. They, including the persons referred to in para 2 shall be released from office only upon:

1. completion of 65 years of age;
2. resignation;
3. judgment which has the force of res judicata for a penalty of deprivation of liberty for an intentionally committed criminal offence;
4. permanent de facto inability to perform their duties for more than a year;
5. serious infringement or systematic neglect of their official duties, as well as actions damaging the prestige of the judiciary.

(4) (new, SG 85/03, declared unconstitutional by Constitutional Court Judgment No. 7/2006 - SG 78/2006)" (Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, 1991).

¹⁹³ "Art. 129. (5) (new, SG 85/03, prev. para 4 SG 27/06) In cases of removal from office under para 3, items 2 and 4, the acquired irremovably shall be restored upon subsequent appointment to the office of a judge, prosecutor or investigating magistrate.

- The closure of the 'justice and home affairs' chapter was ensured by the first amendments made in the 1991 democratic constitution, which led to the conclusion of all EU accession negotiations in June 2004 (Hain, 2016, p. 155).

2) Second constitutional amendment 2005

The constitution underwent two significant changes following the 2005 election victory of BSP¹⁹⁴ and during its coalition with NDSV and MRF. The second constitutional amendment was passed in 2005 and primarily concerned laws related to the institutionalization of EU membership (Hain, 2016, pp. 155-156). The articles covered by these amendments are as follows: Bulgaria's contribution to the development and construction of the European Union (Art. 4, Sec. 3), giving the EU the rights arising from this constitution (Art. 85, Sec. 1, No 9), the Council of Ministers denouncing the National Assembly from EU membership, at the same time, the Council of Ministers is required to inform the National Assembly in advance and inform about its actions when participating in the preparation and adoption of European Union instruments (Art. 105. Sec. 3-4), to be regulated by the law on participation in elections of members of the European Parliament and participation of EU citizens in local elections (Art. 42. Sec. 3), the right of foreigners to own land in the country under the conditions arising from Bulgaria's accession to the EU (Art. 22, Sec. 1), the inability of any Bulgarian citizen to be abandoned to another country or to an international court in accordance with certain international agreements (Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, 1991, Art. 25, Sec. 4).

- Following these amendments to the constitution, Bulgaria gained the right to sign an EU accession treaty (Hain, 2016, p. 156).

Although all parties accepted the amendment to the democratic constitution of Bulgaria regarding EU membership, there were difficulties, particularly in the reform of the judiciary. The EU insisted that Bulgaria make changes in this area as a priority.

(6) (new, SG 85/03, in force from January 1, 2004, prev. para 5 SG 27/06)) The heads of the judicial bodies, except for those referred to in para 2, shall be appointed for a period of 5 years and are eligible for a second mandate” (Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, 1991).

¹⁹⁴ The Bulgarian Socialist Party formed a coalition government and gained the majority in parliament in the 2005 elections, which were the last elections before EU membership. They continued to make changes to the constitution. The Bulgarian Socialist Party formed a coalition government and gained a parliamentary majority, leading to constitutional changes in line with EU standards and conditions. As a result, Bulgaria became a full member of the EU on January 1, 2007 during this government's tenure.

3) Third constitutional amendment 2006

In 2006, amendments were made to the law, particularly concerning the immunity of deputies. In 2006, several changes were made to the constitution, including the limitation of deputy immunity. The limits of a deputy's immunity have been defined. If a deputy commits a criminal offense, prosecution requires a decision from either the National Assembly or the President of the Assembly. If the deputy is caught in the act, this decision is not necessary, but the parliament must be informed (Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, 1991, Art. 70, Sec. 1-2). At the request of the EU, the Bulgarian Assembly has enacted a law governing the election of an Ombudsman¹⁹⁵ whose role is to safeguard the rights and freedoms of the people (Art. 91a, Sec. 1).

These were some of the changes to the Bulgarian constitution before its accession to the EU. The changes ensured the stability of Bulgaria's EU membership, which was confirmed in January 2007, and prevented any further postponements.

The European Union requested changes to Bulgaria's constitution in three areas. The first area concerned the reform of the judiciary, including its strengthening and the revision of judges' immunity, taking into account their fallibility. These two main requests were to take new constitutional measures to prevent corruption in the country and to implement the changes necessary to support this request. Finally, Bulgaria was requested to remove some restrictions and expand the area of freedoms to comply with EU membership. As a result of these demands and observations, Bulgaria successfully implemented these changes, making its system more democratic and deserving integration with the democratic world.

b) EU impact on Minority Rights

In Bulgaria, the Council of Europe and the European Union have played a significant role in promoting minority rights and improving relations with minorities since the beginning of the democratization process. Minority rights are a crucial indicator of the

¹⁹⁵ The Ombudsman is an independent public authority that investigates complaints of injustices that occur in the public sector, playing a crucial role in resolving disputes between society and public administration. In Bulgaria, the Ombudsman is an independent institution appointed by amendments to the laws in the constitution at the request of the EU. The Bulgarian parliament elects the Ombudsman for a five-year term. The Ombudsman is responsible for listening to people's complaints and seeking solutions in compliance with the Constitution and international laws.

strength of democracy in any given country. Resolving the minority problem in Bulgaria has been challenging¹⁹⁶.

The main problem faced by the Muslim minority (mostly consisting of ethnic Turks) is that assimilation attempts have been on-going since the repressive communist regime. Despite constitutional and legal guarantees of minority rights, they have not been respected in practice by the government.

Turkish participation in politics and the Movement for Rights and Freedoms party, which represents them, has played a significant and decisive role in all Bulgarian governments since the democratization process began, up until the country's integration into the EU. However, during the initial years of the MRF's establishment, nationalist and communist members of parliament attempted to prevent the party's participation in elections. Therefore, due to warnings and calls for change from the European Union, Bulgaria has since made mandatory policy changes regarding minorities and has made significant progress in this regard.

In the mid-1990s, Bulgaria held its first successful democratic elections, which led to the adoption of a new constitution in 1991, marking the beginning of progress towards democratisation. To become a member of the Council of Europe, Bulgaria was required to harmonize its human rights framework with that of the European Union, which was addressed in the democratic constitution.

The Copenhagen criteria require strict implementation of the article on minority rights in order to progress towards EU membership. In August 1992, following progress in association negotiations, the National Assembly ratified the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, marking a significant step towards reforming Bulgaria's old system (Kostov, 2019, p. 101). The ratification of the Convention granted Bulgarian citizens the right to seek redress for human rights violations in the European court.

On February 18, 1999, the Bulgarian parliament ratified with the majority votes the Council of Europe's Convention on the Protection of National Minorities (Koinova,

¹⁹⁶ Because of the assimilation process carried out against minorities by the Bulgarian communist government under Zhivkov, the issue of minorities is very sensitive in Bulgaria. Long-term policies aimed at assimilating minorities have had severe effects on the minority groups. Therefore, correcting this situation require a significant amount of time. The minority issue in Bulgaria is very sensitive comparison with other Central and Eastern European countries due to assimilation policies carried out by the communist. During the period of EU membership initiatives, resolving the minority issue has been a top priority, and EU membership has been considered challenging without its resolution.

1999, p. 147). This momentous decision played a crucial role in determining Bulgaria's policy against minorities and was considered a step towards democratization and EU membership. Significant changes were made in the constitution related to minority issues, especially after the 2000s, which facilitated the membership path and showed that the EU accelerated the democratization process in Bulgaria.

De-politicization of the Army in Bulgaria

One of the obligatory steps taken by Bulgaria on the path to EU membership was the de-politicization of the army and the creation of a civilian and administrative structure under the Ministry of Defence (Ratchev & Milina, 2002, p. 91). After the fall of the communist regime and the democratization process in 1989, the Bulgarian army underwent significant changes, including the depoliticization of its ranks. Throughout history, the Bulgarian military has intervened in internal affairs, including attempted coups. During the communist era, the military both monitored and endorsed the actions of political administrations. The Bulgarian communist government quickly implemented changes in the military, appointing officials loyal to the communist system to leadership positions. Over eighty percent of military officials were members of the Communist Party (Soper, 1992, p. 238).

During the intra-party coup against Todor Zhivkov, the Bulgarian army maintained its neutrality¹⁹⁷. It declared its intention to remain apolitical and provide stability during the peaceful transition period. This stance contributed to a smooth transition in Bulgaria (Soper, 1992, p. 238).

In 1991, the Bulgarian military was transitioning from a highly politicized army to a depoliticized one (Soper, 1992, p. 238). During the initial years of the democratization period, the democratic opposition held sessions and stressed the importance of depoliticizing the military. The Round Table Meetings also extensively discussed this matter. During the national roundtable meetings, a crucial decision was made to “depoliticise the army, police, judiciary, prosecution, and diplomacy” (Epicenter, 2020). Furthermore, the Bulgarian Socialist Party has removed the law protecting the communist party and declaring it the head of the state from the constitution.

¹⁹⁷ There was a concern that the Bulgarian military might intervene in the removal of Zivkov from the administration while the people were taking to the streets for democracy. However, it is crucial for democracy in Bulgaria that the military remains neutral and only maintains public order. The peaceful protests by the Turks in Bulgaria and the lack of military intervention during the overthrow of the communist regime facilitated a peaceful democratization process.

Additionally, there have been successive changes in the constitution related to the position of the army.

Since the democratization period, the aim and objectives of the Bulgarian army underwent a significant change. Previously tasked with protecting the communist system, the army has been transformed into an institution that will fight for the national interests of the country. (Soper, 1992, p. 239). The army's primary responsibility is to safeguard the nation's borders, territorial integrity, and independence. To ensure political neutrality and ideological consistency, high-ranking military officials with communist leanings were retired.

Membership in NATO and the European Union required democratic oversight of the armed forces (Ratchev & Milina, 2002, p. 91). Bulgaria has taken significant steps towards Euro-Atlantic membership following the depoliticisation of the army. Bulgaria's efforts towards EU membership have resulted in the depoliticization of the military, which was previously influenced by the communist system. The EU has indirectly contributed to this positive development.

