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**MASS-ELITE DIMENSIONS  
OF SUPPORT FOR THE EU  
IN BULGARIA (1989-2007)**

Lyubka G. Savkova  
University of Sussex

Thesis submitted as required for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Falmer, Brighton

## STATEMENT

I hereby declare that this thesis, whether in the same or different form, has not been previously submitted and will not be submitted, in whole or in part, to another University for the award of any other degree.

**Signature .....**

*To my family and those who had the patience to wait for me*

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

Lyubka Savkova

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**Mass-Elite Dimensions of Support for the EU in Bulgaria (1989-2007)**

**Summary**

This research studies mass-elite dimensions of support for the EU in Bulgaria. The scope is to fill a missing gap in the existing literatures on public opinion and party positions on European integration providing an in-depth study on a specific case of Central and Eastern Europe before accession. In order to present the most comprehensive study, the research employs quantitative and qualitative research methodologies in the form of cross tabulations of public opinion surveys, contents and discourse analysis of election programmes, parliamentary debates and elite interviews.

The main research question is what the level of support was for the EU at mass and elite levels in Bulgaria during the accession process, and what the relationship between them was. The results are likely to be valid well beyond the specific interest of the research in all current member states and candidate countries. The main conclusions drawn from this project are that in Bulgaria the utilitarian and proxy models of support explain well the high degree of public support for EU membership before accession and in that respect Bulgaria conforms to the analysis of past academic contributions on public opinion in Central and Eastern Europe. At elite level European integration was perceived positively and debated in broad terms until the Copenhagen criteria for accession were formulated. In the latter part of the transition EU membership was established as a valence issue in Bulgarian party politics but the parties differed in their visions of the EU according to ideology, their coalition potential and positions in the party system.

Moreover, the level of support for the EU in Bulgaria was influenced by internal (domestic) and external (EU related) factors associated with European integration. Chapters 2 and 3 of the thesis provide a contextual framework for the empirical chapters by describing the environment in which support for the EU in Bulgaria was formed and developed. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 analyse the public and elite debates on European integration. The concluding Chapter 7 builds upon the thesis' findings by suggesting new avenues for research.

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I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Tsvete and Georgi, my sister Maria and everyone who believed in me and had the patience to wait for me at the final stage of research. My parents have nurtured all the qualities I needed to successfully undertake such a lengthy project, especially persistence and faith. As the research was coming to an end my life was made happier and complete by the presence of my partner, Yau Lin, who completed his PhD at Sussex. His encouragement, hands-on support at all times, love, care and understanding were indispensable to the fulfilment of this project. His interest in Bulgaria made it so much more worthwhile to write on the topic.

Many of the historical events discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 of the thesis that relate to the formation and development of the Bulgarian party system and the process of accession negotiations for EU membership such as the break up of communism, the Roundtable Talks, the election of the former monarch, Simeon II to power, the decisions of the European Councils in Copenhagen and Helsinki, the signing of the Accession Treaty, I have witnessed as an adolescent in Bulgaria or as an informed observer in the UK. The scale and magnitude of the changes that took place during the period of transition is more dramatic than can be described in a scientific text. It is the ordinary people that made the most sacrifices to realise the goal of EU membership and it is their efforts that this research endeavours to honour.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

- AA – Association Agreement(s)  
BANU – Bulgarian Agrarian National Union  
BAU – Bulgarian Agrarian Union  
BBB – Bulgarian Business Bloc  
BCP – Bulgarian Communist Party  
BSP – Bulgarian Socialist Party  
CAP – Common Agricultural Policy  
CB – Coalition for Bulgaria  
CCEB – Candidate Countries’ Eurobarometer  
CEE – Central and Eastern Europe(an)  
CEEB – Central and Eastern Eurobarometer  
CUA – Coalition Union Attack  
EA – Europe Agreement(s)  
ECPR – European Consortium for Political Research  
EEC – European Economic Community  
EFTA- European Free Trade Area  
EP – European Parliament  
EU – European Union  
GDP – Gross Domestic Product  
GDR – German Democratic Republic  
GNA – Grand National Assembly  
IMF – International Monetary Fund  
MEP – Member of European Parliament  
MP – Member of Parliament  
MRF – Movement for Rights and Freedoms  
NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organisation  
NMSS – National Movement Simeon II  
OECD – Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development  
SEI – Sussex European Institute

SME – Small and Medium Enterprise(s)

SU – Soviet Union

UDF – United (Union of) Democratic Forces

UK – United Kingdom

UN – United Nations

USA – United States of America

USD – United States Dollar

USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 SCOPE OF RESEARCH

The level of support for European integration in Bulgaria during the transition period from communism to democracy was determined by the process of democratisation and multi-party system formation after the collapse of communism as well as the pace and structure of European integration.<sup>1</sup> This thesis analyses the support for the EU in Bulgaria at the level of the public (Chapter 4) and political elites (Chapters 5 and 6) without making a priori assumption about the direction of interaction between the two debates.

The aim of the research is to fill a missing gap in the existing literatures on public opinion and party positions on European integration providing an in-depth study on a specific case of Central and Eastern Europe before accession. The research questions of this thesis are in principle pertinent to any and all of the post-communist candidate states. Besides the impracticability of a multi-country comparative study considering the time frame of the work, methodology and sources, there are a number of reasons that justify the selection of Bulgaria as a subject of an in-depth case study which constitutes an original and substantial contribution to the state of research.

From all Central and Eastern European countries that joined the European Union in 2004 and 2007 Bulgaria is one of the least researched, both individually and comparatively

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<sup>1</sup> For comparative literature on democratisation and regime change in Central and Eastern Europe see Kitschelt (1992); Kitschelt *et al.* (1999); Lewis (2006). On the pace and structure of European integration with Central and Eastern Europe refer to Gower (1999); Grabbe (2002); Schmitt (2006).

within the region.<sup>2</sup> Whereas the domestic politics of EU accession in Poland, Slovakia and Hungary were studied by country specialists or in collective works, Bulgaria has remained on the fringes of academic research in the English language academic literature.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time Bulgaria stands out from the general pattern of experiences in the region in a number of respects that make this research worthwhile to undertake. The delayed implementation of economic and social reforms resulting from an unstable party system had an unfavourable effect on Bulgaria's ability to make progress towards European integration and it lagged behind other post-communist countries. Moreover, Bulgaria (and Romania) showed one of the highest levels of public support towards EU membership and the lowest opposition. The public support in favour of European integration was matched by an apparent unwavering political consensus among the mainstream parties in favour of EU membership and the issue of integration was a major platform for political competition in the latter part of the transition. Above all, as one of the few Balkan post-communist countries to join the European Union, research on the levels of support for the EU in Bulgaria can draw valuable lessons that can be applied to explain attitudes to European integration in Macedonia and Croatia, countries that may constitute the next wave of enlargement.

The period under investigation is 17 years, from the breakdown of communism in Bulgaria in November 1989 until the country achieved EU membership in January 2007. To put the period in context, Chapters 2 and 3 of the thesis provide overviews of the formation and development of the Bulgarian party system and the enlargement process. Their role in the thesis is to substantiate the empirical chapters 4, 5 and 6 that analyse the public and elite debates on European integration. As far as the parties are concerned, in addition to the four parties that had permanent presence in parliament throughout the transition period and constructed the debate on European integration, the Bulgarian Socialist (Communist) Party (later the Coalition for Bulgaria), United Democratic Forces

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<sup>2</sup> For notable exceptions on the formation and development of the Bulgarian party system see contributions such as Karasimeonov (1995, 1996, 1999a, 2000b, 2002, 2003); Karasimeonov and Konstantinov (2000); Noutcheva and Bechev (2008).

<sup>3</sup> For research on the countries from the first wave of the Eastern European enlargements see Henderson (1999a); Pridham (1999, 2004); Vachudova (2005).

(later the Union of Democratic Forces), the Movement for Rights and Freedoms and the National Movement Simeon II, Coalition Union 'Attack' is also examined since it was the only political party which expressed concerns with aspects of EU membership since 2005. All other parties are excluded: notably, the Bulgarian Business Bloc, the Bulgarian Agrarian People's Union (People's Union) and the Bulgarian Euro-Left. Although these parties were present in parliament for longer or shorter periods in the 1990s their impact on the European debate in Bulgaria was not significant.

## **1.2 OBJECTIVES AND RELEVANCE**

The thesis explores the level of support for the EU in Bulgaria in the light of the public and political debates on EU membership. The project has a dual objective. Firstly, it analyses the reasons behind public support for EU membership by applying established models of support from the Western European literature: the utilitarian model of Gabel (1998b), cognitive mobilisation and value change theories of Inglehart (1970, 1977) and proxy models of support (Anderson 1998; Anderson and Kaltenthaler 1996) to public opinion data from Bulgaria.<sup>4</sup> The primary questions in this context are what factors determine public support for EU membership? How does Bulgaria compare to other Central and Eastern European countries? What explains the high level of support for and low opposition to EU membership in Bulgaria? Secondly, the thesis defines and analyses the positions of the political parties on EU membership from their election programmes and parliamentary debates on European integration. In this respect, the research seeks to account for the high level of political support and lack of euroscepticism in Bulgarian party politics.

While, the conceptual distinction between the public and elite debates on integration is important, empirically they are closely interrelated, especially in post-communist societies where the consolidation of the political systems and democratisation of society overlapped with the gradual integration and accession into the European Union. The EU support in Bulgaria was influenced by internal (domestic) and external (EU related)

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<sup>4</sup> For comparative studies that test those models in the context of Central and Eastern Europe see Cichowski (2000a); Ehin (2001); Tucker *et al.* (2002); Tverdova and Anderson (2004); White *et al.* (2000).

factors associated with European integration and the direction of interaction between the two debates was both top-down (elite-public) and bottom-up (public-elite).<sup>5</sup> The overall objective of this thesis is to assess these relationships and draw lessons from the Bulgarian experience.

The relevance of the research is threefold. Firstly, it provides chronological accounts of the formation and development of the Bulgarian party system (Chapter 2) and Bulgaria's accession to the EU (Chapter 3) referring to contributions from English and Bulgarian sources. The Bulgarian story so far has not been told in a systematic manner although there are numerous contributions that concern different aspects of party system development such as the study of elections (Barany 2002; Bates 1993; Crampton 1995; Koinova 2001; Kostova 1992; Koulov 1995; Mitev 1997; Savkova 2005, 2006; Spirova 2006, 2007), party identity (Ganev 1995), organisation and party competition during the transition (Ivanov 1997/1998; Kolarova 2002; Krastev 1997; Spirova 2005), the development of European integration at EU level (Baldwin 1995; Grabbe 2002, 2006; Grabbe and Hughes 1998). Secondly, the thesis contributes to the public opinion literature which tests the applicability of Western models of support for European integration in the context of Central and Eastern Europe (Chapter 4) (Cichowski 2000a; Ehin 2001; Tucker *et al.* 2002; Tverdova and Anderson 2004; White *et al.* 2000). Finally, by comparing the party positions on European integration from the contents of their election programmes and transcripts of parliamentary debates (Chapters 5 and 6) the thesis adds to the comparative party literature. It is one of very few studies that analyses the way in which the issue of accession is channeled into the politics of Bulgaria and the interrelationship between European integration and the party system.<sup>6</sup> By looking at public opinion on one hand and party attitudes to European integration on the other the research indicates the future direction of levels of support for the EU in Bulgaria. The political parties' current positions on European integration, their choice of policies and strategies in relation to the EU in the pre-accession period signal their ability to integrate and play a constructive role upon membership. The public position on European integration is influenced to some extent by the political debate on the EU but its direction

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<sup>5</sup> See Figure 1.1 in Appendix A which explains the relationships between the dependent variable and various streams of the literature discussed in the thesis and outlined in the next section of this chapter.

<sup>6</sup> For a very informative study on the impact of European integration on Bulgarian and Romanian politics see Spenzharova (2003), as well as Stoyanov (2005).

is more sensitive to the gap between expected and actual costs and benefits arising from EU membership and the way in which this gap is diffused by the political elite in Bulgaria.

The next section will locate the thesis within the current literatures by providing an outline of the main strands to which this research is contributing. It will describe the state of the art of the literatures on transitions, democratisation and party system development in Central and Eastern Europe; the Eastern enlargements; public opinion; party manifestos and the role of parliaments and parliamentary debates. This will be followed by an outline of the project: its methodology, sources, hypotheses and main arguments, constraints and limitations. The chapter will conclude with a brief description of the chapters that follow.

### **1.3 LITERATURE REVIEW**

Figure 1.1 in Appendix A describes the thematic streams of academic literatures and how they relate to levels of support for the EU in Bulgaria, which is the dependent variable of the project. From the figure it can be seen that the European debate was constructed by internal (domestic) discourse associated with the period of democratisation and party system development as well as external (EU) factors that account for the decision at EU level to provide a framework for the Eastern enlargements. The interaction between the domestic and external factors influenced the public and elite levels of support for EU membership.

#### **1.3.1 LITERATURE ON TRANSITIONS, DEMOCRATISATION AND PARTY SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE**

The beginning of the European debate in Bulgaria coincided with the period of transition from communism to democracy and changes to the party system. The starting point of the research is therefore located in the literature on democratisation, transitions and party system development in Central and Eastern Europe which is concerned with the factors

that have contributed to the establishment of consolidated democracies and political pluralism in the region.

A major study by Kitschelt established that the mode of democratic transitions countries experienced is pre-determined by the mode of communism these countries had before regime change (Kitschelt 1992; Kitschelt *et al.* 1999). He distinguished between patrimonial, national-accommodative and bureaucratic-authoritarian communism. In countries with patrimonial communist regimes such as Bulgaria the communist elite employed pre-emptive strategies and the transition was brought from within the ranks of the Communist Party.

The legacy of communism determined not only the nature of the transition but also the formation and structuring of electoral linkages between the citizens and political parties. Research on electoral linkages in the post-communist democracies of Central and Eastern Europe suggests that they are not expected to form quickly or remain stable in the long run (Mainwaring 1992; O'Donnell 1992). Kitschelt *et al.* (1995) hypothesised that in Bulgaria linkages were based on a mix of prospective economic evaluations of advantages or disadvantages arising from the transition and sentimental attitudes towards Bulgaria's former king Simeon Saxcoburggotsky as well as general pro-left or right predisposition of voters.

Another strand of the transitional literature is concerned with political elite and parties and the impact they have on democratic consolidation. Higley *et al.* (1996) compared the process of legitimisation of political elites in Central and Eastern Europe. They argued that the communist elites have contributed to, not undermined, the establishment and strengthening of democratic institutions. Most studies that investigate the role of political elites in democratic consolidation fall in one of two groups. They are either interested in the revival of the post-communist parties in Central and Eastern Europe, their role in the transition and strategies for adaptation (Evans and Whitefield 1995; Grzymala-Busse 2002; Ishiyama 1995, 1997; Mangott 1995; Waller 1995; Ziblatt 1998) or compare the electoral fortunes of those parties (Evans and Whitefield 1995; Grzymala-Busse 2002; Ishiyama 1995; Waller 1995). Common findings that have emerged are the organisational

advantage of post-communist parties compared to their democratic opponents and their ability to distance themselves from a communist past. The communist successor parties were also found to fulfil important roles that enhance democratic consolidation such as integrating the socialist electorate into a democratic polity and limiting the influence of right-wing, nationalist parties (Mahr and Nagle 1995).

At a broader level research has been done on the evolution of party systems in Central and Eastern Europe in the period of transition. An early contribution to this field by Berglund and Dellenbrant (1992) speculates on the kind of party systems that might evolve in reference to Sartori's party system types (Sartori 1990).<sup>7</sup> The researchers demonstrated that the party systems at the initial period of the transition were structured around many cleavages, independent of each other which promoted an extreme kind of multi-partyism. They predicted that the fragmentation and extreme multi-partyism in Eastern Europe of 1989-90 was not likely to persist beyond the initial stage and there would be a significant reduction of parties and the party systems would begin to resemble Sartori's moderate pluralism type.

In Bulgaria a bi-polar system was established from 1990 until 2001 with high levels of contestation on ideological grounds between the Bulgarian Socialists and United Democratic Forces.<sup>8</sup> Power rotated between the two alternatives and frequent elections were held in 1990, 1991, 1994, 1997 and 2001. Each time a party assumed power it reversed the economic policies of its competitor. In economic terms the Bulgarian Socialists were in favour of gradual economic reforms while United Democratic Forces wanted to adapt a 'shock therapy' approach. Since neither the Socialists nor the Democrats managed to complete a full term in office until 1997 and implement their version of reforms, Bulgaria's transition was prolonged and troubled. The stability came in the form of a third centrist political party National Movement Simeon II which won the 2001 general election and the party system was transformed from a two-party to a multi-party type.

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<sup>7</sup> For the structure of cleavages in the new democracies see Berglund and Dellenbrant (1991).

<sup>8</sup> For an analysis of the Bulgaria party system in relation to Sartori's typology see Kolarova (2002). On the formation and development of the Bulgarian party system refer to: Bell (1997); Karasimeonov (1996); Strmiska (2001).

### 1.3.2 LITERATURE ON THE EASTERN ENLARGEMENTS

The period of democratisation and party system development in Bulgaria overlapped with the gradual integration towards EU membership. Chapter 3 of the thesis outlines the literature on the Eastern European enlargements which is concerned with the cost and benefits arising from EU membership for the candidate and member states as well as the role of the European Union in the reforms process in Central and Eastern Europe.

In general, the literature on the benefits and costs from enlargement consists of two types of contributions of supply and demand for enlargement.<sup>9</sup> Academic texts that deal with the supply side attempt to explain the reasons that motivated the old European Union member states to formulate an institutionalised path to full membership as well as their preferences in favour of some candidate countries over others (Baldwin 1994, 1995; Baldwin *et al.* 1997; Brancati 2001; Caves 1996; Dunning 1989; Gower 1993; Hollifield 1992a, 1992b; Schimmelfennig 2001; Schimmelfennig *et al.* 2002). Contributions to the demand side deal with the desire for European Union membership as well as the factors that influenced the timing of the individual countries' decisions to apply and pursue integration (Baldwin 1994, 1995; Baldwin *et al.* 1997; Lankes and Venables 1996; Mattli 1999; Mattli and Plumper 2002).

The cost and benefits strand from the enlargement literature provides an explanation of the political forces behind the Eastern enlargements. Most importantly the research offers evidence to show that there was no predetermined framework for the Eastern enlargements and political decisions about enlargements were often taken circumstantially, amid contestation between the European Union member states and under growing pressure from the Central and Eastern European countries (especially the Visegrad group) to provide a pathway to accession.

The supply arguments can be grouped in three clusters (negative externalities, economic gains and political and security considerations) according to the type of factors that were

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<sup>9</sup> The definitions of 'supply' and 'demand' were originally given by Mattli and Plumper (2002).

deemed as important in deciding which of the Central and Eastern European countries to invite for negotiations (Brancati 2001).

On the demand side, there are two main views points (constructivist and pragmatic) that explain the desire of the Central and Eastern European countries to apply for membership. The constructivist perspective argues that through membership the Central and Eastern European countries desire to restore their historical position within mainland Europe (Baldwin 1995; Baun 2000; Gower 1999; Grabbe and Hughes 1998; Watson *et al.* 1997). This perspective adheres to the logic that the European Union has a moral obligation to create a Europe without divisions and overcome the conflicts of the post Second World War period through the policy of enlargement. The pragmatic view holds that the appeal for membership rests with the financial and technical assistance from the European Union as well as the economic prosperity and growth achieved through integration (Baldwin 1995; Grabbe and Hughes 1998).

In the literature of democratisation the topic of European Union membership and its impact on candidate states has been discussed in at least two major studies. According to Mattli and Plumper (2002), the desire to pursue European Union membership is related to both regime type and its willingness to implement economic reforms. The researchers argued that countries that implemented substantial economic reforms were better prepared for EU membership. In Bulgaria major economic reforms were delayed until the middle of the 1990s which may explain why Bulgaria was left out from the first wave of the Eastern enlargement.

A similar theory by Vachudova (2005) addressed the impact of the European Union on the countries from Central and Eastern Europe. She distinguished between liberal and illiberal states on the basis of the quality of political competition which was determined primarily by the presence or absence of an opposition to the communist regime strong enough to take power at the time of regime change. In liberal states which she identified to be Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary the very idea of European Union membership was a sufficient incentive for political elites to implement reforms. Vachudova defined this as a 'passive leverage' of the European Union. By contrast, in

illiberal states such as Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia, the cost of implementing reforms was initially too high for rent-seeking elites, which demonstrated a desire for EU membership in order to secure domestic popularity without pursuing changes towards democratisation. In those countries the EU ‘active leverage’ expressed through a formal criterion for EU membership and based on the three principles of ‘asymmetric interdependence’, ‘enforcement’ and ‘meritocracy’ raised the costs of exclusion to a level that forced the politicians in those countries to take the necessary steps towards membership.

The literatures outlined in the last two sections on transitions, democratisation, party system development and the Eastern enlargements provide a general framework for analysis of support for the EU in Bulgaria. The remaining part of the literature review will turn to describe the state of research of public opinion and elite positions on European integration before presenting the structure and methodology of the thesis in the next part of this chapter.

### **1.3.3 LITERATURE ON PUBLIC OPINION ON EUROPEAN INTEGRATION**

On the whole the literature on public support for European integration in the new European Union member states was influenced by past research related to Western Europe. There are three approaches that offer competing explanations for variations in public support for European integration which have been extended to the post-communist region.

Most popular among researchers were the utilitarian and economic based models (Anderson and Reichert 1996; Carrubba 1997; Eichenberg and Dalton 1994; Gabel 2000; Gabel and Palmer 1995; Gabel and Whitten 1997; Smith and Wanke 1993). They hypothesised that support for European integration was determined by expectations of economic gains associated with membership, which depended upon the socio-economic profile of the respondents or the economic performance of the member state measured in terms of GDP, unemployment or inflation as well as levels of trade with other EU member states; direct financial transfers from the EU, length of EU membership or

concerns for national security. In other words, support for European integration was a function of cost/benefit analysis at individual or national level.

The most extensive study in this area was the utilitarian model of Gabel according to which citizens varied in their support for integration because they bore different costs and benefits arising from integration depending on their socioeconomic position (Gabel 1998b; Gabel and Palmer 1995). Gabel used individual level Eurobarometer data for the period 1975-1992 to test four hypotheses related to the profile of respondents in the then EU member states.

He found that well educated people and those on higher incomes were more likely to support European integration because they were easily adaptable in a liberalised labour market and could benefit from greater investment opportunities provided by the mobility of financial capital.

By contrast, those with limited 'human capital', who were poorly educated and with less valuable and mutable skills faced higher competition for their jobs and were more likely to perceive European integration as a threat to their welfare. Similarly, respondents on low incomes were generally hurt by capital liberalisation since capital mobility constrained government welfare spending on which they were reliant.

Finally, Gabel (1998b) and Gabel and Palmer (1995) demonstrated that Europeans residing in borderline regions with another EU country were generally more supportive of integration as they benefited from cross-border trade. Farmers too expressed greater utilitarian support for integration since they benefited from the distributive effects of the CAP policy in the form of direct payments from the EU budget.<sup>10</sup>

In the academic literature on Western Europe the utilitarian model had been supported by a number of studies. McLaren (2002) compared it empirically to her own 'cultural threat' model and found equal support for both of them. Other studies tested the validity of the

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<sup>10</sup> But note that Anderson and Reichert (1996) on the basis of Eurobarometer data from 1982, 1986 and 1990 found that farmers were no more supportive of the EU than other occupational groups contrary to the utilitarian expectations. Cichowski (2000a) found that farmers in Central and Eastern Europe were in fact more likely to oppose EU membership than any other occupational group.

utilitarian model by proposing new variables that relate to support. For instance, Nelsen and Guth (2000) were interested in explaining gender differences of support for integration and particularly why women appeared to be less enthusiastic about integration than men.<sup>11</sup>

When applied to Central and Eastern Europe the utilitarian and economic models were supported to some degree by most studies. Tverdova and Anderson (2004) reported that in six East European (then) candidate countries – Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia and Slovakia – support for EU membership was strongly linked to expectations of personal or collective benefits arising from integration. Respondents in occupations that related to higher returns from EU membership were more likely to vote for it in a referendum than citizens in less advantageous positions.

A similar study by Cichowski (2000a) conducted on the same set of 1996 Eurobarometer data as Tverdova and Anderson (2004), tested utilitarian and economic variables in four Central and Eastern European countries: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary and Slovenia. Their results showed that levels of education and occupations were in fact the two utilitarian /cognitive variables with the strongest explanatory power in relation to support for EU membership. Individuals in occupations within the private sector or the civil service were on average more supportive of integration than other sectors. Significantly, farmers were found to be more likely than anyone else to oppose EU membership contrary to Gabel's hypothesis about the distributive effects of CAP. The research gave credibility to the 'human capital' hypothesis and found a strong relationship between levels of education and support for the EU across all five countries.

A third study by White *et al.* (2000) related support for EU membership in four Central and Eastern European states: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Ukraine to the social characteristics of respondents. The researchers found that support for EU membership was linked to age, education, income and residence while gender was irrelevant to levels of support.

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<sup>11</sup> But note that Anderson and Reichert (1996) found that age and gender were unreliable predictors for support towards European integration in the original and later EU member states.

A second approach took a different view and related support for European integration to higher levels of cognitive mobilisation or involvement in politics. According to Inglehart (1977) the more people knew about the European Union, the less threatening it became to them and they felt inclined to support it. In addition value orientation could also influence people's opinions on integration. Those with post-materialist value orientations would be more supportive of integration while materialists would be more sceptical and concerned with bread and butter issues such as security and economic growth and not abstract concepts like integration (Inglehart 1977).<sup>12</sup>

Inglehart's theories of cognitive mobilisation and value orientations had been difficult to apply in both Western and Eastern Europe (Inglehart 1970, 1977). Only a handful of studies had tried to test their empirical veracity, all of them rejecting the theoretical reasoning of the value based model and finding limited evidence for the impact of cognitive mobilisation.

Three such studies by Janssen (1991), Anderson and Reichert (1996), and Gabel (1998a) looked for relationships between support for European integration and age, education, income and post-materialism utilising Eurobarometer surveys. Their research indicated that education and income were positively related to support for European integration in Western Europe but age and post-materialism had no effect on levels of support.

When applied to Central and Eastern Europe both models were difficult to validate and their results were less conclusive than those from Western Europe. The political value theory posed a particular challenge to researchers who could not distinguish between materialists and post-materialists because the citizens from the post-communist region had different value priorities to their Western counterparts stemming from their evolving environment.

A third approach linked support for EU membership to the performance of the state, the national institutions, the political party that respondents support or national identity (Anderson 1998; Anderson and Kalthenthaler 1996; Kritzinger 2003; Sanchez-Cuenca

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<sup>12</sup> But note that Janssen (1991) argued that this relationship was likely to be based on the higher levels of cognitive mobilisation among postmaterialists and not on the assumption that their values were different.

2000). The underlying argument of this approach was that individuals rely on 'proxies' in forming their views on integration. They used information about something on which they were well informed (such as the performance of the state) to make judgments about something they were relatively unfamiliar with (like the EU).

According to Kritzinger (2003) the state could be seen as being inefficient in a number of ways such as having a high level of corruption, political instability, low responsibility on the part of the political parties or high unemployment. Under such circumstances the support for the EU would increase as the responsibility for change would be transferred from the state to the EU. Equally, if the state was perceived to work efficiently there would be less need to support integration.

The same logic applies in relation to the performance of national institutions. Sanchez-Cuenca (2000) argued that in Western Europe support for European integration was ultimately a function of national and supranational politics. The worse the citizens' opinion of national institutions was and the better their opinion of supranational ones, the stronger their support for European integration (Sanchez-Cuenca 2000: 169).

Another proxy for European integration was the positions of political parties. Supporters of pro-European parties were more likely to be supportive of the EU and vice versa. According to Anderson this happens because citizens were relatively uninformed about European integration to make independent evaluations and they compensated for this gap in knowledge by constructing a reality about the EU that fits their understanding of the political world (Anderson 1998; Anderson and Kaltenthaler 1996). A fourth proxy of support for integration is national identity. A strong sense of national identity was expected to foster negative attitudes towards European integration.

A number of attempts have been made to test the proxy theories in Central and Eastern Europe. For instance, Ehin (2001) provided evidence to show that greater support for the national government increased the likelihood of supporting EU membership in the Baltic countries. The relationship between attitudes to the national government and European integration was reported to be strongest in Latvia and weakest in Estonia. In the Baltic

context it was explained by the lack of public awareness about European affairs coupled with the widespread enthusiasm for European integration at elite level which translated into positive attitudes towards the EU where trust in government was high.

Two other studies by Tverdova and Anderson (2004) and Cichowski (2000a) used political parties as proxies of public support for integration. The studies reported conflicting findings. While Cichowski found party cues useful in the context of Central and Eastern Europe for predicting public support, Tverdova and Anderson reported the opposite. In the second study the researchers hypothesised that the lack of support for the proxy theory may be linked to the gap in awareness about the positions that parties hold in regards to the European Union and the limited debate on the issue in the researched countries. Another contributing factor was the overwhelming consensus on the EU among the political elites which made it difficult to identify prospective EU opponents.

In Chapter 4 of the thesis some of the public opinion models of support for European integration will be tested against survey data from Bulgaria. Using Eurobarometer data as in other studies from Central and Eastern Europe, the utilitarian model of Gabel and the political and identity proxy models will be examined over time and the results compared to available findings from past research.

#### **1.3.4 LITERATURE ON PARTY MANIFESTOS AND PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

The thesis relates indirectly to the literatures on party manifestos and parliamentary debates in Chapters 5 and 6 where elite support for European integration in Bulgaria is analysed. The main difference between the approach taken in the thesis and current research from those streams is in the methodology. The majority of contributions that rely on party manifestos and parliamentary debates use content and discourse analysis based on a selection of words and phrases which are then categorised and loaded into regression models in order to test a series of hypotheses. This thesis is interested in the discourse of the European debate and traces changes in party positions over time without referring to quantitative measures. The literatures on party manifestos, the role of parliaments and

parliamentary debates nevertheless contextualise the elite debate on European integration in Bulgaria and a brief outline of the main contributions to these fields is justified.

Election programmes and party manifestos of political parties reflect the linkage between voters and parties which is essential for functioning democracies.<sup>13</sup> The programmes are evidence of election promises on behalf of parties to carry out certain policies if elected to office. Voters choose between alternatives and parties have the responsibility to enforce their election pledges when they come to power. If winning parties behave randomly in relation to their pre-election positions, the electorate's choice is irrelevant. Whether or not parties do so remains a central question in the party literature and early contributions to the field have tried to measure the degree to which electoral commitments were fulfilled (Petry 1988; Pomper 1968; Rallings 1987; Rose 1980). The majority of the studies measured whether pledges were implemented as a percentage of budget spending or number of enforced administrative or legal acts (Budge and Hofferbert 1990; Ginsberg 1976; Hofferbert and Budge 1992; Hofferbert and Klingemann 1990; Kalogeropoulou 1989; King *et al.* 1993; Petry 1988, 1991, 1995).

A number of authors have extended the use of election programmes to test aspects of coalition theory (Budge and Laver 1993; Warwick 1992a, 2001). In coalitions parties may be constrained to fulfil all of their election pledges and policy objectives may influence the formation of government coalitions. This strand of literature is concerned with how and why coalitions are formed as well as strategies of party competition before elections.

Which parties form coalitions depends on their ideology. Research in this area has favoured the saliency theory of party competition according to which parties 'own' certain policy areas related to their ideology where they have a competitive advantage to other parties (Budge and Farlie 1983; Robertson 1976). For instance, left parties are normally perceived to be better at promoting policies relating to social welfare, health and education, while right parties are better at economics. According to the theory a party's issue emphasis in the manifestos is not dependent upon the positions chosen by

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<sup>13</sup> For contributions that recognise the significance of party manifestos see Budge and Farlie (1977); Budge *et al.* (1987); Robertson (1976).

other parties and in elections parties talk past each other making their case on different issue areas where they have reputations for performance.

In a major study Budge *et al.* (1987) compiled a comparative research across 19 democracies where they represented 'significant' political parties on an issue space that allowed the identification of salient policy dimensions.<sup>14</sup> Then party movements were mapped on these dimensions over the post-war period in order to determine how the distances between parties have changed over time. The study was later extended to 25 democracies in Western Europe, Japan, Israel, Sri Lanka and the rest of the Anglo-Saxon world relying on the same methodology of coding each sentence of the party manifestos into one of 54 categories organised in seven policy domains (Budge *et al.* 2001). The results were mapped using a two-stage factor analysis to measure the movements of parties on the left-right scale.

The results showed an overall trend for political parties in the world to converge with each other over time. There were intermittent periods of divergence in the 1960s and 1980s when there was greater distance between the positions of parties with similar identities across countries or between the parties in a party system. In terms of ideology the study confirmed that the most popular cleavage was the left-right even in countries where other issues remained salient such as Israel and Sri Lanka. The results supported the theory of party competition as parties aimed to win elections by emphasising their strongest points and masking out the weak ones, rather than as the theory of party confrontation suggests, taking the opposite views on policies to distinguish themselves from competitors.<sup>15</sup>

In contrast to the expanding debate on party manifestos in Western Europe there is no body of literature to match the same discourse in relation to Central and Eastern Europe, either individually or comparatively. This gap in the literature follows the lack of comparative manifesto data for the post-communist region which could provide an

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<sup>14</sup> See also Budge and Laver (1986).

<sup>15</sup> For research that explains and supports party competition refer to Budge (1982); Budge and Farlie (1983); Robertson (1976).

assessment of the positioning and movement of political parties, the role of ideology and coalition formation against the findings from Western Europe.

Parliamentary debates on the other hand have been used in discourse analysis in order to research a diverse range of topics such as immigration, xenophobia, racism, EU membership, embryo and stem cell research, euthanasia and abortion (Broughton and Palmieri 1999; Carbo 1992; Caulfield and Bubela 2007; Jackobs 1998; Kirejczyk 1999; Mulkey 1993, 1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c, 1997; Van Dijk 1997b, 2000a; 2000b; Van Der Valk 2000, 2002, 2003a, 2003b; Tekin 2008). A review of the literature on parliamentary debates reveals that in the areas of immigration and embryo research academic contributions have developed into systematic debates by cross referencing with a number of disciplines such as political science, anthropology, sociology and natural science in a comparative or individual country context.<sup>16</sup>

The focus on immigration in parliamentary debates has been to understand how the issue of immigration was constructed in the political discourse between right and left parties in countries where past colonial changes led to mass waves of immigration such as France, the Netherlands and Italy (Jackobs 1998; Montali *et al.*; Riva *et al.*; Tekin 2008; Van der Valk 2003a, 2003b; Van Dijk 1997b, 2000a). In this cluster of academic literature political discourse is primarily defined and studied contextually in terms of participating actors, their social role and the political institutions and cognition involved (Van der Valk 2003a, 2003b; Van Dijk 1997b, 2000a). Most studies emphasise the importance of parliamentary discourse on the level of communication, where it strongly influences the public at large (Montali *et al.*; Riva *et al.*; Van Dijk 1997b, 2000a). The findings point out to the relevance of negative over-representation of foreigners who are systematically criminalised in parliamentary debates by right wing parties but supported by politicians from the left who favoured more tolerant laws and social integration.

An extensive body of literature exists since the 1990s on different aspects of the legitimacy of scientific research on human embryos in Britain that has been developed by

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<sup>16</sup> For key contributions on immigration, racism and xenophobia see Van der Valk (2000, 2002, 2003a, 2003b; Van Dijk (1995, 1997b, 2000a, 2000b and *Montali et al.*) and for contributions on embryo research refer to Mulkey (1993, 1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1994d, 1994e, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c, 1997).

Mulkey over a decade.<sup>17</sup> Mulkey (1994b) studied how women contributed to and were represented in the parliamentary debate on human embryos, how those debates translated to the public sphere as well as difference in the rhetorical resources employed by supporters and opponents of embryo research (Mulkey 1993, 1994e). Other angles covered were how both sides of the debate drew upon the same ideal of family life (Mulkey 1994c), how the balance of parliamentary opinion concerning embryo research changed over time (Mulkey 1994e), differences in positions of the British Conservative and Labour parties on embryo research (Mulkey 1995a), how the topic was depicted in the press and similarities between religious and scientific accounts in parliament (Mulkey 1994d, 1995c).

The literature on parliamentary debates feeds into a wider research stream on the role of parliaments in consolidated democracies where the debates take place. The academic literature on parliaments broadly relates to institutional theory as defined in legislative studies which determines how parliamentary procedures influence political outcomes. Extensive comparative work in this area was accomplished by Doring who studied and compared the institutional structures and procedural rules in 18 countries from Western Europe (Doring 1995, 2001; Doring and Hallerberg 2004).<sup>18</sup> Other scholars looked into more specific aspects of the functioning of parliaments such as the relevance of the veto players' model (Bawn 1999; Tsebelis 1995, 1999, 2002; Tsebelis and Chang 2004), the agency relationship between cabinets and ministers (Andeweg 2000; Martin and Vanberg 2004; Saalfeld 2000), models of government survival and parliamentary dissolution (Strom and Swindle 2002; Warwick 1992b, 1994), the structure and functioning of the European parliament and its relationship with the national parliaments of the EU member states.