Impact of EU Membership on the Development of the Democratic System in Bulgaria

The European Community and the European Union played a critical external factor from the beginning of the democratization process of Bulgaria. The European Union has made significant contributions to the development of the democratic system in Bulgaria, which does not have a historical democratic culture. In this context, the European Union has enabled the countries to transform their systems with the conditionality policy it has applied to the member countries. The influence of the EU in that manner was seen in Bulgaria's transition from a communist regime to a democratic system.

Regarding the impact of EU membership on the development of the democratic system in Bulgaria, the following results have been obtained:

- Bulgaria has made agreements with the EU on various issues, demonstrating its commitment to democracy.
- On its path towards EU membership, Bulgaria has made significant progress in addressing minority issues and has successfully resolved this problem.
- The path towards EU membership has played a crucial role in safeguarding and reinforcing democratic institutions in Bulgaria.

- At the beginning of the democratization process, Bulgaria replaced its communist constitution with a new democratic one. The new constitution underwent significant changes in line with EU standards, resulting in a more democratic constitution.
- Bulgaria has taken steps towards EU membership by de-politicizing its military and returning it to its primary function of supporting and protecting the democratic system.

The establishment of a democratic system in Bulgaria was a lengthy and challenging process, but the desired outcome was eventually achieved. Bulgaria's NATO membership facilitated its accession to the EU, and 2007 marked a significant milestone in the country's democratic progress. Following its EU membership, Bulgaria has continued to work towards strengthening and consolidating its democracy.

4.4. Conclusion

Between 1990 and 2007 Bulgaria went through three important transitions:

- “1. Political transition in which a democratic system of government was established
2. Economic transition from centrally planned economy to open market economy
3. The constitutional transition took place with the constitution created in 1991 and as a result of these transitions; EU membership has been realized” (Kostova, 2016, p. 241).

Bulgaria's democratization process after the collapse of the communist regime in 1989 culminated in its membership in the EU and NATO (Smilov, 2010, p. 96). From the outset, Bulgaria aligned its political and economic orientation with that of the EU and NATO. However, accession to these two organizations posed significant challenges. Bulgaria faced obstacles before its membership in NATO and the EU. These challenges were caused by internal factors. During the period between 1991 and 2000, the Bulgarian parliament frequently discussed the issues surrounding the European Union and NATO membership (Savkova, 2010, p. 46).

After the fall of the oppressive communist regime and subsequent democratization process, the democratic opposition in Bulgaria under the roof of the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF)¹⁹⁸ has identified EU and NATO membership as their primary

¹⁹⁸ The Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) supported both EU and NATO membership but did not seek closer ties with Russia.

objectives. They believe that membership in these two organizations will aid in the democratization process and lead to economic and social development.

However, the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP)¹⁹⁹ previously adopted a nationalist policy and viewed EU and NATO membership as a threat to national interests. Despite that, the BSP later softened its stance on EU membership due to its potential to strengthen the economy, but remained opposed²⁰⁰ to NATO membership.

Due to the bipolar politics carried out at that time, different views emerged. During the 2000s, Bulgaria's domestic politics underwent significant changes, with the decline of bipolar politics and the emergence of parties with a liberal orientation. Between 2001 and 2005, discussions about EU and NATO membership took place in the Bulgarian parliament. The discussions were based on conjecture at the time. It was observed that there was a political consensus between the parties on both matters (Savkova, 2010, p. 46). Inter-party political consensus has accelerated both the democratization process and the way to NATO and EU membership.

Bulgaria has striven assiduously to become a member of the European Union and NATO, two of the most esteemed Euro-Atlantic organisations. It successfully implemented a foreign policy within this framework and was rewarded by becoming a full member of the EU on January 1, 2007 (Bechev, 2009, p. 210).

From an external perspective, it is difficult for the European Union to exert pressure on a sovereign state and influence changes in its domestic politics. However, if a country expresses its desire to become an EU member, the Europeanization process can have an impact on internal political changes within that country. Although, seeking membership in the EU had to make internal or domestic changes to align with membership requirements. Additionally, external factors such as the EU and NATO emphasized the conditions for membership prior to joining.

Bulgaria's aspiration to join the EU necessitated the fulfilment of the Copenhagen Criteria, which are the membership requirements. However, to meet the political Copenhagen criteria, Bulgaria needed to undergo a significant transformation from the previous political regime to a democratic system.

¹⁹⁹ The Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) welcomed EU membership but opposed NATO membership and prioritised maintaining close relations with Russia in its foreign policy.

²⁰⁰ It is important to note that the EU and NATO are interconnected, with the former integrating various European states economically and politically, while the latter ensures collective security

The social, economic, institutional, and political changes that occurred domestically were intertwined with the external dynamics involved in the participation process. These internal changes benefit the democratization and economic development of Bulgaria, rather than the EU. Therefore, the changes emphasized by the EU are for the benefit of Bulgaria's young democracy. The implementation of these conditions helped to promote democracy both internally and externally in Bulgarian politics.

When Bulgaria expressed its aspiration to become a member of the European Union, the EU presented its membership conditions. These conditions include having a democratic system, granting rights to minorities, upholding the rule of law, and maintaining an open market economy while developing and strengthening regional ties.

Bulgaria has implemented significant changes to its domestic policy in order to meet the conditions set out by the EU and become a member of the organisation. The process had a positive impact on the democratisation of Bulgaria, strengthening its democracy. Economic sanctions were imposed by the EU when Bulgaria faced obstacles in its democratization process, resulting in a delay in its membership. This demonstrates the EU's ability to exercise its check and balance power over candidate member states. Although Bulgaria has a communist past, it has successfully overcome various challenges and eventually achieved EU membership, which was a significant milestone towards democracy.

EU membership has played a significant role in Bulgaria's democratization and modernization process. However, this role was not solely achieved through the EU's conditionality. Bulgarian politics has undergone major changes and evolution over a long period of domestic politics.

To conclude Bulgarian society and politicians expressed enthusiasm towards joining the EU, with high expectations such as:

- Firstly, Bulgaria's EU membership is expected to bring about economic development through the integration of its economy into the global economy. This is likely to attract investment from EU companies (Dimitrova, 2012).
- Secondly, an expectation from the EU was assistance in democratizing the country and its state institutions. As Dimitrova stated:

“The Bulgarian government viewed the European integration process as a potential avenue for introducing external oversight and regulatory standards, aiming to

reform the country's political system and institutions that had been significantly influenced by patronage and corruption. This approach posited that EU membership would serve as a significant corrective force for both government and political parties. Its objective was to facilitate the implementation, monitoring, and enforcement of reforms in areas identified as problematic by EU institutions, including the European Commission, namely corruption, organised crime, and the judiciary system” (Dimitrova, 2012).

- Bulgaria's acceptance as a full European state is the third expectation of EU membership (Dimitrova, 2012). This expectation stems from Bulgaria's prolonged communist history.



CONCLUSION

In the mid-twentieth century, particularly after World War II, the political map of the world underwent a significant transformation, resulting in the formation of two distinct political poles: the Western Capitalist Democratic Bloc and the Communist Bloc. An extended period of political, economic, and military rivalry between these two blocs, known as the Cold War, ensued.

Following the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Pavan, 1993, p. 54), Bulgaria underwent significant political changes. The collapse of the Berlin Wall marked the beginning of the end of the Cold War. Subsequently, the dissolution of the Soviet Union initiated a transition from communist regimes to democracy in Central and Eastern Europe. Bulgaria took place in the process.

The process of democratisation in Bulgaria began on 10 October 1989, when Todor Zhivkov was ousted from power in an intra-party coup by the foreign minister and liberal reformist Petar Mladenov. Reforms within the Bulgarian Communist Party then began and a coalition was formed between the liberal reformist Andrey Lukanov and the democratic reformists Alexander Lilov and Stefan Prodev (Ishiyama, 1997, p. 108). At the 14th congress of the Bulgarian Communist Party BCP in 1990, Andrey Lukanov became Prime Minister of Bulgaria (Ishiyama, 1997, pp. 108- 109). The BCP was subsequently renamed the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP).

In 1989, with the merger of different groups and factions aiming democratic system in Bulgaria, the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) the democratic opposition coalition was formed and became a main factor in the Round table discussions period. The formation of the Democratic opposition in Bulgaria occurred relatively late in comparison to other Central and Eastern European countries. Nevertheless, it played a pivotal role in the peaceful transition to democracy. At the beginning of 1990, Roundtable Discussions started between BSP, UDF and The Bulgarian Agrarian National Union BANU²⁰¹ (Ishiyama, 1997, p. 109). At the end of these negotiations, certain compromises were given by both UDF and BSP to maintain a peaceful and soft transition from communist regime to democratic system.

²⁰¹ The only opposition party that survived the communist era. The existence of BANU was used by the communist totalitarian system to give the impression that in the country exists a multi-party system and a pluralist elections.

Bulgaria initiated its democratization process with resolute steps. However, subsequent political and economic crises impeded this progress (Ágh, 1999, 271-272).

- A new democratic constitution was created that guarantees human rights.
- Highly competitive and multi-party elections were held.
- Functional democratic institutions were established (Melone, 1996, p. 231).

Bulgaria has transitioned successfully to a democratic system from its previous totalitarian communist regime (Popova, 2020, p. 81).

During the 1990s and 2000s, Bulgaria experienced disruptions in its democratic system, with frequent changes in government between socialist and democratic parties. In the 2001 parliamentary elections, the National Movement for Simeon II (NDSV), founded by King Simeon II, won the majority of votes. The party formed an alliance with other liberal parties, particularly the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, and implemented crucial political and economic reforms that prepared Bulgaria for integration into NATO and the EU. In 2004 Bulgaria joined NATO.

The parliamentary elections of 2005 were highly competitive. The Bulgarian Socialist Party won the majority of votes and formed the government in the same year, providing Bulgaria with an opportunity to integrate into the European Union. Consequently, on January 1, 2007, Bulgaria joined EU and became a part of the Western democratic society.