This section provided an outline of the literatures on party manifestos and parliamentary debates which contextualise the findings and analysis from Chapters 5 and 6 of the thesis. The rest of this chapter will describe the characteristics of the study: its methodology and

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<sup>17</sup> For a detailed review of Mulkey's work of embryo research see Mulkey (1997).

<sup>18</sup> For a similar line of comparative analysis see Norton (1999). Also, note there is one account of parliament and law-making in Poland which follows the same debate: Goetz and Zubek (2007).

sources, hypotheses and basic arguments, constraints and limitations. The chapter will conclude with an overview of the chapters that follow.

#### **1.4 METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES**

While this thesis focuses on one in-depth case study, it takes a comparative approach. According to Mair (1996), comparative politics is a field of inquiry defined by a distinctive method as well as by its ‘substance (the study of foreign countries or the plurality of countries)’. The comparative method does not by definition imply an explicit comparison between symmetrical case studies of two or more countries. Rather its primary objective is to ‘translate a national experience into an operational category’ (Mair 1996: 324). As long as this can be achieved through the use of general concepts – ultimately through implicit comparisons – a single case study is justified. In Sartori’s words, ‘a scholar can be implicitly comparative without comparing...provided that his one country or one-unit study is embedded in a comparative concept and that his concept, his analytical tools, are comparable’ (Sartori 1994: 15).

The thesis employs a comparative framework. Chapters 2 and 3 of the research contextualise the analysis subsequently applied to Bulgaria in the empirical chapters 4, 5 and 6 by reviewing the existing literatures on transitions, democratisation, party system development and enlargement, the bulk of which focuses on Central and Eastern Europe. The thesis thus indirectly draws on the experiences of other post-communist countries.

Moreover, in the empirical chapters references are made to the literatures on public opinion, party manifestos, and the role of parliaments and parliamentary debates which originated in Western Europe. Although the propositions of this thesis are not formally tested outside Bulgaria, where possible similarities and differences are highlighted that could point out to further research with regards to other EU member states.

A single country case study on Bulgaria is also justified in terms of the sources used in the project: where generality is sacrificed, it is compensated by depth. Besides the

English language literature which constitutes the backbone of the research, the thesis draws on a wide range of Bulgarian language sources. These include secondary sources – academic contributions, comments and analysis published in the Bulgarian media as well as primary qualitative and quantitative sources.

The qualitative data in the empirical chapters comes from election programmes (Chapter 5) and transcripts of parliamentary debates on European integration, security and foreign policy (Chapter 6) as well as interviews with politicians who were selected for their role in the transition period and during the negotiations for EU membership as well as (in the case of Coalition Union Attack) because of their positions on European integration. The interviews were structured in an open format in order to allow the interviewees to express their views on the topic of discussion.

The project utilises quantitative data from Eurobarometer surveys conducted in 1997 and 2002 in order to map changes in public opinion in Bulgaria over time. The raw data from the questionnaires was obtained in an SPSS output format from the European Commission and relationships were tested by constructing cross-tabulations from the raw data for all candidate states included in the sample. The methodology of the public opinion surveys is discussed in more details in Chapter 4.

## **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS, DEPENDENT VARIABLE, HYPOTHESES AND BASIC ARGUMENTS**

The three empirical chapters examine a number of research questions on the basis of which the hypotheses in the main chapters are constructed. The dependent variable of the project is ‘level of support for the EU in Bulgaria’. The overall aim of the research questions is to analyse the mass and elite support for European integration in Bulgaria. The first set of research questions relate to public support for EU membership: what determines public support for EU membership, how public support in Bulgaria compares to that in other Central and Eastern European countries and the relationship between public and elite support for European integration. The second set concerns the

characteristics (i.e. discourse) of the European debate at the level of parties – the main players and themes, importance and frequency of European issues. The third set of research questions addresses elite support for EU membership in the context of foreign policy alternatives, the place of parties in the party system and political consensus on European integration. The basic arguments and hypotheses are presented here in a short form and developed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

The research questions in Chapter 4 are based on the assumption that public support for European integration is influenced by a number of utilitarian and cognitive factors associated with the socio-economic characteristics of respondents as well as citizens' perceptions of the performance of the state, national institutions and positions on European integration of political parties. Based on findings from the current literature on public support for European integration on Western Europe people who expect to gain from EU membership (personally or at the level of the state) are more supportive of EU membership and vice versa. The extent to which benefits can be made depends on the socio-economic profile of respondents. At the same time citizens who are unfamiliar with European integration, hence unable to calculate the gains or losses from EU membership, construct their positions on the EU through proxies. One such proxy is the performance of the state, national institutions, national (European) identity and the positions of political parties. Relying on those arguments as well as taking into account the nature of Bulgaria's transition and the process of European integration Chapter 4 of the thesis examines the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 4.1:** Citizens who expect their state to benefit from EU membership are more supportive of it.

**Hypothesis 4.2:** Citizens who expect to personally benefit from EU membership are more supportive of it.

**Hypothesis 4.3:** Citizens in occupations that are likely to yield high incomes are more supportive of EU membership.

**Hypothesis 4.4:** Support for EU membership decreases with age.

**Hypothesis 4.5:** Support for EU membership increases with education.

**Hypothesis 4.6:** Supporters of main political parties are more supportive of EU membership than those without party affiliation.

**Hypothesis 4.7:** Opposition to EU membership is greater among citizens who do not support mainstream political parties.

**Hypothesis 4.8:** Citizens possessing positive evaluations of the aims and activities of the European Union are more likely to support EU membership and vice versa.

**Hypothesis 4.9:** Public support for EU membership is higher in Bulgaria than the average for Central and Eastern Europe, while opposition to membership is lower.

**Hypothesis 4.10:** Public support for EU membership has increased in Bulgaria over time, while levels of opposition have decreased.

The thesis takes an intergovernmental perspective in adopting the view that political parties play a decisive and instrumental role in generating support for European integration. Chapters 5 and 6 have a dual objective: in the first part they present the characteristics and discourse of the European debate at elite level which provide background for a series of hypotheses. Thus the second set of research questions ask about the format and length of election programmes and parliamentary debates, the sections on European integration, main participants in the European debates, intensity of participation, reoccurring themes, perspectives and visions on Europe. The hypotheses are justified as follows:

**Hypotheses 5.1 and 6.1:** Elite support for European integration increased with the formulation of the EU's strategy for Accession.

The hypothesis is based on the assumption that political parties are more likely to support European integration if there is a clear framework for EU membership. In the early election programmes (1990-2001) the main political parties rarely discussed European integration and references to Europe were made in general terms. Similarly, the parliamentary debates show that the majority of debates took place after the publication of the Copenhagen criteria and during the time of Accession negotiations (1995-2002). Against certain criteria political parties could raise their domestic credibility by highlighting their contribution towards meeting those criteria. For opposition parties the

structure of the accession process provided opportunities to criticise the work of the government on specific points. At a broad level, by taking part in parliamentary debates on European integration and clarifying their positions in election programmes political parties gained legitimacy as they appeared to represent the interests of the pro-European public in Bulgaria.

**Hypotheses 5.2 and 6.2:** Elite support for European integration increased as support for the USSR and Russia decreased.

The hypothesis is based on the assumption that mainstream political parties adopt a rational approach when formulating the foreign policy proposed in their election programmes and positions in parliamentary debates. Based on that proposition following the collapse of USSR and the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact Bulgaria had to alter its foreign policy preference for Russia in favour of EU membership in order to secure its economic interests and national security. European integration became a foreign policy choice for Bulgaria after the Copenhagen criteria for EU membership was announced in 1993 and Bulgaria submitted its application for EU membership in 1995. The reorientation of other countries in Central and Eastern Europe in the same direction towards EU membership and the lack of a sizable Russian minority strengthened the pro-European elite consensus in Bulgaria.

**Hypothesis 6.3:** Elite support for European integration increased as elite support for NATO increased.

The hypothesis arises from the assumption that the political consensus on NATO membership in Bulgaria which was formed between the Bulgarian Socialist Party and United Democratic Forces in 2000 led to an increased support for European integration since the political parties began to consolidate their visions of the EU and the benefits that it could offer to Bulgaria. The hypothesis indirectly tests the strength of the relationship between support for European integration, NATO membership and party ideology. Since both European integration and NATO membership are seen as projects built on market principles and challenging the status quo of the state, liberal parties such

as United Democratic Forces should be more supportive of both initiatives while left parties such as the Bulgarian Socialist Party, later Coalition for Bulgaria should be more protectionists.

**Hypothesis 6.4:** Parties in government are more supportive of European integration than parties in opposition.

The hypothesis rests on the assumption that government parties are directly involved in the accession process of facilitating integration by undertaking tasks such as submitting an application for EU membership, taking part in the accession negotiations, revision of chapters, signing of Accession Treaty which makes them better informed of the dynamics of integration as well as more positive about membership. Moreover, parties in government often operate in coalitions with other parties so they will support strategic topics such as EU membership in order to stay in the political mainstream. Given the high level of public support for European integration in Bulgaria and assuming that parties in government represent the views of the public majority they are likely to be more supportive of the EU than other parties in the party system.

## **1.6 CONSTRAINTS AND LIMITATIONS**

Many of the previous propositions may be valid not only for Bulgaria but also other post-communist states. However, while the framework is in principle applicable in a broader comparative perspective, the thesis is restricted to one empirical case and thus can not claim to arrive at universal conclusions about public and elite levels of support for European integration. This is the first limitation of the research which needs to be acknowledged.

Secondly, the research is essentially about levels of public and elite support for the EU in Bulgaria before membership and any conclusions reached are limited to that time frame. The dynamics of support for European integration following accession are influenced by different variables arising from Bulgaria's position as a full EU member state, the actual

cost and benefits from integration, the representation of parties at EU level as well as the future of the European Union and its strategy for further enlargement. Nonetheless, the following analysis seeks to provide insights that can be starting points for further comparative research on support for European integration before and after accession.

Thirdly, the study is not concerned with the political economy of the EU enlargement (Pedersen 1994). This is touched only insofar as it affects the public and elite positions on EU membership in the empirical chapters or in order to provide context of the process of integration in Chapter 3 of the thesis. Although macro economic indicators may be useful in explaining material incentives for joining the Union, they are less relevant for the domestic debate on EU membership. This is especially true for countries from the post-communist region where EU membership had symbolic as well as monetary value (Henderson 1999a).

## **1.7 THESIS STRUCTURE AND OUTLINE**

This thesis is divided into four parts. The first part – Chapters 2 and 3 of the research outline the existing literatures on transitions, democratisation, party system formation and development in Central and Eastern Europe and EU enlargement in order to provide a contextual analysis of the nature of the European debate in Bulgaria and the empirical chapters that follow. The second part consists of Chapter 4 which analyses the public support for EU membership on the basis of Eurobarometer data. The political support for European integration is discussed in the third part, Chapters 5 and 6 that utilise election programmes and parliamentary debates. In the final part, Chapter 7, the overall conclusions of the project are presented as well as scope for further research.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the formation and development of the Bulgarian party system during the period of transition from the end of communism in 1989 until EU membership in 2007. It begins with a detailed account of the literatures on democratisation, transitions and party system development in Central and Eastern Europe. The development of the Bulgarian party system is then divided into three stages.

The first stage covers a period of consensus between the Bulgarian Communist (Socialist) Party and United Democratic Forces which facilitated the preparation of an initial legal and institutional framework at the Roundtable Talks essential for the functioning of democracy. This relatively short period ended in June 1991 and was followed by a second stage of ideological confrontation between the Bulgarian Socialists and United Democratic Forces that resulted in the formation of a bi-polar model of party politics. This new political set up persisted until 2001. The third stage of party development was marked by a return to a multi-party system and the formation of coalition governments in 2001 and 2005.

Chapter 3 is symmetrical to the previous one. Its aim is to provide a historical account of the Eastern enlargements to the European Union by dividing the enlargement process into three periods. The starting point of the chapter is a review of the existing literatures on enlargement and democratisation. The first period covers the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the communist regimes in Europe between 1989 and 1993. Within this time interval the European Union played a constructive role in assisting the economic and political transformation of the Central and Eastern European states and guaranteeing the security on the continent. This was followed by a second period of preparation for negotiations that began when a political decision for enlargement was taken by the European Union member states at the European Council in Copenhagen in 1993. In 1997 at the European Council in Luxemburg a differentiation approach to enlargement was adopted. As a result only some of the candidates were invited to begin accession negotiations. The Luxemburg decision put an end to the second stage of the enlargement process and a third period of accession negotiations began. For Bulgaria this period ended in January 2007 with its accession to the European Union.

Chapter 4 is the first of three empirical chapters. It analyses public support for EU membership in Bulgaria on the basis of Eurobarometer public opinion surveys from 1997 and 2002 comparatively to other EU member states. The chapter is located within the Western European literature on public opinion and support for European integration which is the starting point of discussion. The methodology section that follows presents the data set, the method of cross-tabulations, the choice of dependent and independent

variables and ten hypotheses. Then the findings of the research are introduced which essentially test aspects of the utilitarian model of Gabel (1998b), European identity and Anderson's proxy model of support (Anderson 1998). The chapter ends with a discussion of the findings and two broad conclusions: that public support for EU membership before accession is higher than that in other post-communist countries which could be explained with a delayed transition. Besides that, Bulgaria conforms to the experience of Central and Eastern Europe where the utilitarian characteristics of respondents and the positions of political parties on European integration influenced the level of mass support for the EU in Bulgaria.

Chapter 5 presents findings about the political support for EU membership from the election programmes of the main political parties in Bulgaria. The objective is to get a sense of the discourse regarding European integration by comparing the positions of political parties at the same points in time. The chapter is complementary to Chapter 6 which relies on parliamentary debates in order to examine changes in attitudes on European integration. It begins with an acknowledgement of the Western European literature on party manifestos from which it draws indirectly. It proceeds to introduce the main political parties in Bulgaria as well as the external and internal characteristics of their election programmes: the format, length, distribution channels of their election programmes, structure, main themes and visions on Europe. Against this background, the research progresses with a section on methodology which outlines the data set of election programmes, the method of content analysis, dependent and independent variables and two hypotheses. The main findings and analysis are then discussed. The conclusions are summarised in the final section. The overall observations made are that support for European integration at the level of political elites in Bulgaria was influenced by the pace of European integration, the ideology of the political parties in the party system, their proximity to power and coalitional potential.

Chapter 6 develops the analysis of the European debate in Bulgaria based on the transcripts from parliamentary debates on topics of European integration, foreign policy and national security. It aims to highlight the development of political debate during the transition over time. The research begins with an overview of the literature on

parliamentary debates and the role of parliaments. In the second part the chapter presents the methodology of the study. It explains the data set of parliamentary debates and outlines the advantages and applicability of discourse analysis. In the methodology section the chapter introduces four hypotheses that relate to foreign policy alternatives, the positions of parties in the party system and support for European integration which are the starting point of analysis. The findings refer to the structural characteristics of the debates – length and number of debates and intensity of participation by party as well as the contextual features – main actors, their goals and importance in Bulgarian party politics and cognition involved. The third group of findings, which are the most substantial, distinguishes between the main themes and visions of European integration. The conclusion compares the hypotheses against the observations made on European integration.

Chapter 7 concludes the research project. It presents an overview of the thesis and a summary of the key conclusions. It then examines the hypotheses in light of the empirical chapters and outlines the scope for future areas of research. After testing the Bulgarian case it is possible to extend the analysis to new candidate states and countries that have preferred to stay outside of the European influence such as Belarus with which Bulgaria shares a common historical heritage. At the level of public opinion research can be carried out to examine new variables that might influence public support for European integration such as location, religion and gender. At a broader perspective the relationship between information and level of support and the extent to which European elections are perceived by the publics as second order elections are promising avenues for investigation. Finally, the thesis suggests there is scope to expand the data sets of election programmes and parliamentary debates to other EU member states in order to test the role of ideology, party identity and coalitional potential that influence the positions parties assume on European integration as well as whether parties remain trustworthy in fulfilling election pledges made on topics relating to European integration and the success of populist parties in the run up to accession, their characteristics and the emergence and nature of accession populism in future EU member states.

# **PART 1**

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE BULGARIAN PARTY SYSTEM DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD FROM COMMUNISM TO DEMOCRACY (1989-2007)**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

Party system formation and development in Central and Eastern Europe coincided with the time of the transition period from communism to democracy. In the Bulgarian case, the party system developed as a stable but painfully slow process. There were many intra-party splits and regroupings and for the first decade only three parties (the Bulgarian Communist/Socialist Party, United Democratic Forces and Movement for Rights and Freedoms) were regularly elected to parliament. It was those parties that made the backbone of the Bulgarian party system and defined the nature of Bulgaria's transition. Following the 2001 general election the party system was reshaped with the appearance of a new party, National Movement Simeon II, which took a central stage in politics for

the next four years. Since then the party system has become more vibrant and fluid: the political right was fragmented into three smaller parties in 2005 which subsequently dissolved while at the same time there has been a surge of populist and anti-system parties such as Coalition Union Attack and Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria that have secured presence at national and European levels.

The aim of this chapter is twofold: its contribution is first to the existing literature on political parties and party systems by explaining the formation and development of the Bulgarian party system during the period of transition from 1989 until 2007. In order to achieve this, the chapter will adopt a historical perspective and divide the studied period into three stages, describing the characteristics of each one comparatively to the region. Secondly, the chapter will identify the key political parties and actors that shaped the political process in Bulgaria and to which the rest of the thesis will relate. The overall objective is to provide an informed overview of the formation and development of the Bulgarian party system while at the same time justifying the selection of parties used in the thesis.

There is a link between the type of democratic transition that countries from Central and Eastern Europe experienced and the formation and development of their party systems. The academic literature on transitions and democratisation is concerned with the factors which have contributed to the establishment of consolidated democracies and political pluralism in the region.

According to Kitschelt the mode of democratic transition that countries experience is predetermined by the type of communism that those countries had before regime change (Kitschelt 1992; Kitschelt *et al.* 1999). He distinguishes between three types of communism: 1) patrimonial communism, which is clientelistic and resorted to both repressive practices and cooperative incentives to achieve conformity; 2) national-accommodative communism which relied on formal bureaucracies and preferred cooperative methods to repressive practices; and 3) bureaucratic-authoritarian communism, which was bureaucratic and repressive by nature. In countries with patrimonial communist regimes such as Albania, Bulgaria and Romania the communist

elite employed pre-emptive strategies and the transition was bought from within the ranks of the Communist Party. By contrast, in countries that experienced national accommodative communism like Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia, the transition was completed by means of negotiation between the reformist wing of the Communist Party and the moderate wing of an established opposition. In the third case, the Communist Parties of the countries with bureaucratic-authoritarian communism (e.g. Czech Republic and GDR) held onto power and refused negotiations until the point when they were swept away by the mass protests resulting from the domino effect of the collapse of communist power across Eastern Europe.