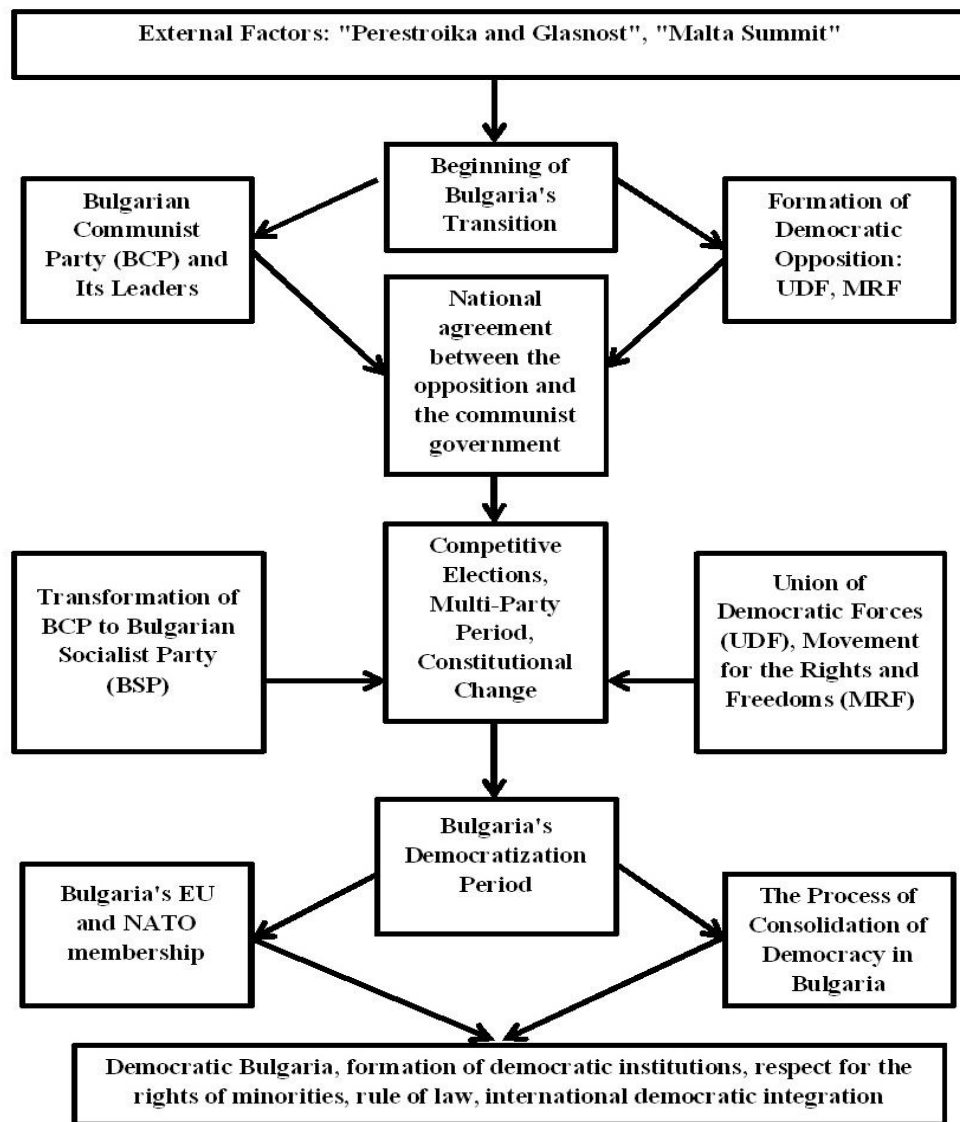


Figure 5: The Role of Internal and External Factors According to the Phases of the Democratization Process in Bulgaria

Source: The figure is prepared by the researcher

The main subject of this thesis is how internal and external factors played a role in the democratization process of Bulgaria between 1989 and 2007. The democratization of Bulgaria was influenced by changes in the political world system and internal factors. In this context, Gorbachev's perestroika movement had the greatest impact on this transition process in Bulgaria. As a result of the findings of the research, the communist system that existed in the world at that time was managed from a single centre, and that centre was the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF). Communist parties in other communist countries were hierarchically affiliated with the Communist Party in

Russia. Considering this hierarchical connection, the conclusion emerges that democratization in Bulgaria starts from the top down. After the Perestroika and Glasnost movement and the decision of Gorbachev to reform the system of the Soviet Union, the reform movement spread to other communist states such as in Central and Eastern Europe countries by creating a domino effect.

Todor Zhivkov the leader of the communist rule in Bulgaria saw the economic and political stalemate of the Soviet Union and predicted that this system would not last long and tried to create his own politics; he did not accept the reform movement initiated by Gorbachev. Subsequently, on November 10, 1989, Todor Zhivkov was removed from power by an intra-party coup, and Bulgaria entered the transition period from a communist regime to a democratic system. The communist system in Bulgaria was established following a revolution carried out by the communist elites against the king in 1946. Consequently, the decision to remove the communist leader Todor Zhivkov from the government in 1989 and to establish a democratic system in the country was taken by the elite.

The Bulgarian democratisation case was distinctive due to the country's accelerated democratisation process. The democratization process in Bulgaria began with a coup d'état within the Communist Party. The aim was to reform the failing communist system. During the search for a solution, the communist factions were divided. Some advocated for reforming the system, while others insisted on maintaining the old system. There were even those who suggested using tanks to disperse the crowds who were asking for democratic system, as Petar Mladenov did when he said, 'It would be better if the tanks came'. However, the removal of Todor Zhivkov from power did not satisfy the demands of the democratic opposition, who made their desires clear through marches and protests in the streets. As a result, the communist rulers in power were forced to seek solutions.

Progress towards democratization was limited while communist structures remained in power. However, with the weakening of communist influence in the politics, the democratization process in Bulgaria accelerated.

During the democratization process in Bulgaria, the democratic opposition initially lacked strength. However, under the guidance of leaders such as Zhelyu Zhelev, it gradually gained momentum and forced the communists to make political concessions.

There was a split in the democratic opposition. Some groups advocated for the direct overthrow of the communists by storming the parliament and ending the communist regime by force. On the other hand, Zhelyu Zhelev's faction preferred a managed transition through negotiations to ensure a smoother and bloodless change. Zhelyu Zhelev was aware of the communists' power and took prudent steps, playing a significant role in the peaceful transition.

Despite the long-standing ethnic assimilation policies in Bulgaria, the Turks acted rationally and sought their rights within the legal framework without seeking revenge. This prevented an ethnic war in Bulgaria from breaking out and facilitated a smooth transition. The peaceful integration of Turks into the newly established system set Bulgaria's transition to democracy apart from other Balkan countries that experienced ethnic conflicts.

At the start of Bulgaria's democratization process, a crucial step was taken when the pro-reform group of ruling communists and the moderate faction of the democratic opposition met at the Round Table to make important decisions about the process's future. Round table discussions played a pivotal role in the transition to democracy, by facilitating dialogue and collaboration between Communist and democratic elites. The decisions made by both the ruling party and the opposition regarding the future of the state and the political system have led to the continuation of the democratization process, albeit with some setbacks, until the 2000s.

Since the transition to a democratic system in Bulgaria in 1989 marked the country's inaugural experience with such a transformation in its political landscape, it was necessary to provide guidance and support in the development of democratic institutions and processes. In this regard, the European Union has fulfilled this role.

The European Union was founded in the 1990s. It expanded to include Central and Eastern European countries that gained independence after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the transition from communism to democracy. In 2004, the European Union admitted 10 countries to its membership, and in 2007, Bulgaria and Romania also became members. The EU's transformative power has played a crucial role in consolidating democracy and establishing strong institutionalized democratic governments in the post-communist countries.

The European Union provided economic aid to accelerate and promote the transition to a democratic system. It also monitored the democratization process in the domestic politics of countries applying for membership. As a result, the internal politics of candidate countries were transformed to meet EU standards. The European Union's initiatives and conditionality policy have assisted candidate countries in establishing robust democratic state systems and open market economies. As a result, these states have successfully developed functional democratic institutions.

When Bulgaria declared its candidacy for the European Union and NATO, it had to comply with the membership conditions of these two organizations. In this context, Bulgarian political elites and parties underwent certain ideological and political changes to facilitate integration with the European Union and NATO.

The Bulgarian Socialist Party experienced great ideological transformation under the leadership of Georgi Parvanov (1996–2001) and especially during the period of Sergey Stanishev (2001–2014), started to follow politics close to the Western European Social Democracy (Ganev, 2018, p. 95). European Union membership also took place during the period of these leaders. While the European Union has ensured the political development of democracy in Bulgaria, NATO has limited the sphere of influence of Russia while protecting democratic developments.

This thesis examines the role of internal and external factors in the democratization process of Bulgaria. The focus is on political democratization in a broad sense, with an aim to identify the main factors in this direction. The thesis notes that the collapse of the Soviet Union led to the mobilisation of communist elites in Bulgaria, who initiated the first democratisation and system change. However, in the 2000s, the democratisation process and reforms were driven by liberals, and more concrete steps were taken towards democratisation under the influence of the EU and NATO.

The frequent changes in government that occurred until the 2000s, with power shifting between democrats and socialists, prevented the full achievement of a balanced democratization process, particularly in its early stages. It was difficult to take a clear stance on NATO and EU membership.

In 2001, the steps taken by Simeon's government towards liberalism and the unification of the socialist and democratic parties had a significant impact on the democratization process. As a result, Bulgaria made rapid progress towards integration with NATO and

the EU. During this period, Bulgaria's democratization process was influenced by requests for NATO and EU membership, leading to external factors playing a greater role. Membership rules and conditions were aimed at promoting positive democratic changes in domestic politics. As a result, Bulgaria achieved NATO membership in 2004 and EU membership in 2007. Bulgaria initiated its democratization process long ago, and it achieved its goals peacefully and without bloodshed.

Bulgaria has set an exemplary precedent among post-communist European countries by initiating the democratisation process in a peaceful manner and subsequently integrating into Western democratic institutions. In contrast to other Central and Eastern European countries, Bulgaria was the first to establish a democratic constitution, thereby laying the foundation for a robust democratic system. The key to this success can be found in the interplay between internal and external factors during the democratisation process. The subject of this thesis is the influence of internal and external factors on the direction of the democratisation process and Bulgaria's integration into Western democracy. The thesis employed transition theory to elucidate Bulgaria's transition to democracy and its subsequent evolution.

The transition to democracy in Bulgaria is not primarily concerned with the historical development of democracy, but rather with the manner in which a democratic system was established within the country. Transition theory provides an effective explanation of these circumstances. The case study of Bulgaria's democratisation process, which forms the subject of the thesis, was explained based on transition theory. This theory best explains the democratisation process of Bulgaria, which occurred in an unexpected place and in a short period. The fact that elites managed the transition to democracy in a controlled manner and that communist and pro-democratic elites transitioned to democracy by agreement is also explained by the transition theory.

Finally, according to the transition theory, the democratisation process occurs at three levels: the transition period of Bulgaria, the establishment of a democratic system and the consolidation of democracy in the country. The transition of Bulgaria from the communist system to democracy is compatible with the transition theory, and therefore the process is explained using this theory.

Bulgaria's successful integration into the Western democratic society can be attributed to the country's adherence to a nuanced policy and the implementation of a

democratisation method. Following the transition period, the first elections to form the Grand National Assembly and the subsequent abolition of the communist constitution and the creation of a new democratic constitution guaranteed the establishment of democracy in the country. Following the formation of democratic institutions, the fact that the government changed only through normal elections and that there was never a tendency to establish a government by using force was indicative of the strengthening of democracy in the country. Bulgaria's minimalist approach to democracy has resulted in significant progress towards a comprehensive understanding of the concept. Despite the establishment and change of short-term governments, the overarching objective was the advancement of democracy in the country, and no compromises were made. The consolidation of democracy in Bulgaria was facilitated by the EU, which played a pivotal role in fostering an understanding of democracy within the country. This process culminated in Bulgaria's acceptance into the democratic community.

Bulgaria has experienced three significant turning points. The first was not the transformation and reform of the communist system, but the direct transition to democracy, which was the result of the round table discussions. The second significant turning point occurred in the 1997 elections, when a pro-democracy government was established and its mandate completed, thereby ensuring political balance in the country. The third turning point occurred in the 2001 elections, when the liberals established a government and NATO and EU membership were achieved. These three ruptures have effectively determined the course of democracy in the country.

In conclusion, the democratization process of Bulgaria was divided into three phases according to Rustow democratisation model and these periods were analysed in deep, also the contributions of internal and external factors to democratization were presented. The first phase the period between 1989 and 1990, Bulgaria experienced a transition period from communism to a democratic order.

The second phase occurred between 1990 and 2001. During this time, the old institutions were replaced with new democratic ones. However, these changes did not occur at the desired pace. In the 1994 elections, the communists took power, resulting in a shift from Euro-Atlantic politics to pro-Russian politics. After the elections held in 1997, the democratic wing of UDF won the elections became a turning point for Bulgaria and the government of Ivan Kostov accelerated the democratization process

again. This period coincided with the Kosovo war, and Bulgaria's close relationship with NATO, while protecting its own national interests, opened the Euro-Atlantic road. Finally, the period after 2001 developed as the years when democracy started to consolidate, and as a result, Bulgaria became a full member of the EU in 2007.

As for the results from the thesis, it can be concluded:

- In the study has emphasized that the transition to democracy in Bulgaria has been in accordance with the definition of minimal democracy.
- The most striking point in the democratization process in Bulgaria is that this process takes place under the leadership of the elite (elite-driven process).
- Bulgaria's transition to democracy started with the impact of major changes in world politics (Perestroika and Glasnost, Malta negotiation, End of Cold War, Dissolution of Soviets) and continued with the decisions of political elites.
- The role of elites in the democratization process in Bulgaria has come to the fore (intra-party coup and removal of Todor Zhivkov from power) and a top-down system change and transformation has been experienced.
- During the final years of the communist regime, an ethnic revolt emerged as the assimilation process against the Turks intensified. This revolt provided an opportunity for the pro-democracy opposition to take action.
- The unification of the Turks and the pro-democracy opposition mobilised the people and led to the overthrow of the communist system.
- The politically organized opposition taking to the streets led to Round-Table Talks with the communists. However, the decision made as a result of the negotiations did not lead to the peaceful reform of the communist system, but instead resulted in the implementation of democratic system in the state.
- In the first democratic elections, the Constituent Parliament was elected. The communists emerged as the winners of the elections, and thus gained control of the constitution-making process.
- Although elections were held at different times between 1990 and 1997, short-term governments were established and democratic development slowed down.
- The democratic government was established in 1997 and it was the government that completed its mandate for the first time until the end. The aforementioned period was characterised by a stabilisation of the democratic system.

- In 2001, liberals won the elections and formed a coalition government and paved the way for NATO (in 2004) and EU (in 2007) integration.



REFERENCES

- Ágh, A. (1999). Processes of Democratization in the East Central European and Balkan States: Sovereignty-Related Conflicts in the Context of Europeanization. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 32(3), 263-279.
- Akşit, S. (2011). Doğu Avrupa'da Radikal Neo-Liberal Dönüşüm. *İstanbul Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 0 (41), 61-85. Retrieved from <http://dergipark.org.tr/iusiyaal/issue/595/5987>
- Almond, G. B. & Verba, S. (1963). *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*. (1st ed.). California: SAGE Publication.
- Andreev, S. A. (2009). The Unbearable Lightness of Membership: Bulgaria and Romania after the 2007 EU Accession. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 42(3), 375-393.
- Arat, Z. F. (1988). Democracy and Economic Development: Modernization Theory Revisited. *Comparative Politics*, 21(1), 21–36. <https://doi.org/10.2307/422069>
- Arndt, M. (2013). Muslims in Bulgaria: Degree of Integration, Political Representation and Social Status of the Turkish, Pomak and Roma Peoples. *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung*, 6–20.
- Axtmann, R. (2007). *Democracy: Problems and Perspectives*. (1 ed.). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Babbie, E. (2010). *The Practice of Social Research*. (2 ed.). USA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.
- Baroch, C. T. (1971). The Brezhnev Doctrine. *American Bar Association Journal*, 57(7), 686–690. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25725538>
- Barrington, M. (1966). *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*. (1st ed.). UK: Allen Lane the Penguin Press.
- Bechev, D. (2006). Carrots, Sticks and Norms: the EU and Regional Cooperation in Southeast Europe. *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, 8(1), 27-43.
- Bechev, D. (2009). From Policy-Takers to Policy-Makers? Observations on Bulgarian and Romanian Foreign Policy Before and After EU Accession. *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 10(2), 210-224.
- Bell, J. B. (1990). “Post-Communist” Bulgaria. *Current History*, 89(551), 417–429.
- Bell, J. D. (1997). Democratization and Political Participation in "Post-Communist" Bulgaria. In Dawisha, K & Parrot, B (Eds), *Politics, Power and the Struggle for*

- Democracy in South-East Europe (Democratization and Authoritarianism in Post-Communist Societies, pp. 353-402). UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Bideleux, R. & Jeffries, I. (2007). *The Balkans a Post-Communist History*. (1st ed.). UK: Routledge.
- Binder, D. (1998, August, 7). Todor Zhivkov Dies at 86; Ruled Bulgaria for 35 Years. *The New York Times*. Retrieved 1 April, 2020, from <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/08/07/world/todor-zhivkov-dies-at-86-ruled-bulgaria-for-35-years.html>
- Boix, C. & Stokes, S. C. (2003). Endogenous Democratization. *World Politics*, 55(04), 517–549. doi:10.1353/wp.2003.0019
- Bojkov, V. D. (2004). Neither Here, Not There: Bulgaria and Romania in Current European Politics. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 37(4), 509–522.
- Bollen, K. A. (1980). Issues in the Comparative Measurement of Political Democracy. *American Sociological Review*, 45(3), 370-390.
- Brar, H. (1992). *Perestroika: The Complete Collapse of Revisionism*. (1st ed.). India: Progressive Printers.
- Brown, A. (2007). *Seven Years that Changed the World Perestroika in Perspective*. (1st ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Brown, A. (2015). *Perestroika: Reform that Changed the World*. Retrieved 26 October, 2021, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31733045>
- Bunce, V. (1990). The Struggle for Liberal Democracy in Eastern Europe. *World Policy Journal*, 7(3), 395–430.
- Burkhart, R. E. & Lewis-Beck, M. S. (1994). Comparative Democracy: The Economic Development Thesis. *American Political Science Review*, 88(04), 903–910. Doi:10.2307/2082715
- By Reuters. (1991). End of the Soviet Union; Text of Gorbachev's Farewell Address 1991. Retrieved 8 April, 2023, from <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/12/26/world/end-of-the-soviet-union-text-of-gorbachev-s-farewell-address.html>
- Carothers, T. (2000). Civil Society. *Foreign Policy*, 3(8), 18-29.
- Çaşkurulu, E. (2020). Bulgaristan Devleti Kamu Maliyesi Yapısı. In Tangör, B (Ed), *Bulgaristanda Devletin Yeniden İnşası: Anayasal Gelişmeler ve İdari Yapı* (pp. 331- 426). Ankara: TİAV.
- Chary, F. B. (2011). *The History of Bulgaria*. (1st ed.). USA: ABC-CLIO/Greenwood.