In a related study on pre-election survey data from the 1991 general elections in Bulgaria, Kitschelt *et al.* (1995) showed that the legacies of communism determined not only the type of transition the country experienced but also had a lasting effect on the formation of the citizens-party linkage which is an important element of consolidated democracies. According to Sartori (1986), in 'strong' or 'structured' party systems voters are able to compare party positions and relate them to their own political interests that create linkages between the citizens and the democratic regimes.

Research on electoral linkages in the post-communist democracies of Eastern Europe suggests that such linkages are not expected to form in the immediate aftermath of regime change (Mainwaring 1992; O'Donnell 1992; Whitefield 2002). This is because of the lack of time voters have to familiarise themselves with the democratic process and accept the culture of competition, tolerance for disagreement and political participation (Sztompka 1993). Moreover, because of the economic changes voters might find it difficult to distinguish their economic interests or know how to pursue them. Thirdly, the transition brought out the emergence of a large number of political parties with similar programmes to give voters a clear choice. Finally, because of international economic constraints, imposed by institutions such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund, voters in post-communist societies had little to choose from and parties could not therefore differentiate their messages.

In Bulgaria the lack of quasi-democratic opening after World War II and the rapid establishment of communism between 1944 and 1947 meant that no memories of previous party systems had survived that could be used as a blueprint for the construction of a new party system. Also the repressive nature of Bulgaria's communism, which Kitschelt (1999) describes as patrimonial, prevented the formation of a civil society and the emergence of progressive elite that could stimulate the establishment of party-citizen linkages. Kitschelt (1995) therefore identified Bulgaria as a particularly 'hard' case to confirm the hypothesis that 'structured' party-citizen linkage emerge in post-communist societies.

His study on Bulgaria presented evidence showing that linkages between voters and parties formed quite early on in the democratic process and in the case of Bulgaria those linkages were based on a mix of prospective economic evaluations and cultural interpretations. The structuring was based on citizens' individual resources defined by their age, education and residence, which they expected to convert into economic benefits in the economic market economy, their market location in occupational terms, i.e. whether they were involved in sectors that were likely to benefit or lose out from the transition, their general ideological predisposition to left or right parties, their evaluation of the economic performance of the incumbent governments as well as sentimental attitudes towards the former Bulgarian king Simeon II.

Another strand of the transitional literature is concerned with political elites and parties and the impact they have on democratic consolidation (Birch *et al.* 2002). Sartori (1995: 105) considers political elites as important for the 'taming' of politics. A nation's politics is tamed when there is a broad support for democratic procedures and institutions as well as a shared acceptance of norms of accommodation and cooperation among political elites. Higley *et al.* (1996) compare the process of legitimisation of political elites in Central and Eastern Europe. They argue that elites in those countries survived the initial regime collapse and adapted to the new order which explains the peaceful nature of the transition and democratic consolidation. In other words, the communist elites have contributed to, not undermined, the establishment and strengthening of democratic institutions. The main difference between countries was that in Bulgaria and Slovakia

elite change was less substantial compared to Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic where the old cadres of the communist parties were replaced with new or reformed leaders.

At a broader level a number of studies have investigated the process of party consolidation and party strategies for adaptation in the transition from authoritarianism to democracy (Druckman and Roberts 2007; Evans and Whitefield 1995; Grzymala-Busse 2002; Ishiyama 1995, 1997; Mangott 1995; Waller 1995; Ziblatt 1998). The majority of these studies are concerned with the revival of the post-communist successor parties, their role in the transition and their strategies for adaptation in the new environment. Mahr and Nagle (1995) find that successor parties in Central Europe fulfil several positive roles in democratisation such as ‘resocializing a good proportion of the post-communist electorate into a democratic polity and a civic society’; ‘channelling discontent away from right-wing nationalists and xenophobic movements, which might otherwise mobilize current disillusionment into a politics of ethno-nationalist conflict’ and in the case of Poland providing opportunities for a more coherent political landscape. The study concludes that in virtually all cases communist successor parties have enhanced democratic consolidation rather than threatened it.

Moreover, researchers have studied and compared the electoral fortunes of ex-communist parties. This perspective adopted by Waller (1995), Evans and Whitefield (1995), Ishiyama (1995) and Grzymala-Busse (2002) explores the factors that have influenced the varying level of success of ex-communist parties in East and Central Europe since the collapse of communism. Waller (1995) highlights the organisational advantages of ex-communist parties compared to their democratic opponents. He writes that ‘The ability of the communist parties to adapt to their changed circumstances is due in good part to an organizational strength and leadership skills inherited from the communist past’ (Waller 1995: 487-488). In a similar vein, Grzymala-Busse (2002) argues that the underlying factor that accounts for the ability of successor parties to return to power has been their organisational transformation while at the same time breaking with a discredited past. She sees the transformation as a function of elite skills developed under communism. Evans and Whitefield examine two other variables: the degree of ideological extremism

of the parties and national differences in the experience of economic transition. Using survey data from the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, Evans and Whitefield (1995) show that the more difficult a population perceives the process of economic transition, the greater the electoral success of an ex-communist party. Finally, Ishiyama (1995) argues that electoral incentives, political opportunities and the structure of electoral competition as well as the historical legacy of the ex-communist party influence the post-communist survival of ex-communist parties. In his later work, similarly to Kitschelt he links variations in electoral success of ex-communist parties to the structure of the communist regime from which each party emerged (Ishiyama 1997).

A number of studies compare the evolution of party systems in Central and Eastern Europe during the period of transition.<sup>19</sup> An early contribution to this field by Berglund and Dellenbrant (1992) speculates on the kind of party systems that might evolve in the region in reference to Sartori's party system types.<sup>20</sup> In short Sartori (1990) differentiates between four types of party systems in Western Europe: *Predominant party system* where there is one dominant party that wins a majority of the seats for a considerable period of time. There are also two or three other parties outside the dominant party which act as independent agents and on the whole the level of competition between all political actors is low. The second type is a *two party system*. In this scenario two parties are in a position to compete for the absolute majority of seats. Moreover, one of the two parties actually succeeds in winning to govern alone and is willing to hold on to power. Nevertheless, its position is threatened since alternative rotation of power remains a credible expectation and on the whole there is high competition between the parties. Thirdly, in *moderate pluralism* there is a bi-polar coalitional set up with a relatively small ideological distance among the relevant parties and centripetal competition. Finally, the fourth type of *polarized pluralism* presupposes the presence of relevant anti-system parties, the existence of bilateral opposition, centrality of one party or groups of parties and polarisation in terms of ideological distance between the different party blocs. In an earlier article Sartori (1966) lists a number of factors which are likely to affect the development of a party system into one of the described types. His list is not defined as

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<sup>19</sup> For comprehensive comparative works in this area see Jungerstam-Mulders (2006); Lewis (2006); Lewis and Mansfeldova (2007); White *et al.* (2007).

<sup>20</sup> For the structure of cleavages in the new democracies see Berglund and Dellenbrant (1991).

exhaustive but the factors he identifies are ‘the timing of the franchise’, ‘the timing of the proportional representation’, ‘the number and structure of cleavages’ and ‘the degree of party organization’. According to Berglund and Dellenbrant (1992) in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the communist regimes party systems in Eastern Europe showed features of extreme pluralism. For instance they noted that the region experienced a rapid process of democratisation when subjects were turned into citizens overnight and proportional representation was introduced without being preceded by majority representation. Similarly, the party systems were structured around many cleavages, independent of each other which promoted an extreme kind of multi-partyism, especially as the parties were in the early stages of organisation (Berglund and Dellenbrant 1992: 155). Their conclusion was that the fragmentation and extreme multi-partyism in Eastern Europe of 1989-90 was not likely to persist and there would be a significant reduction of parties and the party systems would begin to resemble Sartori’s moderate pluralism type (Sartori 1990).

Comparative research studies on party system development in Central and Eastern Europe have supplied evidence that the party systems have evolved considerably since regime change. However, their development has not always followed the same path. The emergence and persistence of cleavages, which is one of the factors identified by Sartori (1990), has varied between countries. In structured party systems cleavages serve an important function for voters, political parties and the political system as a whole. They provide citizens with cues which can be used to guide their political orientations and voting behaviour and they provide political parties with a loyal and stable electorate with standing partisan predispositions. Comparing cleavages in post-communist countries one can see that in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic it was originally difficult to identify any cleavages at all apart from a socioeconomic one of transitional winners and losers while in Poland in addition to the socioeconomic cleavage there was an obvious secular *versus* religious division in society to which parties responded (Lawson *et al.* 1999).<sup>21</sup> On the whole the cleavage theory was difficult to justify in the post-totalitarian reality where the parties formed not in response to structured cleavages but to the chance of gaining power. Referring to the case of Bulgaria researchers agree that structured cleavages began to

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<sup>21</sup> For an analysis of the post-totalitarian cleavages in Bulgaria see Karasimeonov (2002). On cleavage formation in Central and Eastern Europe see Whitefield (2002).

form around the 2005 general election when there was a division on nationalist and ethnic lines which was confirmed again at the presidential elections in November 2006 and the European Parliament elections in May 2007. Prior to that any divisions in Bulgarian society such as the question of lustration, communisation versus de-communisation, and the state versus civil society debates were temporary and although sometimes referred as cleavages in the academic literature they did not run deep enough to provide persistent linkages between voters and parties (Karasimeonov 1999b; Krastev 1997).

According to Sartori (1990) the type of party system is influenced also by the number of operating parties and the degree of contestation between them. In this respect one finds similarities between the early experiences of the countries from Central and Eastern Europe. Virtually everywhere the beginning of the transition period was marked by the emergence of a large number of political parties and actors which was reduced after the second democratic elections.<sup>22</sup> The dynamics of contestation however differed between countries: in Bulgaria a bi-polar system was established from 1990 until 2001 with high levels of contestation on ideological grounds between the Bulgarian Socialists and United Democratic Forces.<sup>23</sup> Power rotated between the two alternatives and frequent elections were held in 1990, 1991, 1994, 1997 and 2001. Each time a party assumed power it reversed the economic policies of its competitor. In economic terms the Bulgarian Socialists were in favour of gradual economic reforms while United Democratic Forces wanted to adapt a shock therapy approach. Since neither the Socialists nor the Democrats managed to complete a full term in office until 1997 and implement their version of reforms, Bulgaria's transition was prolonged and troubled. The stability came in the form of a third centrist political party National Movement Simeon II which won the 2001 general election and the party system was transformed from a two-party to a multi-party type. Most recently, since 2005 there has been the emergence of two populist parties, Coalition Union Attack and Citizens for European Development in Bulgaria, which

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<sup>22</sup> For an in-depth comparative analysis on the number of parties in Central and Eastern Europe refer to Millard (2004).

<sup>23</sup> For an analysis of the Bulgaria party system in relation to Sartori's typology see Kolarova (2002). On the formation and development of the Bulgarian party system refer to Bell (1997); Karasimeonov (1996); Strimiska (2001).

coincided with the fragmentation of the political right.<sup>24</sup> If this political set up persists in time the Bulgarian party system is likely to become an example of polarized pluralism.

This section provided a summary of the academic literature on transitions, democratisation and party system formation and development in Central and Eastern Europe since regime change. It explained Kitschelt's theory of democratic transitions as well the relationship between consolidated democracies and political pluralism and the role and actions of political elites and parties. The second part of the section looked at studies that have applied Sartori's model of party system development to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and compared those with the Bulgarian experience.

## **2.2 STAGES OF PARTY SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT IN BULGARIA**

The aim of this section is to offer a historical overview of the formation and development of the Bulgarian party system during post-communism running from November 1989 until May 2007. The period is divided into three stages. The first stage covers a period of consensus between the Bulgarian Communist (Socialist) Party and United Democratic Forces which facilitated the preparation of an initial legal and institutional framework at the Roundtable Talks essential for the functioning of democracy. The three main agreements reached at political level at this stage were the election of a Grand National Assembly with which to prepare a new Constitution, and two laws on political parties and elections. All of this facilitated the establishment of a multi-party system which replaced the Communist monopoly of power. This relatively short period was followed by a much longer spell of ideological confrontation between the Bulgarian Socialists and United Democratic Forces which resulted in the formation of a bi-polar model of party politics similar to Sartori's 'two party' system (Sartori 1990). Throughout this period there was a constant rotation of power between the left and right with a high level of contestation and a third political party, Movement for Rights and Freedoms, which alternated its support between Socialists and Democrats. Consequently, in the first democratic decade general elections were frequently held in Bulgaria in 1990, 1991, 1994, 1997 and 2001 and nine

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<sup>24</sup> On the emergence of Attack and Citizens for European Development in Bulgaria and their electoral performance see Savkova (2005, 2006, 2007).

Prime ministers were elected or appointed throughout the same period.<sup>25</sup> The third stage of party development was marked by a return to a multi-party system and the formation of coalition governments in 2001 and 2005. This allowed the reaching of consensus between the main political actors on strategic goals such as EU membership and the continuation of economic and social reforms. At the same time anti-system and populist parties such as Coalition Union Attack and Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria emerged as the new opposition which indicated a shift towards a system of polarized pluralism. The rest of this section will elaborate on each the three stages in detail.

### **2.2.1 STAGE ONE – CONSENSUS BUILDING IN A MULTI-PARTY SYSTEM**

The first stage of party system development in Bulgaria ran from November 1989 until June 1990 or in other words from the time when Todor Zhivkov was removed from power until the first free elections in the country. Two significant events from the point of view of party system formation and development occurred at this stage. First, a multi-party system was established which replaced the Communist monopoly of power. Initially, this system was in the making at the Roundtable talks which involved the Bulgarian Socialist Party, United Democratic Forces and Bulgarian Agrarian National Union. It was later legitimised through the first democratic election of June 1990 when two more parties, Bulgarian Agrarian National Union and Movement for Rights and Freedoms, gained seats in the new parliament. Secondly, the period was dominated by political consensus between the Communist Party (BCP) and the Opposition (United Democratic Forces and Bulgarian Agrarian National Union) on the necessity of accelerated institutional and legal reforms to enable the transition to democracy.

Bulgaria made the first step towards political democracy on the 10<sup>th</sup> November 1989, when the former party leader and head of state Todor Zhivkov was forced to resign after an organised coup d'état, supported by Gorbachev. Several other state and top party officials from the conservative wing of the Communist Party were removed in the

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<sup>25</sup> Table 2.1 gives the election results and table 2.2 lists Bulgaria's Prime ministers and their political affiliation, both in Appendix B.

aftermath of his resignation.<sup>26</sup> The new Communist leader, Petur Mladenov, Zhivkov's former Foreign Minister, declared that the government would seek cooperation with the newly emerging social and political forces and that the country would open itself to the democratic processes developing throughout Eastern Europe (Kanev 1996).

At around the time of that announcement dissident groups that existed under the communist regime in Bulgaria quickly began to organise. On the 18<sup>th</sup> November there was a large rally in Sofia, followed by a series of street protests which gradually spread to major cities. Throughout December and during all of 1990 the country was swept by public unrest, which in most cases, was an expression of protest against various aspects of totalitarian rule. Rallies, strikes, all-night vigils, petitions, tent-cities: all this occurred for a first time after decades of suppression and for many, the first time in their lives (Kanev 1996; Popov 1993).

Under the new circumstances the Communist Party leaders realised that their ability to retain power depended on the degree to which they could adjust to the new situation. They already had access to all the resources needed to decide the course of events and control the process of change. With no structured opposition to the totalitarian regime and a rising degree of social unrest the communists were faced with a choice either to allow and stimulate a process of slow disintegration of the Communist Party into two or more parties, or to create an opposition, partly from its own supporters, and in this way to control the events from behind the scenes (Karasimeonov 1996: 255-256). The first option was seriously envisaged at the beginning, but the second was preferred and was realised at the time when the Roundtable Talks were held in 1990. The advantage of the second option was that the Communist Party retained its organisational structure, considerable financial resources and a functioning press which allowed it to reinvent itself in the new political order.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> For an in-depth account of the events from the 10<sup>th</sup> November 1989 see Bell (1997).

<sup>27</sup> The importance of organisational continuity for the Bulgarian Communist Party was recognised by Karasimeonov in several of his contributions on the formation and development of the Bulgarian party system. He remarked, 'The real strength of former communist parties in the region as a whole, but especially in Bulgaria, came not from the inheritance of past ideological traditions, but chiefly from organisational continuity. This might prove an important advantage over all newcomer parties who first have to learn the art of organisation' (Karasimeonov: 1996: 258).

Moreover, the Party had already allowed back in its ranks reformed communists with social democratic orientation in order to preserve its relative unity in spite of a sharp decline in support from one million to half a million supporters in the first six months of the transition (Karasimeonov 1995: 164-165).<sup>28</sup> Comparing the decision of the Bulgarian Communists to stage their own opposition with the strategies of the Communist parties in Hungary and Poland, the latter were less successful at avoiding divisions. In Hungary the Communist Party self-dissolved, while in Poland it split into Social Democrats and Marxists. By contrast, in Bulgaria the modernisers from within the ranks of the Communist Party were integrated within an umbrella organisation of civil initiatives, United Democratic Forces that emerged shortly after regime change. According to the Bulgarian political scientist Georgi Karasimeonov (1996: 256), the Communist experiment of creating one's own opposition was a distinctively Bulgarian phenomenon from the early transition period but it should not create the 'false' impression that the Bulgarian Communist Party manipulated every event that subsequently took place.

The transformation of the Bulgarian Communist Party was not simply internal but more importantly steps were undertaken in the initial few months to legitimise the Party by publicly cutting all ties with the old regime and assuming a social democratic identity. This was possible since the Party had already purged the most committed hardliners from within its structures and party cadres with liberal views such as Aleksander Lilov and Andrei Lukanov replaced them in the party organisation. The first steps in this direction were taken at the party Congress, which took place between the 31<sup>st</sup> January and the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1990 when structural and personnel changes were approved (Bell 1997: 360; Szajkowski 1994: 94). The Congress vetoed two important decisions. It adopted a 'Manifesto of Democratic Socialism' which recognised that the country was in the middle of 'an acute economic and political crisis' and called for the Bulgarian Communist Party to transform itself into a 'modern Marxist party of democratic socialism'. Secondly, it decided to hold a referendum among its members on changing the Party's name from a Communist to a Socialist Party, which was approved by the delegates. The referendum took place at the end of March 1990. From the total 983 899

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<sup>28</sup> For membership rates in the Bulgarian Socialist Party see Karasimeonov (2003: 163). Karasimeonov reports that membership has declined as follows: in 1990 – 980,000 supporters; in 1992 – 365,567; in 1994 – 370,333; in 1996 – 320,437; in 1998 – 253,802; in 2000 – 210,961; in 2002 – 202,105.

registered party members at the time, 726,000 participated in the referendum and 86.71% of them supported the name alteration (Karasimeonov 2003; Szajkowski 1994: 94-95). Another measure towards dismantling the old regime was to change several provisions of the Constitution of 1971, regarding the 'leading role' of the Bulgarian Communist Party in society which was initiated on the 14<sup>th</sup> December 1989 from within the party ranks and the changes were finalised in January 1990, after the constitutionally required one month period between the second vote on the amendments elapsed.<sup>29</sup> This was an important development since it signified the separation of the powers of the state and the Communist Party which was necessary for the establishment of political pluralism. It also showed that, in line with Kitschelt's (1999) definition of patrimonial communism, the Bulgarian Communist Party facilitated rather than undermined the transition to democracy. Thirdly, the Communist Party denounced the name changing campaigns against the Muslims in Bulgaria. On the 29<sup>th</sup> December 1989, the State Council and the Council of Ministers issued a decision to restore the names of all people renamed by force under the communist regime (Spasov 2001: 99-102). At the same time an amnesty was declared for all political prisoners, including most of the Turks imprisoned during the name changing campaign. The culmination of this strategy was the publication in July 1991 of a Declaration of Responsibility by the Supreme Council of the Bulgarian Socialist Party. The essence of the document was to assume responsibility and publicly apologise for all injustices inflicted on the Bulgarian people during the 45 years of communist rule. Significantly, the declaration recognised that the prevailing economic crisis in Bulgaria was a consequence of the flawed economic policy of the communist regime and the Stalinist style of political system.

The formation of a democratic opposition in Bulgaria began after the displacement of Zhivkov from power when the decision for regime change had already been taken by the modernisers within the Communist Party. Public resentment towards the communist regime however has been rising since the 1980s when the worsening economic situation, the environmental issues and the regime's massive abuses of human rights (especially in respect of the Turkish minority) as well as Bulgaria's growing political isolation in the world gave impetus to a fledging dissident movement. In a short space of time, between

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<sup>29</sup> For a descriptive account of the negotiations on the new constitution see Melone (1998b). For a concise overview of the process see Kanev (1996: 54).

1988 and 1989, various civil groups began to emerge. Among the first were the Independent Committee for the Environmental protection of the city of Russe (formed in March 1988), the Independent Association for Human Rights (formed in January 1988), the Club for the promotion of Perestroika and Glasnost (organised in November 1988), the Citizens' Initiative (formed in December 1988), the Podkrepa Independent Trade Union (formed in February 1989), the Committee for Religious Rights, Freedom of Consciousness and Spiritual Values (established in May 1989) and the Eco-glasnost Independent Association (organised in April 1989). As their names imply to start with most of these groups were conceived as independent or apolitical organisations but with the change of the political system they were driven into polarisation since their problems could only be resolved at state level (Giatzibis 2002: 46-47). The majority of these organisations had no social base, membership lists, organisational structures or history. They were formed 'from the top' around small groups of people with very specific concerns and issues. Karasimeonov (1996: 258, 2003: 35) calls them 'label' parties because although they officially registered as political parties they never developed the attributes of political entities such as party ideology, programmes, social base or structures.<sup>30</sup>

The second group of opposition parties was those with historical roots that had participated in the political life of the country before they were prohibited by the Communist regime in 1947/48. Examples of such parties were the Social Democratic Party, Bulgarian Agrarian National Union 'Nikola Petkov', National Union 'Zveno', National Liberal Party 'Stefan Stambolov', the Democratic Party, the Liberal Democratic Party, the Radical Democratic Party and the National Liberal Party. All historic parties were revived by surviving members or party activists such as Dr. Petur Dertliev, Atanas Moskov or Milan Drenchev but with the exception of the Agrarians and the Social Democrats who had a small constituency of an aging group of supporters, the rest of them had no widespread support.<sup>31</sup> Their faith was determined by their decision whether or not to join the democratic conglomerate - United Democratic Forces. Those parties that

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<sup>30</sup> For a very detailed account on the creation of the civic initiatives before regime change see Spasov (2001: 21-48).

<sup>31</sup> For a detailed account of the revival of the historical parties in Bulgaria see Spasov (2001: 49-72). Also refer to Karasimeonov (1996: 258-239; 2003: 36-38).

joined had an opportunity to legitimise themselves at the Roundtable talks in 1990 as well as make use of all state resources available to United Democratic Forces.

Therefore, a specific characteristic of Bulgaria's political life in the early period was that party formation was a top-down matter of leaderships seeking followings rather than the expression of grass-roots mass demands.

'The newly formed or restored political parties were top-down formations: they usually emerged around certain elites or individual leaders, and sought electoral support in the course of their political activity along two lines; endeavouring to make voters affiliate with their professed ideology or practical goals; seeking, in the diffused social realm, target-groups which were likely to identify with them' (Andreev 1996: 27).

United Democratic Forces was an umbrella organisation that joined together ten of the civic clubs and initiatives and historic parties at the time of its formation in December 1990. Although quite different in nature the glue that held those parties together was what is referred to in the literature as the 'liberation myth', or an ideology of anti-communism.<sup>32</sup> In an interview the Bulgarian political scientist Evgenii Dainov elaborates the theoretical basis on which UDF was formed and highlights the importance of the ideology of anti-communism:

'The idea was that the UDF covers the entire political spectrum from the far left (left-wing Social Democrats) to far right (revived pre-war authoritarian right-wing parties). It was held together by a single assumption which proved false: that in a matter of months the Communists, who were deemed beyond left or right, would disappear and the UDF would break up, its component parties covering the entire political spectrum of the democratic future. That was the theory, but of course the Communists instead of disappearing won the 1990 elections and since that moment there was a tremendous weakness in the UDF. It was formed as an entire political spectrum party of completely different people, which had to stay together, and this made agreement on an ideology or platform all but impossible, since the only thing the coalition partners agreed on was anti-Communism' (Giatzibis 2002: 77).

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<sup>32</sup> On the formation of UDF see Bell (1997: 362); Karasimeonov (1996: 258-259); Spasov (2001: 74-93).

The National Round Table was the place where a consensus on the post-communist development of the country was reached and the main framework of the future constitutional and social order was established.<sup>33</sup> The talks began on January 16<sup>th</sup> 1990 on the initiative of the Bulgarian Communist (later Socialist) Party, and proceeded until April 1990. The Round Table was constituted as a two-sided forum between United Democratic Forces, which at the time consisted of 14 oppositional groups and the Communists. Both United Democratic Forces and the Bulgarian Communist Party had a vital stake in the negotiations: the Democrats wanted to use the opportunity to present itself to the Bulgarian public as the only viable contender of the political authority of the communists; the Communists sought to reduce the pressure from the streets and establish itself as a legitimate partner in a democratic political dialogue (Kanev 1996: 55).

In constitutional terms the Roundtable was illegitimate but it was conceived as an expression of the public will and its main purpose was to provide a structured atmosphere for the peaceful transition from totalitarianism to democracy. It therefore had to discuss and give preliminary approval to all legislative acts proposed in the parliament and the parliament, which was elected during the totalitarian rule and largely seen as unrepresentative, rubber-stamped the decisions of the Round Table. This political set up was unique because all discussions were televised and direct transmissions from the Roundtable became the top broadcast item in the country for more than two months. It was also the first national forum for discussions on the communist policies during totalitarianism (Kanev 1996: 55).

The atmosphere at the Roundtable was one of mutual tolerance since both sides had a vested interest in implementing the changes. In a relatively short period of time a series of agreements were reached which transformed the political and social order in the country. The main document of the Round Table which established the principles of the future political system was the *Agreement on the political system*, signed on the 12<sup>th</sup> March 1990 after long deliberations. It envisaged the establishment of a pluralistic democracy in Bulgaria in which all human rights and freedoms would be guaranteed. The

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<sup>33</sup> For a detailed account on the Roundtable Talks in Bulgaria see Kanev (1996: 55-58); Melone (1994, 1998a: 1-120); Popov (1993); Spasov (2001: 102-111); Szajkowski (1994: 94-95).

agreement described the basic elements of a democratic political system, including free and competitive elections in the framework of a multiparty system, elected local self-government, separation of powers, and rule by the majority with guaranteed political rights for expression for the minority and accountability of all public officials to the people. It proposed urgent legislative amendments to the 1971 Constitution such as the abolition of the Preamble which had established the Bulgarian society as an ‘advanced socialist society’ as well as the procedures for elections and the mandate of the Grand National Assembly (Kanev 1996: 55-56).

Together with the *Agreement on Political System*, two other documents were signed – the *Declaration on the Role and Status of the National Roundtable* and the *Agreement on Guaranteeing the Peaceful Development of the Transition towards a Democratic Political System*. The Declaration did not have much political significance since it merely reaffirmed the status of the Round Table against public accusations, coming mainly from the communist circles, that it did not represent a legitimate public will. The Agreement on the Peaceful Transition gave the guidelines and rules which the main political forces agreed to abide by in order to secure social peace during the transition period. They agreed to refrain from using violent methods and means in the political contest and to prevent and intercept all acts of violence of their members, to demonstrate tolerance for the opponent’s beliefs, to guarantee mutual non-interference in their political activity, to refrain from provocations, to cooperate in the preparations for the elections and to prevent state agencies abusing power in favour of any party (Kanev 1996: 57).

On the 30<sup>th</sup> March 1990 two other agreements were signed – the Agreement on the Basic Ideas and Principles of the Draft Law on Amendments and Addenda to the Constitution of Bulgaria and the Agreement on the Principles of the Draft Law on the Election of a Grand National Assembly. The Agreement on the Amendment of the Constitution was a detailed development of the principles outlined in the Agreement on Political System. One aspect of it was the further ‘cleansing’ of traces of the one-party monopoly in all spheres of social life. It also envisaged a change in the structure and functions of the central state power, introducing the institution of the Presidency with a President elected by the National Assembly instead of the State Council. The agreement on the election

law envisaged a mixed majority-proportional electoral system through which 200 deputies would be elected in single-mandate constituencies and another 200 through party lists on a proportional basis. The agreement also specified the principles of the fair representation of the parties in the central and local election committees as well as the detailed schedule of actions for election agencies and officials (Kanev 1996: 57).<sup>34</sup>

All provisions of the agreements were supposed to be, and most of them were, introduced as legislation immediately after signing and while the deliberations on further agreements were going on. Among the new laws were the Meetings, Rallies and Demonstrations Act, the Political Parties Act, the Law for Election of the Grand National Assembly, all adopted before the first free elections which were scheduled for the 10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> June 1990. During the same period and also as a result of the Round Table Agreements, the Constitution, the Penal and Penal Procedure Codes were substantially amended (Kanev 1996: 57-58).

Occasionally, some provisions of the signed agreements were misinterpreted by the parliament when they were put into legislation. This was the case, for example, with the provisions determining the functions of the president. On the 4<sup>th</sup> April 1990, United Democratic Forces protested that declaring martial law or a state of emergency, as put forward in the final version of the Constitution was not part of the agreement. In general, however, the agreements were correctly implemented and the legislation secured the necessary preconditions for free and fair elections (Kanev 1996: 58).

The first stage of party formation and development in Bulgaria covers a period of intense transformation of the political and social order in the country. Most significant from a party point of view were the breakdown of the communist party monopoly and the emergence of a multi-party system. The identities of the two main parties, the Bulgarian Communist (Socialist) Party and United Democratic Forces, were in the process of definition. The relationship between them was one of tolerance born out of the understanding that the transition to democracy required some immediate agreements on the institutional and legal framework. Once this objective was achieved at the National

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<sup>34</sup> Also, on the laws of political parties and elections see Bell (1997: 364-367); Szajkowski (1994: 94-95).

Roundtable talks the relationship between the two major parties was transformed. Prior to the June 1990 elections a highly charged confrontational campaign between the Bulgarian Socialist Party and United Democratic Forces polarised the electorate. This was the beginning of the second bi-polar stage of party development in Bulgaria.

### **2.2.2 STAGE TWO -THE EMERGENCE OF IDEOLOGICAL BI-POLARITY**

The second period of party system development in Bulgaria began with the first democratic elections in June 1990 and ended with the general elections in June 2001. The most distinctive feature of the period was the bi-polar model of party politics which was ideologically defined and reflected the unstable nature of Bulgarian politics during the transition from communism to democracy. Resembling Sartori's 'two party' system type on the left pole was the Bulgarian Socialist Party and on the right was United Democratic Forces which competed for the absolute majority of seats and alternated their positions of power in a quick succession of elections (Sartori 1990). There was a third minority party, Movement for Rights and Freedoms, which sided with both the Socialists and the Democrats at different points in time and played the role of a balancer in Bulgarian party politics. Elections were frequently held and until 1997 no government managed to complete a full electoral term. The Bulgarian Socialist Party won the 1990 and 1994 elections, while United Democratic Forces came first in 1991 and 1997. There were two attempts to form coalition governments with the participation of all three parties in 1990 and 1992, which were unsuccessful. The relationship between the two major blocs was confrontational with emphasis on ideology and alternative routes to de-communisation rather than economic reforms. Changes to the economy were delayed due to fear of a public backlash resulting from the high cost of implementing strict economic measures. Moreover, when economic reforms were initiated by either side such as the restitution of land which was one of the most controversial economic issues in Bulgaria, they were reversed or discontinued as soon as the initiating government was brought down and replaced with a new government from the opposition. The bi-polarity came to an end when a central political party, National Movement Simeon II, succeeded in gaining an almost full majority in parliament at the 2001 elections. The success of the party is associated with the popularity of its leader, the former Bulgarian child king Simeon II

and his pledges to introduce a new moral and loyalty in politics and improve the economic situation of Bulgarians in 800 days.

The preparation for the first democratic election in June 1990 began immediately after the decision for the election date was taken at the Roundtable talks. Both United Democratic Forces and the Bulgarian Socialist Party entered the democratic contest with a high level of confidence that they were going to win the election (Bell 1997: 368; Szajkowski 1994: 95). United Democratic Forces assumed that since this was the first democratic election after 45 years of communist rule the voters would automatically reject the Socialist Party and gravitate towards the political right. Therefore, they focused in their election campaign on discrediting the Communists by making the communist past and atrocities committed by the Bulgarian Communist Party during the Stalinist era the main theme of their election campaign.

By contrast, the spirit of the election campaign of the Socialists was positive, futuristic and accommodative. The Party sought to put across an image of a party in transition, one which was open to the principles of democracy and capitalism as well as being devoid to Marxist ideology. There were many references to the role of the Communist Party in initiating regime change and the party presented itself as the party of 'responsible, conservative change', stressing the experience of its leaders and minimising their policy differences with United Democratic Forces.

As Karasimeonov (2003: 53-54) points out, the first democratic elections in Bulgaria were indicative of the direction of development of the Bulgarian party system. The main dividing line between the two political blocs was the ideological cleavage of 'for' or 'against' communism which predetermined the formation of the bi-polar model of party politics. The model had on the left and right respectively, the Bulgarian Socialist Party and United Democratic Forces with gravitating around them smaller political parties: Bulgarian Agrarian National Union, which was closer to the Socialists and Movement for Rights and Freedoms which was closer to the Democrats. The main theme of the election debate compared the memories from the communist past with the vision from the future. United Democratic Forces combined the negative evaluations of totalitarianism with

positive messages about the democratic future. For the Bulgarian Socialists the past was not all negative and the future was associated with the idea of democratic socialism.

Following the 1990 election there was a theoretical possibility that a multi-party system might emerge as a result of United Democratic Forces' split into three divisions in the summer of 1991.<sup>35</sup> By that time a number of important changes had taken place in the Bulgarian political arena: the Socialist government of Lukanov resigned in November 1990 and the country was left in the hands of a care-taker coalition government of experts with Dimitur Popov as a Prime Minister. The main reason for Lukanov's resignation was the worsening economic conditions in the country which led to the 'hungry' winter of 1990-1991 when people were queuing for hours in order to obtain most basic essentials and quotas (similar to the rationing in the war period) for sugar, oil, soap, tea and coffee were given to every family unit. Thousands of young and well educated Bulgarians left the country; the prices of food and electricity increased; unemployment was escalating and crime was on the rise. Lukanov's plan was to artificially keep the standard of living to affordable levels until the 1990 election but this was clearly a short term measure and when it was no longer possible to sustain his government resigned due to constant strikes and mounting pressure from the streets.

At the point of Lukanov's resignation United Democratic Forces were unprepared to form a new government. Following the election the party had lost the political drive and adopted the attitude of an opposition, rather than its earlier role of an initiator of reforms. Their lack of experience and constant change of strategy in relation to the Socialist government eventually created the impression that they shared the blame with the Socialists for the limited reforms. In the summer of 1991, United Democratic Forces split into three fractions: two moderate and radicals. The catalyst for the split was disagreement over the new Constitution. In April 1991, a group of 39 radical deputies left parliament and refused to ratify the Constitution because it was too socially oriented and under the influence of the Socialists. They claimed this made it morally unacceptable and not consistent with liberal traditions. Those Members of Parliament were later joined by representatives of Bulgarian Agrarian National Union-Nikola Petkov, Movement for

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<sup>35</sup> On UDF's split see Bell (1997: 374-377); Karasimeonov (1995: 162-164); Kolarova (1996: 545); Petrova and Kanev; Szajkowski (1994: 100).

Rights and Freedoms and other MPs. However at the ballot 309 out of a total of 400 deputies, including the majority of United Democratic Forces gave their approval, believing that it reflected the major demands for democratic change and the Constitution was passed.

Prior to the split the differences between the radicals and the moderates within United Democratic Forces were evident for some time and they were formed on broader issues for which the Constitution was only a motif. Strategically, the radicals wanted total power as soon as possible and allowed for no negotiations or compromises with the Socialists.<sup>36</sup> Ideologically, they stood for aggressive anti-communism and insisted that the old nomenclature should be held to account. Some radicals for instance from the Democratic Party displayed royalist tendencies and aspired to restoring the monarchy.<sup>37</sup> The moderates were willing to cooperate with the Socialists in order to preserve social peace and implement reforms. They were firmly for a republican form of government and in favour of the rule of law and practices of parliamentarianism.