- Cheibub, J. A. & Vreeland, J. R. (2016). Modernization Theory. Oxford Handbooks Online. Doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199845156.013.26
- Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. (1990). Report on the Parliamentary Elections in Bulgaria. Washington. DC.
- Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria. (1991). <https://www.parliamentbg/en/const>. Retrieved 8 February, 2024, from <https://www.parliament.bg/bg/const>
- Crampton, R. (1997). The Bulgarian Elections of 19 April 1997. *Electoral Studies*, 16(4), 560-563.
- Crampton, R. J. (2005). *A Concise History of Bulgaria*. (2 nd ed.). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Crampton, R. J. (2007). *Bulgaria*. (1st ed.). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approach*. California: Sage publications, Inc. ISBN: 9781452226101
- Curtis, G. E. (1992). *Bulgaria: A Country Study*. Retrieved 3 April, 2020, from <http://countrystudies.us/bulgaria/>
- Cutright, P. (1963). National Political Development: Measurement and Analysis. *American Sociological Review*, 28(2), 253–264. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2090612>
- Сакскобургготски, С. (2014). *Симеон II - Една Необикновена Съдба*. (1st ed.). София: Сиела.
- Спасов, М. (2004). *Историята на СДС 1993 - 1997*. (1st ed.). София: Гутенберг.
- d’Estaing, V. G., Nakasone, Y., & Kissinger, H. A. (1989). East-West Relations. *Foreign Affairs*, 68(3), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20044005>
- Dahl, R. A. (1998). *On Democracy*. (1st ed.). USA: Yale University Press.
- Dahl, R. A. (1989). *Democracy and its Critics*. (1st ed.). UK: Yale University.
- Dahl, R. A. (1971). *Polyarchy*. (1st ed.). USA: Yale University Press.
- Daskalov, R. (1999). The Emerging Order Bulgarian Experiences with Democracy. In Sacwa, R (Ed), *The Experience of Democratization in Eastern Europe Selected Papers from the Fifth World Congress of Central and East European Studies*, Warsaw, 1995 (pp. 202- 222). Great Britain: Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Daskalov, R. (2011). *Debating the Past Modern Bulgarian History: From Stambolov to Zhivkov*. (1st ed.). Budapest: Central European University Press.

- Daskalov, R. (2018). A Democracy Born in Pain: Bulgarian Politics, 1989-1997. In Bell, J.D (Ed), *Bulgaria in Transition Politics, Economics, Society, and Culture after Communism* (pp. 9-38). London: Routledge.
- Dedominicis, B. E. (2011). The Bulgarian Ethnic Model: Post-1989 Bulgarian Ethnic Conflict Resolution. *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity*, 39(3), 441–460.
- Delanty, G. & Isin, E. (2003). Introduction: Reorienting Historical Sociology. In Delanty, G & Isin, E (Eds), *Handbook of Historical Sociology* (pp. 1-9). USA: SAGE Publications.
- Dellin, L. A. D. (1963). Bulgaria under Soviet Leadership. *Current History*, 44(261), 281–287. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45310920>
- Demetropoulou, L. (2002). Europe and the Balkans: Membership Aspiration, EU Involvement and Europeanization Capacity in South-Eastern Europe. *Southeast European Politics*, III (2-3), 87-106.
- Desai, P. (1988). *Perestroika in Perspective the Design and Dilemmas of Soviet Reform*. (1st ed.). New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Diamond, L. (1992). Economic Development and Democracy Reconsidered. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 35(4-5), 450–499. doi:10.1177/000276429203500407
- Dimitrova, A. (2002). Enlargement, Institution-Building and the EU's Administrative Capacity Requirement. *West European Politics*, 25(4), 171-190.
- Dimitrova, A. (2004). Bulgaria. In Dryzek, J & Holmes, L (Eds), *Post-Communist Democratization Political Discourses across Thirteen Countries* (pp. 206- 223). United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Dimitrova, A. (2012). Public Opinion in Bulgaria with Regard to the EU Membership in the Context of the Economic Crisis towards a ‘Bulgarian Exception’? Retrieved 7 December, 2022, from <https://www.cairn.info/revue-l-europe-en-formation-2012-2-page-289.htm>
- Dolenec, D. (2016). Democratization in the Balkans the Limits of Elite-Driven Reform. *Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, 12(1), 125-144.
- Dryzek, J. S. & Holmes, L. T. (2004). *Post-Communist Democratization Political Discourses across Thirteen Countries*. (1st ed.). UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Dursun, D. (2008). *Siyaset Bilimi*. (4 ed.). Istanbul: Beta Basim Yayim Dağıtım A. Ş.
- ec.Europa. (1990). European Commission - Enlargement - Phare. Retrieved 16 March 2022, from https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enlargement-policy/glossary/phare_en

- ec.Europa. (1993). European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations. Retrieved 16 March 2022, from https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enlargement-policy/conditions-membership_en
- Ekici, M. U. (2018). *Bulgaristan Siyasetini Anlama Kılavuzu*. (1st ed.). Istanbul: SETA.
- Eminov, A. (1999). The Turks in Bulgaria: Post-1989 Developments. *Nationalities Papers*, 27(1), 31–55.
- Epicenter (2020). На 3 януари 1990 стартира Кръглата маса, която осъществи прехода към демокрация. (On January 3, 1990, the Round Table started, which made the transition to democracy possible) Retrieved 15 February, 2022, from <https://epicenter.bg/article/30-godini-ot-Kraglata-masa/202901/11/0>
- Epstein, D. L., Bates, R., Goldstone, J., Kristensen, I., & O'Halloran, S. (2006). Democratic Transitions. *American Journal of Political Science*, 50(3), 551–569. Doi:10.1111/j.1540-5907.2006.00201.x
- Evans, G. & Whitefield, S. (1995). The Politics and Economics of Democratic Commitment: Support for Democracy in Transition Societies. *British Journal of Political Science*, 25(4), 485–514.
- Fischer, M. (2006). Civil Society in Conflict Transformation: Ambivalence, Potentials and Challenges. Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 1-32.
- Fish, M. S. & Brooks, R. S. (2000). Bulgarian Democracy's Organizational Weapon an Improbable Success Story in the Balkans. *East European Constitutional Review*, 63-71. Retrieved 9 April, 2022, from <https://polisci.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/people/u3833/FishBulgarianParties.pdf>
- Freedom House. (1990). Freedom in the World Political Rights & Civil Liberties 1989-1990. Retrieved 18 April, 2022, from https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Freedom_in_the_World_1989-1990_complete_book.pdf
- Fuchs-Schündeln, N. & Schündeln, M. (2020). The Long-Term Effects of Communism in Eastern Europe. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 34(2), 172–191
- Gallagher, T. (2004). Balkan but Different: Romania and Bulgaria's Contrasting Paths to NATO Membership 1994–2002. *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 20(4), 1–19.
- Ganev, V. I. (2004). History, Politics, and the Constitution: Ethnic Conflict and Constitutional Adjudication in Postcommunist Bulgaria. *Slavic Review*, 63(1), 66–89.

- Ganev, V. I. (2018). "Soft Decisionism" in Bulgaria. *Journal of Democracy*, 29(3), 91–103.
- George, A. and A. Bennett (2005). *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- George, A. L. & Bennett, A. (2005). *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. (1st ed.). UK: MITT Press.
- Gerganov, E. N., Dilova, M. L., Paspalanova, E. P., & Petkova, K. G. (1995). Voting in the First Post Totalitarian Elections in Bulgaria. *Political Psychology*, 16(4), 737–748.
- Gerring, J. (2017). *Case Study Research Principles and Practices*. (2 ed.). UK: Cambridge.
- Giatzidis, E. (2002). *An Introduction to Post communist Bulgaria: Political, Economic and Social Transformation*. (1st ed.). Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Giddens, A. (1971). *Capitalism and modern social theory an Analysis of the Writings of Marx, Durkheim and Max Weber*. (1st ed.). UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Gill, G. (2000). *The Dynamics of Democratization Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*. (1st ed.). London: Macmillan Press LTD.
- Goldman, M. (1992). *Perestroika*. Retrieved 26 October, 2021, from <https://www.econlib.org/library/Enc1/Perestroika.html>
- Gorbachev, M. (1987). *Perestroika New Thinking for Our Country and the World*. (1 ed.). New York: Harper & Row.
- Grabbe, H. (2002). European Union Conditionality and the "Acquis Communautaire." *International Political Science Review / Revue Internationale de Science Politique*, 23(3), 249–268.
- Grugel, J. (2002). *Democratization a Critical Introduction*. (1 ed.). New York: Palgrave.
- Guineva, M. (2012). 'Breakfast with Mitterrand' in the Shadow of the Berlin Wall. Retrieved 12 November, 2021, from <https://www.novinite.com/articles/141380/%27Breakfast+with+Mitterrand%27+in+the+Shadow+of+the+Berlin+Wall>
- Gürsoy, Y. (2018). Rejim Değişiklikleri: Otoriterleşme ve Demokratikleşme. In Sayari, S & Bilgin, D. H. (Eds), *Karşılaştırmalı Siyaset Temel Konular ve Yaklaşımlar* (pp. 74- 100). Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları.
- Hancock, D & Algozzine, B. (2006). *Doing Case Study Research a Practical Guide for Beginning Researchers*. (1st ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.

- Harper, M. A. G. (2003). The 2001 Parliamentary and Presidential Elections in Bulgaria. *Electoral Studies*, 22(2), 335–344.
- Hein, M. (2016). Bulgaria. In Fruhstorfer, A & Hein, M (Eds), *Constitutional Politics in Central and Eastern Europe from Post-Socialist Transition to the Reform of Political Systems* (pp. 145-173). Wiesbaden: Springer VS.
- Held, D. (2006). *Models of Democracy*. (3 ed.). UK: Cambridge .
- Heywood, A. (2004). *Political Theory an Introduction*. (3rd ed.). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Heywood, A. (2013). *Politics*. (4th ed.). UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, George Bush Presidential Library, National Security Council, Condoleezza Rice and Arnold Kanter files. (1989). "US Memorandums of Conversation, George H. W. Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev at Malta Summit, 2-3 December 1989,". Retrieved 10 October, 2021, from <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117430>
- Holmes, L. (2009). Crime, Organised Crime and Corruption in Post-Communist Europe and the CIS. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 42(2), 265–287.
- Honan, W. (2000). Petar Mladenov, Bulgarian Communist Leader, 63. *The New York Times*. Retrieved 8 October, 2021, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2000/06/12/world/petar-mladenov-bulgarian-communist-leader-63.html>
- Houbenova-Delissivkova, T. (1998). Privatisation in Bulgaria. *SEER: Journal for Labour and Social Affairs in Eastern Europe*, 1(1), 73–85.
- Huntington, S. (1993). *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late 20th Century*. (1st ed.). USA: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Huntington, S. P. (1997). After Twenty Years: The Future of the Third Wave. *Journal of Democracy*, 8(4), 3-12.
- Huntington, S. M. (2011). *Üçüncü Dalga Yirminci Yüzyıl Sonlarında Demokratlasma*. Ankara: Yetkin Basimevi.
- Huntington, S. P. (1991). *The Third Wave Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. (1st ed.). USA: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Huntington, S. P. (2011). *Üçüncü Dalga Geç 20 Yüzyılda Demokratikleşme*. (3rd ed.). Ankara: Kilit Yayınları.
- Inglehart, R. & Welzel, C. (2005). *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy the Human Development Sequence*. (1st ed.). UK: Cambridge University Press.

- Inglehart, R. & Welzel, C. (2010). Changing Mass Priorities: the Link between Modernization and Democracy. *American Political Science Association*, 8(2), 551-567. Retrieved 16 October, 2021, from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25698618>
- Inglehart, R. & Baker, W. E. (2000). Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values. *American Sociological Review*, 65(1), 19–51. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2657288>
- Ishiyama, J. T. (1997). Transitional Electoral Systems in Post-Communist Eastern Europe. *Political Science Quarterly*, 112(1), 95–115.
- Jeffrey, S. (1998). Bulgaria and NATO: 7 Lost Years. *Information & Security: An International Journal*, 1(2), 93-104.
- Kaldor, M. & Vejvoda, I. (1997). Democratization in Central and East European Countries. *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944)*, 73(1), 59-82
- Karasimeonov, G. (2002). The Political Parties in Bulgaria and the Political Situation at the Time of the 2001 Presidential Election. *SEER: Journal for Labour and Social Affairs in Eastern Europe*, 4(4), 109–122.
- Karčić, F. (2014). Muslimani Balkana: „Istočno pitanje“ u XX vijeku. (Muslims of the Balkans: "The Eastern Question" in the 20th century) (1st ed.). Sarajevo: Centar za Napredne Studije.
- Karpat, K. (2017). *Türk Demokrasi Tarihi*. (9 ed.). Istanbul: Timaş Yayinlari.
- Kauffman, C. M. (2021). Democratization. Retrieved 19 October, 2021, from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/democratization>
- Klotz, A. & Prakash, D. (2008). *Qualitative Methods in International Relations a Pluralist Guide*. (1st ed.). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Koinova, M. (1999). Ethnic and Religious Minorities in Bulgaria. *SEER: Journal for Labour and Social Affairs in Eastern Europe*, 2(2), 147–158.
- Kormusheva, K. (2003). Change of Behaviour in Transition: The Bulgarian Protests in January 1997. *Polish Sociological Review*, 144, 435–443.
- Kostova, D. (1994). Power Interests of the Elite in Post-Communist Bulgaria. *Anthropological Journal on European Cultures*, 3(1), 31–49.
- Kostova, D. (2016). Report on Bulgaria: Elites' Europeanness and Their Trust in Institutions. *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung*, 41(4 (158)), 239–253.
- Koulov, B. (1995). Geography of Electoral Preferences: the 1990 Great National Assembly Elections in Bulgaria. *Political Geography*, 13(3), 241-258.

- Kramer, M. (1989). Beyond the Brezhnev Doctrine: A New Era in Soviet-East European Relations? *International Security*, 14(3), 25–67. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2538931>
- Карасимеонов, Г. (2006). *Партийната Система в България*. (The Party System in Bulgaria) София: ГорексПрес.
- Клуб за подкрепа на гласността и преустройството в България; Клуб за гласност и демокрация; Федерация на клубовете за гласност и демокрация; Федерация на клубовете за демокрация. (1989). Декларация на Клуба за Подкрепа на Гласността и Преустройството в България. (Declaration of the Club for Support of Publicity and Reconstruction in Bulgaria) Retrieved 11 November, 2021, from http://www.omda.bg/public/arhiv/dokumenti_politicheski/Priziv_za_dialog.htm
- Корнажева, М. & Станчева, Б. (2013). Младите Демокрации в Европейския Съюз Като Дилема за Интеграционния Процес. (The Young Democracies in the European Union as a Dilemma for the Integration Process) *Научни Трудове на Русенския Университет*, 54(52), 68-76.
- Коруджиев, Д. (2008). 1989. (1st ed.). Пловдив: Летера.
- Костов, И. (2019). Свидетелства за Прехода 1989-1999. (Testimonies for the Transition 1989-1999) (1st ed.). София: Ciela.
- Lakov, K. (2014). *The Transition That Never Happened: At Least Not the Way That Was Recommended*. (1st ed.). Sofia: Classic Design Ltd.
- Le Moyne, R. (2009). Conflict Prevention and Dialog. Retrieved 14 April, 2020, from <http://www.democraticdialoguenetwork.org/app/documents/view/en/1421/8>
- Light, M. (1990). Foreign Policy. In Mccauley, M (Ed), *Gorbachev and Perestroika* (pp. 169-189). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Levy, J.S. (2008). Case Studies: Types, Designs, and Logics of Inference. *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 25(1), 1-18.
- Linz, J. J. & Stepan, A. (1996). *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*. (1st Ed.). USA: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Linz, J. J. (2017). *Totaliter ve Otoriter Rejimler*. (4 ed.). Ankara: Liberte Yayinlari.
- Lipset, S. M. (1994). The Social Requisites of Democracy Revisited: 1993 Presidential Address. *American Sociological Review*, 59(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2096130>
- Lipset, S. M. (1959). Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy. *The American Political Science Review*, 53(1), 69-105.

- Laqueur, W. (1988). *Glasnost & Its Limits*. Retrieved 26 October, 2021, from <https://www.commentary.org/articles/walter-laqueur/glasnost-its-limits/>
- Mandacı, N. (2020). Bulgaristan: Siyasal Hayat ve Kurumlar. In Tangör, B (Ed), *Bulgaristanda Devletin Yeniden İnşası: Anayasal Gelişmeler ve İdari Yapı* (pp. 73-135). Ankara: TİAV.
- Maria, S. (2010). Bulgaria since 1989. In Pamet, S. R. (Ed), *Central and Southeast European Politics since 1989* (pp. 400-420). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Mason, D. (1988). Glasnost, Perestroika and Eastern Europe. *International Affairs* (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-), 64(3), 431-448.
- McCrone, D. J. & Cnudde, C. F. (1967). Toward a Communications Theory of Democratic Political Development: A Causal Model. *American Political Science Review*, 61(01), 72–79. Doi:10.2307/1953876
- Melone, A. P. (1994). Bulgaria's National Roundtable Talks and the Politics of Accommodation. *International Political Science Review / Revue Internationale de Science Politique*, 15(3), 257-273.
- Melone, A. P. (1996). The Struggle for Judicial Independence and the Transition toward Democracy in Bulgaria. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 29(2), 231–243.
- Mihaylov, T. (2013) *Bulgaria in the Current Geopolitical Situation* (Strategy Research Project) U.S. Army War College. Retrieved 12 December, 2022, from <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA589453.pdf>
- Mitchell, R. J. (1972). The Brezhnev Doctrine and Communist Ideology. *The Review of Politics*, 34(2), 190–209. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1406470>
- Mitropolitski, S. (2013). The Role of European Union Integration in Post-Communist Democratization in Bulgaria and Macedonia. *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne Des Slavistes*, 55(3-4), 365-389.
- Moor, B. (1966). *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*. (1 ed.). UK: Penguin University Books.
- Muller, E. N., & Seligson, M. A. (1994). Civic Culture and Democracy: The Question of Causal Relationships. *American Political Science Review*, 88(03), 635–652. doi:10.2307/2944800
- Munroe, T. (1994). Review of the Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century, by S. P. Huntington. *Social and Economic Studies*, 43(3), 206–221.
- Марков, Г. & Беновска, И. (1993). *Кой Кой Е, Георги Марков*. (Who's Who, Georgi Markov) (1st ed.). София: Език и култура.

- Михайлов, В. (2018). Факти. (Facts) Retrieved 23 April, 2020, from <https://fakti.bg/krimi/309965-14-uni-1923-g-ekzekuciata-na-aleksandar-stamboliiski>
- Михайлова, Е. (2012). Парламентаризъм и Правова Държава в България. (Parliamentarism and Rule of Law in Bulgaria) (1 ed.). София: Нов Български Университет.
- Neuman, W.L. (2014). Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. (7 ed.). UK: Pearson Education.
- Nikolov, S. E. (2004). The Bulgarian Military: In Search of New Alignments. *Connections*, 3(4), 69–82.
- Noutcheva, G. & Bechev, D. (2008). The Successful Laggards: Bulgaria and Romania's Accession to the EU. *East European Politics and Societies*, 22(1), 114-144.
- Nova TV. (2015). Кой е Желю Желев?. (Who is Zhelyu Zhelev?) Retrieved 28 April, 2020, from <https://nova.bg/news/view/2015/01/30/>
- O'donnell, G. & Schmitter, P. (1986). Transitions from Authoritarian Rule Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies. (1 ed.). UK: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Omda.bg (2018). Ahmed Dogan. Retrieved 10 March 2022, from http://www.omda.bg/public/engl/personalia/dogan_engl.htm
- Omda.bg (2018). Георги Седефчов Първанов Президент на Република България. (Georgi Sedefchov Parvanov President of the Republic of Bulgaria) Retrieved 10 March, 2022, from <http://www.omda.bg/public/bulg/news/personal/parvanov.htm>
- Омда. (2004). Соломон Исак Паси Министър на Външните Работи 2001-2005. (Solomon Isaac Passi Minister of Foreign Affairs 2001-2005) Retrieved 10 December, 2022, from <https://www.omda.bg/public/bulg/news/personal/pasi.htm>
- Omda.bg (2018). Любен Борисов Беров. Retrieved 10 March, 2022, from <http://www.omda.bg/public/bulg/news/personal/Berov.htm>
- Omda.bg (2018). Съюз на Демократичните Сили /СДС/. (Union of Democratic Forces /SDS/.) Retrieved 8 March, 2022, from <http://www.omda.bg/public/bulg/news/party/sds.htm>
- Otfinoski, S. (2004). Nations in Transition: Bulgaria . (2 nd ed.). New York: Facts on File.
- Özbudun , E. (2017). Anayasalcılık ve Demokrasi. (2 ed.). Istanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi.