The second dimension of differences was generational. For instance, the leaders of the historical parties, especially the Social Democrats and Bulgarian Agrarian National Union – Nikola Petkov, considered themselves to be the true opposition to the communists and often disagreed with the views of some of the new and younger leaders (also known as the ‘Young Lions’)<sup>38</sup> who joined the party shortly after the overthrow of Zhivkov in November 1989.<sup>39</sup> At the heart of this difference was a struggle among the party leaders to gain control over United Democratic Forces which developed into bitter

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<sup>36</sup> On the differences between the radicals and moderates within United Democratic Forces see Karasimeonov (1995: 163); Petrova and Kanev.

<sup>37</sup> On the idea for a national referendum on the monarchy pronounced by Petur Dertliev from the Social Democratic Party and why it did not materialise in the early 1990s see ‘The Royal Idea’ in Spasov (2001: 239-241).

<sup>38</sup> The lion is an ancient symbol of Bulgarian statehood and was also the symbol of United Democratic Forces.

<sup>39</sup> Petrova and Kanev distinguish between three groups of leaders within UDF who struggled for power. The first group was composed of the dissidents who were active during the Zhivkov regime and who were mostly involved in underground activities prior to regime change. The most popular of the dissident groups was Ecoglasnost. In the second group were leaders of the historic parties also known as ‘old timers’. They were members of opposition parties defeated by Communism, mostly agrarian parties of social democrats, many of whom have spent time in concentration and rehabilitation camps and prisons. The third group, ‘newcomers’, had a militant attitude towards the Socialist Party but nevertheless believed the UDF’s unity should be preserved. For their account of the split see Petrova and Kanev.

intra-party conflicts. According to Karasimeonov (1995: 163), the atmosphere of political confrontation was most evident from the attacks on the Social Democratic leader Petar Dertliev, who was the most well respected veteran from the moderate wing, by the new party leaders. Those attacks were very fierce, personal and uncompromising and directed at his readiness to cooperate with the Socialists on social policy issues.

The caretaker government of Dimitur Popov was essentially a broad coalition which was formed with the intention to implement the unpopular monetary reforms postponed by the government of Lukanov (Dainov 2000). The cabinet was formed on the basis of a wide consensus and the support of all political parties. For the Socialists as well as the Democratic Forces this was the best possible option. It was an opportunity for both parties to participate actively in politics at a time when neither could form governments on their own.

Politically as well as socially this distribution of responsibilities in the government was logical and reflected the reality of the time. Popov's intention was to bring together experts from both sides of the political spectrum in those areas in which the parties were traditionally strong. For instance, the Socialists were known to be more experienced in the area of governance and domestic affairs while United Democratic Forces, which have never been in government before, were perceived to be better at market reforms. The Bulgarian Socialist Party in particular were satisfied with this arrangement as they anticipated that the introduction of unpopular economic reforms initiated by the political right would lead to a backlash against them before the next general election. Since the government of Popov had a temporary status until the Grand National Assembly ratified the Constitution, it was only a matter of time before the Socialists could regain their position of power (Dainov 2000: 446). The best way to ensure this turn of events was to dilute the political responsibility between the left and right which was the main reason why the Socialists agreed to participate in the coalition.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> There was an explicit agreement between the Bulgarian Socialist Party and United Democratic Forces in the process of negotiations according to which the Socialists agreed to cooperate in the ratification of acts that would facilitate market reform while in return the Democrats agreed to refrain from organising strikes, rallies and protests (Dainov 2000: 444).

The programme declaration of the new government was set in the spirit of United Democratic Forces. Its overall aim was the change of the totalitarian system with a democratic one. It outlined four major objectives: freeing of prices of most goods and end of government subsidies to producers in order to achieve market equilibrium through the forces of supply and demand. Monopolies had to be partitioned to ensure market competition, variety and quality of products. Thirdly, the privatisation of state enterprises was to be given a green light and hand in hand with this a land reform which set the rules for restitution (i.e. the return of the land to private owners from the state) was to be defined (Dainov 2000: 446).

Although this was the plan, the performance of the cabinet was affected by events outside its control such as the Gulf war, the disintegration of Comecon in Central and Eastern Europe and the collapse of USSR.<sup>41</sup> The Gulf war occurred at a time when Iraq owed Bulgaria 2 billion USD for past arms deals delivery for which payment was agreed in oil. The United States imposed an embargo which Bulgaria observed as proof of loyalty to Western democracies but that led to severe fuel and power shortages during the winter and spring of 1991. The Comecon structure which provided guaranteed markets for the countries from Central and Eastern Europe rapidly disintegrated at the same time destroying whole sectors of the national economy. This coincided with the collapse of the USSR. The accumulation of the three events meant that the low quality products, once shipped to partner countries, could not be easily sold at other foreign markets.<sup>42</sup> This resulted in thousand of job losses of low skilled workers that had no alternative to finding employment.

In conditions of deteriorating living standards and under the advice of the IMF the government began the initial stage of monetary reforms by freeing up prices and increasing interest rates to prevent inflation in February 1991 (Dainov 2000: 447-448; Petrova and Kanev). The prices of essential consumer goods and commodities increased

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<sup>41</sup> For an outline of the geopolitical factors that affected the economic development in Bulgaria see Dobrinsky (1991; 2000); Petrova and Kanev.

<sup>42</sup> In a number of interviews in the national press Dimitur Popov expressed an opinion that the rapid disintegration of Comecon was a mistake and countries such as Hungary and Poland which had maintained their trade relations with the Soviet Union had better conditions to undertake the transition to market economy (Spasov 2001: 263).

by 150-200% in a matter of weeks and compensation added to pay, welfare benefits and pensions could not offset even partly the adverse effects brought by the new measures. One in four of the official workforce was unemployed which gave the trade unions substantial leverage to negotiate with the government the pace of market reforms. Although most prices were freed and set by the market those of key commodities such as fuel remained controlled until 1998.

The economic crisis in Bulgaria resulted in consolidating society's polarisation but it did not bring mass disapproval of Popov's cabinet contrary to some expectations. The supporters of the Bulgarian Socialist Party blamed the hardships of the transition on the incompetence of United Democratic Forces whereas supporters of the right were convinced they were due to the legacy of the 45 years of totalitarian rule as well as the supremacy of the Socialist Party in parliament and in the management of major industries.

Following the resignation of the government of Dimitur Popov the political parties in Bulgaria prepared for another election. The election campaign of the Bulgarian Socialist Party was dominated by the centrist wing of the party, organised around Andrei Lukanov and Aleksander Lilov, who were in favour of gradual reforms and ideologically stood for a combination of social democracy with neo-communism. The Bulgarian Socialist Party participated in the election in a coalition with nine other parties such as 'Era – 3' and the Female Christian-Social Club, which had no influence or importance in the political life of Bulgaria. The reason for this arrangement was in order to demonstrate wide social base and public support and this became a repetitive tactic for the party every time it found itself in the midst of political isolation.

Prior to the elections United Democratic Forces split into four formations, each of which participated independently (Karasimeonov 2003: 66-67). The first group, which was the most numerous, were UDF-National Movement (also known as the dark blues) which consisted of the 39 break-away deputies from the Radical Democratic and Democratic parties, the United Democratic Centre, the Federation for Clubs for Democracy, Movement 'Civil Initiative' and other smaller or new parties. They stood for aggressive

anti-communism directed against the Bulgarian Socialist Party and its participation in the political life of the country.

The second group UDF-Centre united the Bulgarian Social Democratic Party, Ecoglasnost and other small parties. They identified with liberal traditions and parliamentary democracy as well as dialogue and compromise in political competition and disapproval of the militant style of UDF-National Movement.

The third group was UDF-Liberals which consisted of the Federation for the Clubs of Democracy, the Green Party and a fraction of the Democratic Party. Ideologically this group stood close to the UDF-Centre but leadership struggles ensured that the groups participated separately at the election.

The fourth group was the agrarians from Bulgarian Agrarian National Movement 'Nikola Petkov' which competed with another agrarian formation Bulgarian Agrarian National Movement (United) for support from the farming and village communities.

At the election only the UDF-National Movement won seats in parliament with more votes than the Bulgarian Socialist Party.<sup>43</sup> The other three formations did not gather enough votes to pass the 4% electoral threshold for representation and remained outside the political system.

The main theme of the election campaign of UDF-National Movement was a change of the political system through electoral victory and policies of de-communisation. Following the elections the democratic government of Filip Dimitrov made it a priority to fulfil its electoral pledges in regards to de-communisation. In a relatively short period of time a number of laws were passed through parliament, all of which were aimed at eliminating the power and privileges of the Bulgarian Socialist Party.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> For election results from the 1991 parliamentary election refer to Table 2.1 in Appendix B.

<sup>44</sup> On the de-communisation initiatives of the UDF government of Dimitrov see Bell (1997: 378-382); Dainov (2000: 466); Kolarova (1996).

One of the first acts passed through the National Assembly provided for the confiscation of the property of the former Communist Party and its totalitarian satellite organisations: the Trade Union Confederation, Komsomol, and Bulgarian Agrarian National Union. The most visible consequence of the implementation of this law was the displacement of the Bulgarian Socialist Party from its headquarters at the Party House to modest and unassuming offices on Pozitano Street (Bell 1997: 378; Dainov 2000: 466).

Within a month of this act there were changes in the administration and management of state institutions. For instance, in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 320 employees were made redundant before the end of 1991. In the army more than 1000 military personnel associated with the Communist (Socialist) Party were demilitarised. Similarly, around 2000 managers of state enterprises were replaced with new faces close to United Democratic Forces and more than a thousand professionals from the National Television were made redundant or demoted (Dainov 2000: 466).

Some of the government's de-communisation measures such as the Banking and Lending Law, the Pensions law and the Law on the De-communisation of Science and Education (also known as the 'Penev' law) were controversial. According to the Banking Law senior members of the Communist Party (also known as the nomenclature) were banned from holding managerial posts in banks for a period of five years (State Gazette 1992a). The Pensions Law denied pensions to retirees whose careers had been in positions within the Bulgarian Communist Party or the Security apparatus (State Gazette 1992b). The law concerning Science and Education denied the recognition of degrees earned in Soviet educational institutions as well as barred anyone who has held a post within the Bulgarian Socialist Party or its associated institutions from leadership positions in academic institutions (State Gazette 1992d). The Banking law was never implemented as it was overturned by the Constitutional Court in Bulgaria.<sup>45</sup> The 'Penev law' was severely criticised by Human Rights Organisations and President Zhelev appealed it to the Constitutional Court which decided to uphold it (Bell 1997: 378-379; Dainov 2000: 466).

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<sup>45</sup> See Decisions 8, 9 and 11 of the Constitutional Court published in State Gazette (1992c).

Right from the start the prosecution of former communist leaders was central to the government's de-communisation approach. Formal proceedings against Todor Zhivkov were launched under the government of Dimitur Popov and the case against him gathered speed under a new Chief Prosecutor Ivan Tatarchev in 1992. It ended with a conviction for embezzlement and Zhivkov was given a house arrest in the home of his granddaughter on the 4<sup>th</sup> September 1992.

More controversial was the indictment of former Prime-minister Andrei Lukanov who at the time was a sitting member of Parliament. Lukanov's passport was confiscated and the Assembly voted to lift his parliamentary immunity and the issuing of a warrant for his arrest. In fact, Lukanov was taken in custody in July 1992 and released in six months' time in December 1992.

The personal nature of the de-communisation campaign was most apparent in relation to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church (Bell 1997: 380-382; Dainov 2000: 502). It was publicly known that the Church hierarchy was infiltrated by secret agents and informants of the Bulgarian Communist Party. The conflict between the government and the Church was brought to light when the leader of the Committee for the Defence of Religious Rights and Consciousness Kristophor Subev with the support of the Prime minister and a few bishops attempted to force out Patriarch Maxim from his post as a Church Head. When the aging Patriarch declined to resign and sought the support of the President, Subev and a group of clergy occupied the Headquarters of the Holy Synod and seized the Church's bank account effectively barring payments of salaries to the clergy, the majority of whom were on the side of Maxim. Public opinion turned sharply against the government and its cohesive methods of reforming the Church leadership as well as against its persistence with various forms of de-communisation.

As part of the de-communisation package a number of reforms were approved that laid the legal framework for the return of the land to private owners who were deprived of ownership through collectivisation (Kolarova 1996). The government decided to carry out the restitution process gradually, starting with the return of buildings and farming land expropriated by the communists according to 'real boundaries'. The communist

collectives were dismantled and the shares in them were returned to the villagers through decisions of Liquidation Committees. By September 1992 there were 1.7 million applications for land restitution covering 94% of the total agricultural land in Bulgaria (Dainov 2000: 466-467).

The relative success in the restitution of the land was offset by the slow pace of privatisation. The government decided to introduce privatisation gradually, beginning with the sale of small enterprises and then moving to privatising state monopolies. In April 1992 a law that determined the rules for the sale of large state enterprises was passed by the power of which they were to be transformed into share-holding companies before the sales took place. This was intended as a preparatory step towards their full privatisation.

A series of circumstances that gathered pace in the summer of 1992 culminated in a failed confidence vote that resulted in the overturn of the United Democratic Forces government in December the same year. The lack of state finances and decline in foreign investment coupled with more than 40 strikes in the space of a year and growing internal disputes between the 19 parties-members of United Democratic Forces weakened the position of the government. Changes in the cabinet left the impression that the internal disputes within the blue coalition were beyond negotiation.

The government of Dimitrov collapsed on the 28<sup>th</sup> October 1992 as a result of a failed confidence vote initiated by Dimitrov as a way of forcing into line break-away deputies from United Democratic Forces and Movement for Rights and Freedoms who in September the same year had voted out the UDF Parliamentary Chief Whip Stefan Savov against the will of the government.

This tactic backfired when the Turkish party joined forces with the Bulgarian Socialist Party and overturned the government by the smallest of margins of 120 to 111 votes. The voting was a symbolic act to punish United Democratic Forces for two specific reasons. First was its failure to support the implementation of social measures for elevating the economic hardships of the Turkish minority which was strongly affected by the economic

changes. Secondly, some deputies from United Democratic Forces had expressed support for the initiative of the Bulgarian Socialist Party to invalidate the election of Movement for Rights and Freedoms through the High Court, which shifted the balance in the relationship between the two partners against one another (Szajkowski 1994: 382-383).

Two months of deliberations and uncertainty produced a new expert government which was a wide coalition formed with the support of the Bulgarian Socialist Party, Movement for Rights and Freedoms and a break away group of deputies from United Democratic Forces.<sup>46</sup> Lyuben Berov, a compromise figure and an advisor to president Zhelev was chosen as a Prime minister of the new cabinet. He was seen as a consolidating figure and upon his appointment he pledged to lead the country out of its 'crisis of confrontation' by forming a government of 'national responsibility' (Bulgarian Telegraph Agency 1992).

In reality the Berov government was the weakest and least productive in comparison to all Bulgarian governments during the transition period. It pledged to speed the process of large scale privatisation but the lack of distinctive majority left it dependant on clientelistic and group interests and incapable of realising reforms.<sup>47</sup>

Towards the end of its term in May 1994 the World Bank produced a report on the economic situation in Bulgaria (Dainov 2000: 527-528). The report warned that Bulgaria was on the verge of an economic crisis and that the slowing down of reforms could lead to freezing of outside financing. Since the moratorium on the foreign debt introduced by Lukanov in March 1990 was still abiding, Bulgaria had no credit trust to receive commercial financing and the only source of available financing was from the 'financial fire-fighters': the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. This form of financing could be discontinued if the institutions disapproved of the politics of the government. Economic analysts from United Democratic Forces reported in the national

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<sup>46</sup> The government of Lyuben Berov was the first Bulgarian government elected with the support of Movement for Rights and Freedoms. According to Ganev (1995) this shows that minority parties can play a decisive role in national politics however in this case the party did not take advantage of its privileged position. Ganev speculates on five factors that could have contributed to this situation: 1. the lack of a coherent coalition strategy; 2. an inability to assume responsibility in the executive branch; 3. a narrow focus; 4. a lack of internal democracy; and 5. no coordination with other ethnic parties.

<sup>47</sup> For an overview of the political developments and the progress of the government of Lyuben Berov see Karasimeonov (2003: 77-83).

media at the time that the share of outside financing threatened by the politics of the government was around 300-400 million USD (Dainov 2000: 527).

The World Bank report identified an unhealthy tendency to maintain higher levels of state employment which had increased by 22 % in 1993 regardless of widespread losses (Dainov 2000: 528). In the state enterprises the weekly losses per employee were between 110-135 USD and the total losses for the period were 4 milliard USD. Moreover, the state budget had subsidised the state sectors with 50 million lev in 1993 compared to only 14 million lev in 1992. Finally, the trade deficit for 1993 was reported to be 900 million USD compared to 86 million for 1992, or a growth percentage of around ten times.

In other words the commercial picture resulting from Berov's time in power was not only one of slowing down of reforms but of economic mismanagement and wasting of resources. For instance, the government became known for laying down the foundations of the hidden privatisation. It allowed the transfer of state resources into the hands of private entities close to the government and created conditions for hyperinflation resulting from the collapse of the financial and commercial sectors.<sup>48</sup> The hyperinflation which became associated with the next cabinet of Zhan Videnov was already in progress during the time of the expert government of Lyuben Berov.

Moreover, the economic decline and the clientelistic attitude of the government produced a new brand of businessmen in Bulgaria: the credit millionaires. They were individuals with political connections, usually linked to the Socialist Party, who took large credits from the banks with no intension to return the loans and relying on the fact that the rising levels of inflation would melt the capital amount to insignificant levels.

The majority of those businessmen (known as *bortsi*, *borcheta* i.e. fighters) were between 20 and 30 years old and with a background in wrestling. In a very short time they opened up insurance businesses with the credit amounts which threatened and blackmailed most

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<sup>48</sup> Bulgaria was not the only country where the profits of private conglomerates were invariably accompanied by losses in the state sectors resulting from commercial rent seeking. For other studies on the region that highlight this trend in post-communist societies see Blasi *et al.* (1997); Bruszt and Stark (2000); Staniszkis (1991).

legitimate outlets in Bulgaria forcing them to buy protection or otherwise face beatings, assassinations or find their premises on fire. Consequently the insurers were squeezing every bit of small profit out of emerging start-ups making transacting business in Bulgaria a very expensive and life-endangering affair. The insurance companies such as SIK, VIS-2, Multigroup, Orion and Tron had the structure of gangster organisations and public assassinations of their leaders became commonplace.<sup>49</sup>

The government of Berov resigned after a failed confidence vote in September 1994 when the Socialist Party withdrew its support. Early elections were scheduled for the 18 December 1994. Berov's government was the longest serving government in the early post-communist Bulgarian history having served the country for 22 months.

The 1994 elections produced a clear majority for the Socialist Party which received 43.5% of the vote.<sup>50</sup> United Democratic Forces and Movement for Rights and Freedoms suffered a sharp decline of support and two new parties National Union and the Bulgarian Business Bloc passed the 4 % threshold for representation and received 18 and 13 seats respectively. The election results from the 1994 election created a new opportunity for the formation of a multiparty system in Bulgaria although this tendency was too weak to be established in the long term.

The main reason for the persistence of bi-polarity after the election was that neither National Union nor the Bulgarian Business Bloc were parties from the political mainstream and their pool of supporters consisted of marginal voters who lacked political conviction. The majority of supporters of the Bulgarian Business Bloc were protest voters who channeled their dissatisfaction with the democratisation process through voting in favour of the new party. Another factor was the charismatic personality of the leader of the Business Bloc – George Ganchev, who participated in the election campaign with a repertoire of nationalistic songs and poems. Given the limited democratic experience and the myriad of new parties in Bulgaria voters became drawn to the populist pledges of the Bulgarian Business Bloc formulated around national interests.

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<sup>49</sup> For an in-depth study of the formation and development of Multigroup in Bulgaria see Ganev (2001).

<sup>50</sup> For election results and distribution of seats see Table 2.1 in Appendix B.

The return of the Bulgarian Socialist Party to power four years after the beginning of the transition from communism to democracy was consistent with the political developments in Lithuania and Hungary where democratic elections in the middle of the 1990s saw the return to power of ex-communist parties which replaced incumbent pro-democratic governments. The period between 1995 and 1997 was filled with events which led to changes in the Bulgarian party system. The government of Zhan Videnov was slow in introducing structural reforms and the economic situation in the country rapidly deteriorated. The protectionist attitude of the cabinet (especially in relation to state enterprises) was complicated by the lack of administrative experience of the Prime minister who was drawn into a series of economic scandals and intra-party conflicts between the different wings of the Socialist Party.

The economic calamities followed one after another. The government's reluctance to carry out land restitution created a situation where the legal status of cooperative farms and land ownership was unclear (Bell 1997: 392). This resulted in less land being cultivated. At the same time the government agreed to issue export licenses to certain economic groups close to the cabinet allowing them to purchase much of the 1995 harvest at low, state determined prices. The consequences of this measure were a sharp rise in food prices, the introduction of bread rationing and the issuing of a plea to the European Union for emergency grain delivery.

In the first half of 1996 the country was caught in a situation of a triple crisis, also referred in the literature as the 'triple drain' (Dobrinsky 2000). According to Dobrinsky the triple drain represents the collapse of fiscal policy, which brought the banking and currency sectors in Bulgaria to a situation of default. The roots of the fiscal crisis were in the protectionist policy of the governments of Berov and Videnov who attempted to keep state enterprises afloat regardless of their loss making and lack of competitiveness. Consequently, a growing proportion of state borrowing was being allocated in this direction and the interest payments on the debt were being financed through the budget. This created a chronically large budget deficit, which failed to be remedied by the intervention of the Central Bank.

The same protectionist policies towards state enterprises were at the heart of the banking crisis, which occurred because of governmental failings to impose strict restrictions on the entities' spending. The borrowing resulted in snowballing of bad loans that coupled with weak banking supervision and improper banking practices such as corruption progressed to a complete collapse of the banking sector.

At the beginning only a handful of banks experienced liquidity difficulties proceeding from bad loans, but by the middle of 1996, public panic had set in and large amounts of deposits were being withdrawn by the public in anticipation of more bank collapses.

The erosion of public confidence in the national currency and its withdrawal from the banking mechanism contributed to a currency crisis. This was complicated by a series of confusing and illogical moves by the Central bank in relation to exchange and interest rate mechanisms which resulted in denomination of the lev and hyper-inflation.

The economic stagnation in Bulgaria was accompanied by complex and contradictory processes of divisions and consolidation within the main political parties.<sup>51</sup> The Bulgarian Socialist Party experienced a period of conflicts which was manifested in the distancing of leading party figures such as Andrei Lukanov and Aleksander Lilov from the economic and social policies of the government. There were a series of cabinet replacements which were attempted to smoothen the differences between the centrist and reformist wings of the Party and overcome the increasing level of political isolation surrounding the government.

In October 1996 Andrei Lukanov was assassinated in Sofia which sent shock waves through the party ranks and strengthened the public perception that Videnov had lost control of the country. Another setback for the Socialists came at the presidential elections in October/November 1996 when the Socialist Party nominated Georgi Pirinski, a candidate with a dual (Bulgarian and American) nationality, whose candidature was rejected by the Constitutional court. The replacement of Pirinski with the publicly unknown professor of art Ivan Marazov shortly before the election contributed to the

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<sup>51</sup> For a description of the developments in United Democratic Forces and the Bulgarian Socialist Party in the period 1995-1997 see Karasimeonov (2003: 83-89).

election loss of the Socialists and Zhan Videnov assumed full responsibility for the political mistake.

The crisis in the leadership of the Bulgarian Socialist Party contrasted the process of consolidation that was taking place within United Democratic Forces. At the 7th National conference of the Party Ivan Kostov was re-elected (this time directly) by the delegates. He initiated strategies to transform the Party into a homogenous entity. For instance at the 9th National conference in February 1997 United Democratic Forces permitted past coalitional members to join the party creating an opportunity for dual membership in both United Democratic Forces and participant parties. This was the beginning of the absorption of the coalition partners into the structure of United Democratic Forces and its transformation into a hierarchical organisation. More importantly, Kostov pursued a moderate style of politics purged from the party radical members from the wing of the 'kindzalite' associated with the confrontational style of Philip Dimitrov. Part of the plan for setting up the party structure involved the investment of considerable time and resources into fostering linkages with voters which was achieved through the establishment of a network of party clubs around the country and working relations with non-governmental organisations such as human rights groups, journalists' societies and market institutes (Ivanov 1997/98: 150).<sup>52</sup>

The election result of the presidential election in November 1996 indicated a shift in public opinion in favour of United Democratic Forces. Their candidate Petur Stoyanov came before the current president Zhelyu Zhelev who run on the electoral ticket of National Union at the first round. The convincing victory of the Democrats at the presidential election increased the pressure on the Socialist government to resign. Following a renewed wave of public protests against the cabinet, Videnov resigned as a prime minister and a party leader at the extraordinary congress of the Bulgarian Socialist Party in December 1996. A temporary government was appointed by the president until the next pre-term election in April 1997.

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<sup>52</sup> For an account of the changes within United Democratic Forces see also Fish and Brooks (2000: 64); Karasimeonov (2003: 88).

The result of the 1997 election returned the power card back to United Democratic Forces. As the election results show the democratic coalition between United Democratic Forces, National Union, the Bulgarian Social Democratic Party and the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Front called *Union of Democratic Forces* gathered 52% of the vote.<sup>53</sup> The Bulgarian Socialist Party received 22% and remained the largest political party on the left of the party system. Interesting from the point of view of party system development was that this election ended the hegemony of the Bulgarian Socialists, who apart from a brief spell in 1991-1992, were in power since 1989.

Another event significant for the development of the party system was the success of the Bulgarian Euro-Left to enter parliament with 14 seats which gave the party the opportunity to compete with the Socialists for support from the left electorate. The extent to which the party was going to succeed in accumulating a stable support base depended on how well it managed to establish its organisational structure and harmonise the positions of its leadership. For most of the time the Bulgarian Euro-Left sided with the Union of Democratic Forces but towards the end of the term it split into factions, some of which merged with the Socialist Party.

Two other political parties, the Bulgarian Business Bloc and National Union passed the electoral threshold. Both parties were located in the political centre but neither managed to alter the bi-polar model of politics and the relationship between the two main political blocs. The Bulgarian Business Bloc failed to make the transition from a populist to a social-liberal party because of its centralised structure and the monopolistic leadership of George Ganchev. In the case of National Union (which was a coalition between the Democratic Party and the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union) the party found itself functioning in the shadow of its coalition partner Union of Democratic Forces and failed to carve an independent identity.

The 1997 government of United Democratic Forces was the first Bulgarian government from the transition period to complete a full term in office.<sup>54</sup> Kostov initiated a series of

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<sup>53</sup> For election results and number of MPs by party see Table 2.1 in Appendix B.

<sup>54</sup> According to Fish and Brooks (2000) the success of United Democratic Forces in 1997 was due to three factors: the institutional framework, i.e. a regime with parliamentary representation; the quality of party

delayed reforms which improved the state of the economy.<sup>55</sup> Unlike the reforms of past governments the package ‘Bulgaria 2001’ consisted of long-term measures for economic recovery. The first initiative was to eliminate price controls and end the protectionist policy towards state enterprises. Hyperinflation was stamped out quickly and the IMF was invited to establish a currency board in Bulgaria that pegged the Bulgarian lev to the Deutschmark. Other measures included a crash privatisation programme and extensive reforms in the administrative and judiciary systems where corruption was endemic. The majority of the BSP-appointed managers of state enterprises were replaced with new personnel. Border control was transferred from the Ministry of Interior and the state-security services into the hands of re-trained army units in order to crack down on smuggling. The government re-oriented Bulgaria’s foreign policy from Russia to EU and NATO memberships which became key objectives for Bulgaria.

The most noticeable effort was the government’s multi-faced campaign to tackle organised crime (Fish and Brooks 2000; Giatzibis 2002: 70-71; Ivanov 1997/98). By the year 2000 the insurance companies chaired by ex-wrestlers with close relations to the Socialist Party had either legitimised or gone out of business. A series of arrests of major crime bosses took place, the first being that of Erdzan Rashid – Roko in 1997. Street crime was significantly reduced and the Ministry of the interior cracked down on car theft rings which had come to constitute one of the biggest sectors of the economy.

However, the price of the strict economic reforms affected the general public. As soon as the middle of 2000 public opinion polls showed that United Democratic Forces were no longer more popular than the Bulgarian Socialist Party. Unemployment increased to 20% of the population, privatisation deals lacked transparency and the government was often accused of corruption in allocating government contracts which often took the form of management-employee buyouts, cronyism and tax evasion.

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leadership which included capable individuals such as Ivan Kostov, Asen Agov, Petar Stoyanov and Stefan Sofiyanski; and the fact that United Democratic Forces lost at the first democratic elections and could not be blamed for the difficulties that followed. The academics point out that by contrast in Lithuania, Poland and Hungary where anti-communist forces won the first elections, they all lost the subsequent one which legitimised the communist parties in these countries as ‘former’ communists. For a debate on the changes in the political right following United Democratic Forces’s 1997-2001 term in office see Malinov (2001).

<sup>55</sup> For an outline of the reforms of the Kostov cabinet see Fish and Brooks (2000); Giatzibis (2002: 70-71); Ivanov (1997/98).

With the approaching of the new elections in 2001 the conflicts within United Democratic Forces snowballed. In the majority of cases they reflected a clash of clientelistic and group interests at local and central level. The establishment of the party organisation was marked by a drive for centralisation, top-down leadership style and weak intra-party democracy (Karasimeonov 2003: 94-96).

In the Socialist Party there were signs that the party was recovering from the self-imposed crisis.<sup>56</sup> It was fulfilling the role of an opposition triggering a number of no-confidence votes against the government. The new leader Georgi Parvanov established his influence within the party organisation whereas the influence of Zhan Videnov and his circle of loyalists diminished. Parvanov organised bilateral and multilateral talks and meetings between the Bulgarian Socialist Party and other left formations in Bulgaria with view of consolidating them together. This project called 'The New Left' was only partly successful because of the intra-party leadership disputes within the Bulgarian Euro-left (the second largest left party in Bulgaria) and the Bulgarian Social Democratic Party. Eventually, both parties split into factions some of which gravitated towards the Socialists while others chose to live outside of the new alliance.

The second stage of party system development in Bulgaria was the longest in the transition period stretching for eleven years from June 1990 until June 2001.<sup>57</sup> The initial consensual relationship between the Bulgarian Socialist Party and Union of Democratic Forces evident at the Roundtable Talks was broken following the first democratic elections in 1990. A polarised and confrontational set up was established regardless of occasional opportunities for new parties to enter the political arena. One such opportunity was when United Democratic Forces split into three factions: two moderate and a radical prior to the 1991 elections. On this occasion the moderate factions failed to pass the electoral threshold for representation and had no effect on the development of the party system. At the 1994 and 1997 elections a number of small parties (the Bulgarian Business Bloc, the Bulgarian Euro-Left and National Union) secured a limited number of seats.

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<sup>56</sup> For a detailed description of the developments within the Bulgarian Socialist Party see Karasimeonov (2003: 96-98). For an analysis of the development of the left in Bulgaria see Kanev (2001).

<sup>57</sup> For an overview of the development of the Bulgarian party system between 1989 and 2000 and the main challenges in front of the political parties see Karasimeonov (2000a).

Their impact on the party system was negligible since they lacked stable electorates, organisational structures, strong leaderships or resources.

The bi-polar model in Bulgaria resembled Sartori's model of polarized pluralism (Sartori 1990). Pre-term elections were held in 1991, 1994 and 1997 and the power rotated between the two political conglomerates. Economic reforms were delayed, postponed or reversed when new governments assumed office and the emphasis in policy making was on de-communisation. There were constant re-groupings, intra-party splits and leadership disputes resulting from the continuous definition of party identities.

At the 2001 elections a new political party, National Movement Simeon II, gathered an almost full majority of votes while United Democratic Forces and the Bulgarian Socialist Party were pushed to the flanks of the party system.<sup>58</sup> National Movement Simeon II was formed around and named after the ex-king of Bulgaria Simeon II eleven weeks before the election. The political system of Bulgaria evolved from a bi-polar to a multi-party type and a new coalitional government between National Movement Simeon II and Movement for Rights and Freedoms was negotiated. This marked the beginning of another stage of party system development in Bulgaria of coalition building in a multi-party system.

### **2.2.3 STAGE THREE – COALITION BUILDING IN A MULTI-PARTY SYSTEM AND THE EMERGENCE OF ANTI-SYSTEM PARTIES**

The most significant characteristic of the third stage of party system development in Bulgaria was the breakdown of the bi-polar model of party politics. The confrontational style of political relations emblematic of the 1990s gave way to a more tolerant approach and continuity in reforms which persisted beyond the end of the transition in 2007. The event that changed the structure of the Bulgarian party system in the direction of coalition building and political rapport was the success of the centrist political formation National Movement Simeon II in winning the 2001 general elections and forming the first elected

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<sup>58</sup> For an overview of the political situation in Bulgaria prior to the 2001 election and the positions of the political parties see Dimitrova (2000).

coalitional government in Bulgaria between National Movement Simeon II and Movement for Rights and Freedoms.<sup>59</sup> The main achievement of this government was that it laid the foundations of political consensus on EU membership turning it into a national goal for Bulgaria. Similarly, other issues which had been divisive in the past such as NATO membership, reform in the judiciary and social inequality began to unite the mainstream political parties.<sup>60</sup>

The 2005 elections reaffirmed the tendency for coalition building in Bulgaria.<sup>61</sup> They resulted in the formation of a grand coalition between Coalition for Bulgaria, National Movement Simeon II and Movement for Rights and Freedoms. From the point of view of party system development these elections registered two new tendencies for fragmentation of the party system and the emergence of anti-system parties. Following the elections seven parties entered the National Assembly which was the most diverse mix of political actors since the end of communism. The fragmentation was most apparent on the right of the party system where United Democratic Forces split into numerous parties, three of which passed the electoral threshold. Secondly, the protest vote at this election was absorbed by the anti-system party Coalition Union Attack which remains the only political party in Bulgaria with a 'soft' eurosceptic agenda (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2000). The tendencies for populism and fragmentation of the political space were also evident at the European Parliament elections in May 2007.<sup>62</sup> On this occasion another new party with a populist appeal - Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria- captured the highest share of the vote.

At the beginning of 2001 public opinion agencies in Bulgaria forecasted a marginal victory for United Democratic Forces in the June elections. Moreover, they registered

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<sup>59</sup> For an overview of the effect of the 2001 elections on the structuring of the Bulgarian party system see Karasimeonov (2003: 98-104); Kolarova (2002).

<sup>60</sup> For instance Harper (2003: 337) points out that in the 2001 election campaign the programmes of the three main political parties (Coalition for Bulgaria, United Democratic Forces, National Movement Simeon II) differed little on major pledges. He notes that they all emphasised continuing reform, economic growth, EU and NATO memberships as well as higher wages and pensions, lower unemployment and rooting out of corruption. The same point about the similarities in the political programmes of the main parties is made by Karasimeonov (2003: 100).

<sup>61</sup> For an analysis of the 2005 general elections in Bulgaria, a description of the election campaign and results see Savkova (2005, 2006).

<sup>62</sup> For an overview of the elections of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) in Bulgaria see Savkova (2008).

that a significant percentage of voters dissatisfied with the length and pace of the transition intended to abstain from voting.<sup>63</sup> In other words there was a vacuum of political representation that could not be filled by the mainstream parties on the left or right of the party system (Karasimeonov 2003: 99; Zdrebev 2004: 131). Two months before the elections in April 2001 the Bulgarian ex-monarch Simeon Saxcoburggotsky consolidated the protest vote of the electorate by establishing a centrist liberal formation, National Movement Simeon II. He became the first royal in Europe to be returned to power as a result of a democratic contest.

Even with the ability of hindsight it is difficult to explain Simeon's motivations to re-enter the political life of Bulgaria as a leader of a political movement.<sup>64</sup> After the collapse of the communist regime Simeon had been non-committal about becoming involved in Bulgarian politics despite the emergence of small monarchist parties and generally positive attitudes toward him among the Bulgarian public (Andreev 1996: 39). One possibility is that since he was not allowed to run at the presidential elections in 2001 after the Constitutional Court rejected his application on residency grounds the only available option was to establish a political entity (Harper 2003: 336; Koinova 2001: 135; Peeva 2001). Three days after the announcement of National Movement Simeon II Gallup reported that the new party was already capturing 46% of public support. This consisted of the protest vote as well as shares of the electorates of United Democratic Forces and the Bulgarian Socialist Party.

At the elections National Movement Simeon II achieved a landslide victory securing an almost full majority of 42.7%.<sup>65</sup> Unlike any other political party in the post-communist history of Bulgaria National Movement Simeon II appealed to all social groups and geographical regions. Compared to the results of Coalition for Bulgaria (the Bulgarian Socialist Party and fifteen small left parties) and United Democratic Forces (Union of Democratic Forces and National Union) which gathered 17.1 and 18.2% their outcomes

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<sup>63</sup> Karasimeonov (2003: 99) points out that public opinion surveys prior to the elections indicated that as many as 50 % of voters intended to abstain from voting.