- Özen, Ç. (2020). Bulgaristan'ın Dış Politikası ve Dönüşümü: Tarihsel bir Bakış. In Tangör, B (Ed), Bulgaristanda Devletin Yeniden İnşası: Anayasal Gelişmeler ve İdari Yapı (pp. 229- 270). Ankara: TİAV.
- Özügürlü, S. B. & Gülpınar, T. (2020). Bulgaristanda Devletin Yeniden İnşası: Anayasal Gelişmeler ve İdari Yapı. In Tangör, B (Ed), Bulgaristan İdari, Siyasi Ve Sosyo-Ekonomik Yapı (pp. 37-57). Ankara: TİAV.
- Paffenholz, T. (2009). Summary of Results for a Comparative Research Project: Civil Society and Peacebuilding. The Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding, 1(4), 1-32.
- Paffenholz, T. (2015). Civil Society and Peacebuilding. Development Dialogue, 1-11.
- Pavan, A. (1993). Europe and the Transition in the Eastern Countries: Democracy and Development. *Aula*, 15(2), 54–61.
- Peicheva, D. (2018). Direct Democracy in Bulgaria. In M. Marczewska-Rytko (Ed.), *Handbook of Direct Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989* (1st ed., pp. 57–68). Verlag Barbara Budrich.
- Petroff, V. (2009). The Belated Bulgarian Dissidence: The Emergence and Development of Dissident Movements in Bulgaria. Retrieved 10 April, 2023, from https://www.omda.bg/public/biblioteka/viktor_petroff/belated_bulgarian_dissidence.htm
- Petrova, D. (2004). Bulgaria. In Wielgoths, J. & Pollack, D (Eds), *Dissent and Opposition in Communist Eastern Europe: Origins of Civil Society and Democratic Transition* (pp. 161-185). UK: Ashgate Publishing Company.
- Petrovic, M. (2008). The Role of Geography and History in Determining the Slower Progress of Post-Communist Transition in the Balkans. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 41(2), 123–145.
- Petrovic, M. (2013). *The Democratic Transition of Post-Communist Europe in the Shadow of Communist Differences and Uneven EUropeanisation*. (1st ed.). UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Popova, L. (2020). The End Goal of the Post-Communist Transition in Bulgaria: Societal Transformation or EU Membership?. *Przegląd Europejski*, 2020(4), 79-94.
- Powell, G. B. (1982). *Contemporary Democracies Participation, Stability, and Violence*. (1st ed.). USA: Harvard University Press.
- Pridham, G., Herring, E. & Sanford , G. (1997). *Building Democracy? The International Dimension of Democratization in Eastern Europe*. (2 ed.). London & Washington: Leicester University Press.

- Przeworski, A. (1986). Some Problems in the Study of the Transition to Democracy. In O'donnell, G, Schmitter, P & Whitehead, L (Eds), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule Comparative Perspectives* (pp. 47- 64). UK: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Przeworski, A. (1991). *Democracy and the Market Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America*. (1st ed.). UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Przeworski, A. & Limongi, F. (1997). Modernization: Theories and Facts. *World Politics*, 49(02), 155–183. doi:10.1353/wp.1997.0004
- Radio Bulgaria. (2019). 30 Years since the Historic Visit to Bulgaria by Francois Mitterrand. Retrieved 9 April, 2023, from <https://bnr.bg/en/post/101070676/30-years-since-the-historical-visit-to-bulgaria-by-francois-mitterrand>
- Ramet, S. P. (1996). Eastern Europe's Painful Transition. *Current History*, 95(599), 97–102.
- Ratchev, V. & Milina, V. (2002). Civil-Military Relations and the Construction of Consolidated Democracy: The Case of Bulgaria. *Connections*, 1(2), 89–100.
- Raycheva, L. (2016). Challenges of Bulgarian Transformations to Contemporary Media Developments (1989–2014). *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska, sectio K – Politologia*, 23(1), 163-180.
- Romaniecki, L. (1970). Sources of the Brezhnev Doctrine of Limited Sovereignty and Intervention. *Israel Law Review*, 5(4), 527–541.
- Ropers, N. (2017). *Basics of Dialogue Facilitation*. (1 ed.). Berlin: Berghof Foundation.
- Rose, R. (2009). *Understanding Post-Communist Transformation a Bottom-Up Approach*. (1st ed.). London: Routledge.
- Rozoff, R. (2010). US And NATO Accelerate Military Build-Up In Black Sea Region. Retrieved 8 December, 2022, from <https://www.globalresearch.ca/u-s-and-nato-accelerate-military-build-up-in-black-sea-region/19259>
- Rueschemeyer, D, Huber Stephens, E & Stephens, J..D. (1992). *Capitalist Development and Democracy*. (1st ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Rustow, D. (1970). Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model. *Comparative Politics*, 2(3), 337-363.
- Sapiro, I. & Córdón, C. .H. (1999). *Democracy's Edges*. (1st ed.). USA: Cambridge University Press.
- Sartori, G. (1987). *The Theory of Democracy Revisited*. (1st ed.). New Jersey: Chatham House Publishers.

- Savkova, L. (2010). One Bed, Different Dreams: Pre-Accession Attitudes to EU Membership in the Bulgarian Parliament. *International Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs*, 19(4), 34–50.
- Savranskaya, S., Blanton, T. & Zubok, V. (2010). *Masterpieces of History the Peaceful End of the Cold War in Europe, 1989. (1st Ed.)*. Budapest New York: Central European University Press.
- Savranskaya, S. (2005). Alexander Yakovlev and the Roots of the Soviet Reforms. National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No 168. Retrieved 12 October, 2021, from <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB168/index.htm>
- Schmemmann, S. (1986). Greater 'Glasnost' Turns Some Soviet Heads. Retrieved 23 October, 2021, from <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/11/09/weekinreview/greater-glasnost-turns-some-soviet-heads.html>
- Schmidt, M. G. (2002). *Demokrasi Kuramlarina Giriş*. (2 nd ed.). Ankara: Vadi Yayınları.
- Schmitter, P. C. & Karl, T. L. (1991). What Democracy Is and Is Not. *Journal of Democracy* , 1(4), 3-16.
- Schumpeter, J. A. (1976). *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*. (5th ed.). UK: Taylor & Francis e-Library.
- Sharlanov, D. & Genev, V. I. (2010). Crimes Committed by the Communist Regime in Bulgaria. The Hannah Arendt Center in Sofia. Retrieved 4 April, 2020, from https://www.ustrcr.cz/data/pdf/konference/zlociny_komunismu/COUNTRY%20REPORT%20BULGARIA.pdf
- Sharlanov, D. & Genev, V. I. (2010). Crimes Committed by the Communist Regime in Bulgaria. The Hannah Arendt Center in Sofia. Retrieved 22 Mart, 2021, from https://www.ustrcr.cz/data/pdf/konference/zlociny_komunismu/COUNTRY%20REPORT%20BULGARIA.pdf
- Shin, D. C. (1994). On the Third Wave of Democratization: A Synthesis and Evaluation of Recent Theory and Research. *World Politics*, 47(1), 135- 170.
- Simensen, J. (1999). Democracy and Globalization: Nineteen Eighty-Nine and the “Third Wave”. *Journal of World History*, 10(2), 391-411.
- Şimşir, B. (1986). *Bulgaristan Türkleri (1878- 1985)*. (1 ed.). İstanbul: Bilgi Yayınları.
- Skocpol, T. (2014). Sosyolojinin Tarihsel İmgelemi. In Skocpol, T (Ed), *Tarihsel Sosyoloji Bloch'tan W Allenstein'e Görüşler Ve Yöntemler* (pp. 1-25). İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları.

- Smilov, D. (2010). Bulgaria the Discontents and Frustrations of a Newly Consolidated Democracy. In Morlino, L & Sadurski, W (Eds), Democratization and the European Union Comparing Central and Eastern European Post-Communist Countries (pp. 96-119). UK: Routledge.
- Smilov, D. & Jileva, E. (2009). The Politics of Bulgarian Citizenship: National identity, Democracy and Other Uses. In R. Bauböck, B. Perchinig, & W. Sievers (Eds.), Citizenship Policies in the New Europe: Expanded and Updated Edition (pp. 211–246). Amsterdam University Press.
- Smith, D. (1991). The Rise of Historical Sociology. (1st ed.). USA: Temple University Press.
- Smith, D. (1999). Olguların ve Degerlerin Keşfi: Barrington Moore'un Tarihsel Sosyolojisi. In Skocpol, T (Ed), Tarihsel Sosyoloji Bloch'tan Wallerstein'e Görüşler ve Yöntemler (pp. 348-395). İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları.
- Soper, K. W. (1992). National Security. In Curtis, G.E (Ed), Bulgaria : A Country Study (pp. 225-275). Washington, DC: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress.
- Spendzharova, A. B. (2003). Bringing Europe In? The Impact of EU Conditionality on Bulgarian and Romanian Politics. Southeast European Politics, IV(2-3), 141-156.
- Spiegel International (2006). Milestones of Perestroika the Dissolution of the USSR a Timeline of the Gorbachev Era, Perestroika, Glasnost and the Demise of the Soviet Union. Retrieved 28 October, 2021, from <https://www.spiegel.de/international/milestones-of-perestroika-the-dissolution-of-the-ussr-a-449404.html>
- Spirova , M. (2006). The Parliamentary Elections in Bulgaria, June 2005. Electoral Studies, 25(3), 616-621.
- Spirova, M. (2008). The Bulgarian Socialist Party: The long road to Europe. Communist and Post-Communist Studies, 41(4), 481–495.
- Spirova, M. (2010). Bulgaria since 1989. In Ramet, S (Ed), Central and Southeast European Politics since 1989 (pp. 401- 421). USA: Cambridge University Press.
- Starcevic, N. (1989). French Presidents Meets with Bulgarian Activists. Retrieved 9 April, 2023, from <https://apnews.com/article/9c01d98f7895aa842f6117302752286d>
- Stefanova, B. (2012). Between Ethnopolitics and Liberal Centrism: the Movement for Rights and Freedoms in the Mainstream of Bulgarian Party Politics. Nationalities Papers, 40(5), 767–782.
- Synovitz, R. (1999). Bulgaria: 'Revolution' Was Coup Within Communist Party. Retrieved 15 February, 2021, from <https://www.rferl.org/a/1092609.html>

- Sztompka, P. (1986). The Renaissance of Historical Orientation in Sociology. *International Sociology*, 1(3), 321–337. Doi:10.1177/026858098600100308
- Tashev, B. (2004). In Search of Security: Bulgaria's Security Policy in Transition. Retrieved 8 December, 2022, from <http://webs.ucm.es/BUCM/cee/papeles/08/06.pdf>
- Tashev, B. (2004). Security Through Integration: Bulgaria's Long Road to Foreign Policy Consensus. *Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs*, 5(2), 72–86.
- Teorell, J. (2010). *Determinants of Democratization Explaining Regime Change in the World, 1972–2006*. (1st ed.). UK: Cambridge University Press.
- The Washington Post. (1989). Bulgarians Demonstrate for Democracy, Glasnost. Retrieved 10 November, 2021, from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1989/11/04/bulgarians-demonstrate-for-democracy-glasnost/3b0b9a31-8be9-4938-9a35-b5625ad04001/>
- Tikkanen, A. (2021). Brezhnev Doctrine Soviet History. Retrieved 25 October, 2021, from <https://www.britannica.com/event/Brezhnev-Doctrine>
- Todorov, A. (2010). *The state of the right: Bulgaria*. (1st ed.). Paris: The Fondation Pour L'innovation Politique.
- Troxel, L. (1993). Bulgaria: Stable Ground in the Balkans? *Current History*, 92(577), 386–389.
- Tsankova, D. (2019). Doç Dr Mihail Gruev: Temelini Oluşturan Prensipleri Bugün de Görmek Istiyoruz. Retrieved 28 April, 2020, from <http://bnr.bg/tr/post/101107571?fbclid=IwAR22sNg0ItYdMFasri1uu49cZRngptSwbwG69bdtu6E8LMhQCUmT0aZ5He8>
- Tzvetkov, P. S. (1992). The Politics of Transition in Bulgaria: Back to the Future?. *Problems of Communism*, 41(3), 34–43.
- Танчев, Е. (2002). Конституционни принципи на съдебната власт и преглед на някои предложения за изменение на конституцията на Република България от 1991 г. (Constitutional Principles of the Judiciary and Review of Some Proposals to Amend the 1991 Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria) In Константинов, Е, Карасимеонов, Г. & Хубчев, П. (Eds), *Право и Политика Предизвикателства на Прехода* (pp. 8-36). София: ГорексПрес.
- Тодоров, А. (2019). 30 Година По Късно : Надежди и Разочарования. (30 Years Later : Hopes and Disappointments) In Андреев et al (Eds), *Преходът България 30 Година По-Късно* (pp. 73-88). София: Колибри.
- Тодоров, К. (2019). *Зад Завесата На Прехода. (Behind the Curtain of Transition)* (1st ed.). София: Изток - Запад.

- Тодоров, К. (2021). Завесата Падна. (The curtain has fallen) (1 ed.). София: Изток Запад.
- Vanderstop, S. W. & Johnston, D. D. (2009). Research Methods for Everyday Life: Blending Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Wiley Imprint
- Vucinich, W. S. (1951). Bulgaria: A Balkan Soviet: Part I. Current History, 20(115), 129–135. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45307905>
- Wucherpfennig, J. & Deutsch, F. (2009). Modernization and Democracy: Theories and Evidence Revisited. Living Reviews in Democracy, 1(1), 1 -9.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). Case Study Research: Design and Methods. (3 ed.). New York: SAGE Publications.
- Zhang, B. (1994). Corporatism, Totalitarianism, and Transitions to Democracy. Comparative Political Studies, 27(1), 108-136.
- Баева, И. (2019). Еволюция и Революция в Българския Преход. (Evolution and Revolution in the Bulgarian Transition) In Андреев et al (Eds), Преходът България 30 години по-късно (pp. 223-242). София: Колибри.
- Вачков, Д. et al. (2020). Трийсет Година От Падането На Тоталитарния Режим Коя България „Загубихме“?. (Thirty Years Since the fall of the Totalitarian Regime Which Bulgaria Have We "Lost"?) (1 ed.). София: Изток-Запад.
- Груев, М. & Калъонски, А. (2019). „Възродителният Процес“ от 1984–1989 г. (The "Revival Process" of 1984–1989) Либерален Преглед, 1(1), 35-84.
- Груев, М. (2012). Първородният Грях на Българския Преход. (The Original Sin of the Bulgarian Transition) Retrieved 9 November, 2021, from <http://epicenter.bg/article/archive/5690/11/0>
- Димитров, М. (2020). БНР Архивен Фонд . (BNR Archive Fund) Retrieved 6 December, 2022, from <https://archives.bnr.bg/parvite-demokraticzni-izbori-v-balgariya/>
- Желев, Ж. (2010). Въпреки Всичко Моята Политическа Биография. (Despite Everything My Political Biography) (2 nd ed.). София: Колибри.
- Иванов, М. (2009). За Тези Събития Трябва да Пише в Учебниците. (About These Events Must Write in Textbooks) Retrieved 1 November, 2021, from <https://www.mediapool.bg/za-tezi-sabitiya-tryabva-da-pishe-v-uchebnitsite-news150414.html>
- Иванов, М. (2019). Няколко Фрагмента от Най- Новата Политическа История на България. (Several Fragments of the Newest Political History of Bulgaria) In Андреев et al (Eds), Преходът България 30 Година По-Късно (pp. 261-278). София: Колибри.

- Искра, Б. (2011). Две Десетилетия Български Преход - Предпоставки, Проблеми, Равносметка. (Two Decades of Bulgarian Transition - Prerequisites, Problems, Assessment) Дриновський Збірник, 4(4), 330-341.
- Лаков, К. (2014). Преходът, Който не Стана Така, Както бе Замислен. (The Transition That Didn't Go As Planned) (1st ed.). София : Институт за Пазарна Икономика.
- Папакочев, Г. (2013). Помак Да Се Наричаш. (Pomak to Call Yourself) Retrieved 7 November, 2021, from <https://www.dw.com/bg/%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%BA-%D0%B4%D0%B0-%D1%81%D0%B5-%D0%BD%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%87%D0%B0%D1%88/a-17278614>
- Паси, С. (2017). Статии, Мнения, Коментари, Интервюта, Извън Протокола. (Articles, Opinions, Commentaries, Interviews, Off the Record) (1 ed.). Пловдив: Хермес.
- Пенчо, К. (2014). Д-р Желю Желев пред "24 часа" през ноември 2014 г: САЩ натиснаха изборите за ВНС да са през юни 1990 г. (Dr. Zhelyu Zhelev in front of "24 Chasa" in November 2014: The US pushed for the elections for the Supreme Court to be held in June 1990) Retrieved 2 March, 2022, from <https://www.24chasa.bg/novini/article/4567649>
- Първанов, Г. (2021). Георги Първанов - Пътуване към Паметта - Разкази за Политиката. (Georgi Parvanov - Journey to Memory - Stories about Politics) (1st ed.). София: УИ „Св Климент Охридски“.
- Райчев, А. & Стойчев, К. (2008). Какво се Случи? Разказ за Прехода в България и Малко След Него 1989-2004. (What happened? Narrative of the Transition in Bulgaria and Shortly After It 1989-2004) (1 ed.). София: Изток-Запад.
- Цеков, Н. (2019). Последното Голямо Злодеяние на Живковия Режим. (The Last Great Atrocity of the Zivkov Regime) Retrieved 7 November, 2021, from <https://www.dw.com/bg/%D0%BF%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%BB%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%BE-%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%BB%D1%8F%D0%BC%D0%BE-%D0%B7%D0%BB%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B5%D1%8F%D0%BD%D0%B8%D0%B5-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%B6%D0%B8%D0%B2%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B8%D1%8F-%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B6%D0%B8%D0%BC/a-50355702>
- Централна Избирателна Комисия . (2005). Парламентарни Избори 2005. (Parliamentary Elections 2005) Retrieved 21 March, 2022, from <https://pi2005.cik.bg/results/>
- Япов, П. (2009). Доган: Демонът на ДС и КГБ. (Dogan: The Demon of the DS and the KGB) (1st ed.). София: Анабел.

24chasa. (2022). Кой колко управлява БСП преди Нинова и след комунизма?. (Who and how much governs the BSP before Ninova and after communism?) Retrieved 5 April, 2022, from <https://www.24chasa.bg/novini/article/10701673>



CURRICULUM VITAE

Full Name: Adnan MESTAN	
Education Information (Undergraduate)	
University	International University of Sarajevo
Faculty	Faculty of Business and Administration
Department	International Relations and Public Administration
Education Information (Master Degree)	
University	International University of Sarajevo
Faculty	Faculty of Business and Administration
Department	International Relations and Public Administration
Articles and Papers	
1. Mestan, A. (2022). Bosna Anyasasının Tarihsel Süreci ve Dayton Anlaşmasının Üzerindeki Etkisi. International Journal of Social, Political and Economic Research, 9(1), 80–94. https://doi.org/10.46291/IJOSPERvol9iss1pp80-94 2. Mestan, A. (2022). Critical Analysis of the Russian-Bulgarian Political Relations based on Far Right Parties 2013-2018. CenRaPS Journal of Social Sciences, 4(1), 143–158. https://doi.org/10.46291/cenraps.v4i1.71	