<sup>64</sup> For an analysis of the reasons behind Simeon's decision to enter political life in Bulgaria and his attitude to the Bulgarian political system see Zdrebev (2004).

<sup>65</sup> For election results see Table 2.1 in Appendix B. For an analysis of the election results and the changes to the Bulgarian party system see Harper (2003: 335-339); Karasimeonov (2003: 98-104).

were relatively modest. Only Movement for Rights and Freedoms maintained its previous presence of 7.5% and were unaffected by the centrist formation.

After the elections National Movement Simeon II entered in a coalition government with Movement for Rights and Freedoms. The cabinet of Saxcoburggotsky reflected his 'catch-all' style of leadership by including two ethnic Turks (the agricultural minister - Mehmed Dikme and the minister without portfolio – Nezhdet Mollov) and two mayors from the Bulgarian Socialist Party (Kostadin Paskalev, the former mayor of Blagoevgrad who became a vice prime-minister and Dimitur Kalchev, the former mayor of Rousse who became a minister of state administration).<sup>66</sup> The Prime minister took also a considerable number of women on board, by contrast to previous governments. Although there were only two female ministers, there were several female deputy ministers and around 40% of the deputies from National Movement Simeon II were women.

The initial impression was that Saxcoburggotsky selected people for their capabilities and merit and not for politicking. For instance not a single minister in his cabinet had participated in a previous government. In fact the majority of them had no past experience in politics at all. With his coming to power Simeon created a new generation of technocratic politicians who unlike their predecessors were young, with respectable Western education and established careers abroad in the sectors of business and finance (Koinova 2001: 136; Peeva 2001). Such politicians were for instance the Minister of the economy, Nikolay Vasiliev and the Minister of finances, Milen Velchev.

The academic literature that debates the role of Simeon in the development of the Bulgarian party system is structured around two main themes. Firstly, there is an attempt to explain the reasons associated with his success at the 2001 election while another cluster of contributions analyses the election campaign of National Movement Simeon II (Barany 2002; Harper 2003: 335-340; Hartmann 2001; Koinova 2001; Peeva 2001).

The success of Simeon is mainly attributed to his personal charisma (Karasimeonov 2003: 99; Peeva 2001). For instance, Peeva (2001) argues that prior to the elections there

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<sup>66</sup> For an excellent account of Simeon's 'catch-all' strategy see Koinova (2001).

were two images of Simeon in the public domain that increased his popularity with the electorate. On one hand Simeon was perceived as the ‘non-political politician’, a successful businessman with considerable foreign contacts who never severed his ties with the motherland. On the other hand, the older generation of Bulgarians remembered ‘the little Simeon’ who was purged by the communist regime and who returned to Bulgaria to serve his people.

The importance of Simeon’s charisma for the success of National Movement becomes apparent when considered in the context of his election campaign.<sup>67</sup> The campaign was brief since National Movement Simeon II was established only two months before the elections. During the campaign Simeon stuck to generalities, therefore denying his opponents grounds to attack him, while formulating only four specific electoral pledges: to fix the economy in 800 days; to introduce higher morality in national politics, to grant a greater role of women in policymaking and to improve Bulgaria’s recognition internationally. In the electoral platform of the party there were three other specific pledges that proceeded from the general ones: to increase the average income from 240 to 400 lev; to introduce a zero % loans for small businesses and to reduce sharply the public debt. The public trusted him not least because of his royal connections which many believed would help to increase the share of Bulgaria’s foreign investment and reputation in Europe.

The party system began to unravel almost immediately after the 2001 election. Both National Movement Simeon II and United Democratic Forces experienced internal splits and disintegration in the first two years in parliament. Several major fractions within National Movement Simeon II struggled to gain influence and control during the first year in power, which did not result in official splits but nevertheless damaged greatly the reputation of the party and undermined its moralistic rhetoric. The tussles, albeit not always explicit were over several issues – the arrangement of the MP lists for the general election; the future organisational structure of National Movement Simeon II as a political party; the appointments of regional governors; and the nomination of the presidential candidate for the movement.

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<sup>67</sup> On the election campaign and an outline of Simeon’s major pledges see Barany (2002: 148-150); Harper (2003: 335-340); Hartmann (2001); Koinova (2001: 136); Peeva (2001).

There were three groups within National Movement Simeon II that were competing for domination: the circle around the movement's heavyweight Plamen Panayotov, known popularly as the 'jurist lobby', another circle around Stoyan Ganev, former Foreign Minister and the young and Western educated cabinet and deputy ministers such as Nikolay Vasilev and Lyubka Kachakova (Open Society Foundation 2001: 28-29).

A similar pattern of fractional rivalries was experienced by United Democratic Forces. There were three main issues which caused serious cracks between the party's leadership and the internal fractions at the beginning. These were the possible election alliance with Movement for Rights and Freedoms prior to the election, the possibility of a coalition with National Movement Simeon II after the election and the management style of Kostov, over which both the former Sofia mayor Stefan Sofiyanski and the deputy prime minister Evgenii Bakurdjiev left or were expelled from United Democratic Forces (Open Society Foundation 2001: 29).

Both National Movement Simeon II and United Democratic Forces attempted to isolate the impact of splits and, in retrospect National Movement Simeon II appears to have been more successful than United Democratic Forces in devising a strategy in the long run. For a start Simeon succeeded in registering the party in April 2002, less than a year after he came to power, and settled his relationship with the to political parties, Movement for National Revival, Oborishte, and the Party of Bulgarian Women, which originally carried the mandate of the parliamentary coalition National Movement Simeon II. In July 2003 there was a government reshuffle as well as changes in the leadership of National Movement Simeon II, the most important of which was the promotion of Plamen Panayotov from the post of former leader of National Movement Simeon II to a Deputy Prime Minister. Other factors that signaled cohesion from within were the negotiation of a long-awaited offer for NATO membership that Bulgaria was given at the Prague Summit in 2002 and the recognition of National Movement Simeon II as an associate member by the Liberal International in September 2003. In April 2004 Bulgaria acceded to NATO and in April 2005 it signed its Accession Treaty with the European Union.

For its part United Democratic Forces agreed upon a series of organisational and structural changes at the 13<sup>th</sup> National Convention in March 2002 which it enacted after that date. The key decision taken at the occasion was the election of Nadezda Mihailova, a former foreign minister during 1997-2001, to the position of party leader after Ivan Kostov resigned. This was seen as a victory for the reformist wing and had the potential to revitalise the party particularly as it led to an almost entire change of the central leadership and replacements in the regional and local structures. As it turned out the changes were little more than cosmetic and had minimal effect on United Democratic Force's policies and performance because within the party remained representatives of the radical wing such as the pro-Kostovite Ekaterina Mihailova and the anticommunist hardliner Edvin Sugarev. Moreover, the spectrum of opinions that remained within United Democratic Forces prevented the party from exploiting its opposition advantage of criticising the governing coalition as on many issues the anticommunist MPs refused to coordinate their actions with those of the Socialist Party.

On the left the Bulgarian Socialist Party was following a different trajectory to National Movement Simeon II and United Democratic Forces of party consolidation, which increased its chances of returning to the forefront of Bulgarian politics, especially as this was skillfully combined with intense and vigorous criticism of many government initiatives. The first milestone was the election of Georgi Parvanov for president in November 2001. From the party's point of view this event was significant as it represented the defeat of United Democratic Forces, after their candidate, the former president Petur Stoyanov, lost by a small margin at the second round of the election.<sup>68</sup> This placed Coalition for Bulgaria as the main opposition party in the country particularly as Parvanov became popular with the electorate for his ability to remain apolitical and identify with the nation's interests on issues such as sending Bulgarian military personnel to Iraq, EU and NATO memberships and the question of the Bulgarian medics in Libya.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> For an analysis of the presidential election in Bulgaria see Harper (2003). For an overview of the political parties in Bulgaria and their positions on the presidential election see Karasimeonov (2001b).

<sup>69</sup> According to BBSS Gallup International the confidence rating of the President Parvanov has steadily increased over the years since his election. His rating in 2002 was 51%, in 2003 -54%, in 2004 -63% and in 2005 – 66%. Refer to Section 'Approval of Institutions' (Open Society Foundation 2005) at <http://www.earlywarning.bg/edition.php?issue=24> (accessed on 26 April 2006).

The 2005 general elections led to a greater fragmentation of the party system as well as the emergence of the anti-system party Coalition Union Attack (Savkova 2005, 2006). Seven parties and coalitions entered parliament which was by far the most diverse mix since the beginning of the transition period. Coalition for Bulgaria secured 33.98% of the vote but felt short of an absolute majority and could only form government in a coalition.<sup>70</sup> National Movement Simeon II came second with 21.83% while Movement for Rights and Freedoms doubled its usual share to 14.07%. On the right three parties managed to cross the required threshold with similar outcomes: United Democratic Forces, Democrats for a Strong Bulgaria and Coalition Bulgarian People's Union had 20, 17 and 13 seats respectively. The biggest surprise in the result was the unexpected breakthrough with 21 seats of Coalition Union Attack, the first openly nationalistic and anti-establishment party in Bulgaria which consolidated the protest vote.

Following the elections another coalitional government was formed this time in the form of a grand coalition between Coalition for Bulgaria, National Movement Simeon II and Movement for Rights and Freedoms. The participation of the Turkish minority party was not strictly necessary in terms of numbers but its inclusion was a political gesture of unification of the three main parties behind the objective of EU membership in 2007. Although the governments of Kostov and Saxcoburggotsky had worked towards the fulfilment of the criteria for EU membership and the completion of the accession negotiations with the European Commission, it was only at the 2005 election that the topic of Bulgaria's accession really entered the public domain. One reason for this is the success of Coalition Union Attack which was the first political party in Bulgaria to oppose membership in the European Union on the basis of national interests.

The end of the transition period in Bulgaria can be formally defined with the European Parliament elections which took place in May 2007.<sup>71</sup> The elections reinforced the tendencies for a greater fluidity of the Bulgarian party system and the success of populist and anti-system parties. The highest number of votes on this occasion was collected by a new populist party Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria organised around Simeon's former bodyguard and former mayor of Sofia – Boyko Borisov. Although his

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<sup>70</sup> For election results see Table 2.1 in Appendix B.

<sup>71</sup> On the European Parliament elections in Bulgaria see Savkova (2008).

party is pro-European it opposes the participation of Movement for Rights and Freedoms in the governing coalition as well as Turkish membership in the European Union because of the risk of immigration and influx of cheap labour.

On the right of the party system no political party managed to secure any seats. This was a natural progression from the process of fragmentation that began in 1997 within United Democratic Forces and led to the complete loss in public support for right parties in 2007.

The third stage of the development of the Bulgarian party system is significant for the breakdown of the bipolar model of party politics which was replaced by a coalitional model of governance in a multi-party system. The event that made this transition possible was the emergence and success of National Movement Simeon II at the 2001 elections which was followed by the first elected coalitional government between National Movement Simeon II and Movement for Rights and Freedoms. In 2005 the coalitional model of governance was reinforced with the establishment of a grand coalition between National Movement Simeon II, Coalition for Bulgaria and Movement for Rights and Freedoms. Moreover, the party system became more fluid and fragmented with new parties securing participation, while United Democratic Forces disintegrated. Significantly for Bulgaria the anti-system party Coalition Union Attack consolidated the protest vote of the electorate in 2005 while at the 2007 European Parliament elections another populist party – Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria – gathered the highest percentage of votes.

This section provided an overview of the formation and development of the Bulgarian party system during the post-communist transition from November 1989 until May 2007. Three stages of party system development were outlined. The first stage covers a period of consensus between the Bulgarian Communist (Socialist) Party and United Democratic Forces which facilitated the preparation of an initial legal and institutional framework at the Roundtable Talks essential for the functioning of democracy. The three main agreements reached at political level at this stage were the election of a Grand National Assembly which to prepare a new Constitution, and two laws on political parties and

elections. All of this facilitated the establishment of a multi-party system which replaced the Communist monopoly of power.

This relatively short period was followed by a much longer spell of ideological confrontation between the Bulgarian Socialists and United Democratic Forces which resulted in the formation of a bipolar model of party politics similar to Sartori's 'two party' system (Sartori 1990). Throughout this period there was a constant rotation of power between the left and right with a high level of contestation and a third political party, Movement for Rights and Freedoms, which alternated its support between Socialists and Democrats. Consequently, in the first democratic decade general elections were frequently held in Bulgaria in 1990, 1991, 1994, 1997 and 2001 and nine Prime ministers were elected or appointed throughout the same period.<sup>72</sup>

The third stage of party development was marked by a return to a multi-party system and the formation of coalition governments in 2001 and 2005. This allowed the reaching of consensus between the main political actors on strategic goals such as EU membership and the continuation of economic and social reforms. At the same time anti-system and populist parties such as Coalition Union Attack and Citizens for European Development in Bulgaria were established while United Democratic Forces disintegrated. The current party system in Bulgaria is therefore fluid and unconsolidated.

## **2.3 CONCLUSIONS**

The Bulgarian party system was fundamentally transformed during post-communism. It went through three phases of development with quite different characteristics. The first stage began with the collapse of the communist regime in November 1989 and ended at the first democratic elections in June 1990. Two events significant for the formation and development of the party system occurred in this time. The communist monopoly of power was replaced by a multi-party system after a myriad of new political parties were formed following regime change. The relationship between the two main political blocs –

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<sup>72</sup> Table 2.1 gives election results and Table 2.2 lists Bulgaria's Prime ministers and their political affiliation. Both Tables are in Appendix B.

the Bulgarian Communist (Socialist) Party and United Democratic Forces was initially consensual which allowed the construction of a new political order at the Roundtable Talks.

The first democratic elections in Bulgaria polarised the political space and the Bulgarian party system began to resemble Sartori's model of a 'two party' system. According to Karasimeonov the party system was in fact a two-and-a-half party system since it was made up by two opposing blocs – the Bulgarian Socialist Party and United Democratic Forces and a third party – Movement for Rights and Freedoms which alternated its support between the two blocs at different moments of the transition. The main characteristics of this stage of party system development were the ideological confrontation in the relationship between the two main parties, a constant succession of elections and rotation of power between the left and right which caused delays in economic reforms. The end of this bi-polar stage came at the 2001 elections when National Movement Simeon II gathered an almost full majority of seats and the protest vote in its favour marginalised the Bulgarian Socialist Party and United Democratic Forces.

Since 2001 a new tendency for coalition building in a multi-party system was set. There were two coalitional governments in 2001 between National Movement Simeon II and Movement for Rights and Freedoms and in 2005 between Coalition for Bulgaria, National Movement Simeon II and Movement for Rights and Freedoms. The coalitional arrangement resulted in a change in the relationship between the major political parties that facilitated an agreement on two strategic foreign policy objectives of NATO and EU memberships. Throughout the same period the party system became fragmented and especially on the right new political parties resurfaced and quickly dissolved. United Democratic Forces split into fractions neither of which managed to win support at the European Parliament elections in May 2007. Hand in hand with this there was a surge of populist and anti-system parties such as Coalition Union Attack and Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria.

The formation and development of the Bulgarian party system had an impact on the level of support for the EU in the country. On one hand the fluctuation and instability of the political system meant that the issue of European integration was sidelined in the domestic political debate to more apparent economic and social concerns until the latter part of the transition period. On the other hand, the lack of debate on EU membership meant that political opposition to European integration was not likely to emerge at an early stage and following in the footsteps of the rest of the region the political elite in Bulgaria committed to the goal of EU membership by turning it into a valence issue of political competition. Since all Bulgarian governments contributed to the process of European integration over many years, this strengthened the pro-European consensus at elite level which was reflected in the perception of EU membership as an issue of competence by the mainstream parties.

This chapter presented a historical overview of the formation and development of the Bulgarian party system during post-communism which outlined the internal factors and processes that shaped the European debate in Bulgaria. Chapter 3 adopts the same historical approach in describing the relations between Bulgaria and the European Union comparatively to the region of Central and Eastern Europe which in the thesis are referred to as the external factors that influenced the European debate. Both chapters serve the purpose to provide context in the light of which the empirical chapters 4, 5 and 6 then discuss and analyse levels of support for the EU in Bulgaria at public and elite levels.

## **CHAPTER 3**

# **HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE ENLARGEMENTS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

European Union membership has a huge symbolic and historical significance for the countries from Central and Eastern Europe. It recognises their success to return to the heart of the continent after one and a half decades of transition and 45 years of communist rule. Moreover, it has acted as a focal point to the process of democratisation in the region and its transformation from totalitarianism to democracy. In the history of European integration there have been three Eastern enlargements. The first (unofficial) enlargement occurred in 1990 with the unification of Germany and the absorption of the Union of the German Democratic Republic. This was followed in 2004 with the accession of eight Central and Eastern European countries together with Cyprus and Malta. The third and final enlargement from the East took place in January 2007, when Bulgaria and Romania became member states.

This chapter provides a historical review of the eastern enlargements by dividing the enlargement process into three periods. Its objective is to contextualise within the thesis the enlargements against the attitude of the Bulgarian political elites and public opinion towards EU membership during the transition from communism to democracy discussed in chapters 4, 5 and 6. It follows in the footsteps of earlier studies that have traced historically the decisions to enlarge the European Union eastwards and as such makes a

contribution to the literature on democratisation and Europeanisation of the new member states.

The chapter is organised in the following way. The first period covers the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the communist regimes in Europe between 1989 and 1993. Within this time interval the European Union played a constructive role in assisting the economic and political transformation of the Central and Eastern European states and guaranteeing the security on the continent. Two policy instruments, the Europe Agreements and the PHARE programme were offered to the new democracies at the initial stage. This was followed by a period of preparation for negotiations that began when a political decision for enlargement was taken by the European Union member states at the European Council in Copenhagen in 1993. During the second period the European Union formulated a pre-accession strategy for enlargement which consisted of a structured dialogue and a White paper. Most importantly at this stage all Central and Eastern European countries formally applied for EU membership and the European Union initiated a process of evaluating their applications. In 1997 at the European Council in Luxemburg a differentiation approach to enlargement was adopted. As a result only some of the candidates were invited to begin accession negotiations. The Luxemburg decision put an end to the second stage of the enlargement process and a new (third) period of accession negotiations began. In 1999 the European Union replaced the differentiation approach with a 'regatta' approach by allowing all remaining candidate states to enter negotiations while accession was nevertheless still ruled by the principle of merit. The next three years were dominated by intense approximation of the candidates' legislation with the EU *acquis* which was achieved through regular dialogue and monitoring by the European Union of the countries' progress. Between April 2002 and May 2004 the accession treaties for EU membership were signed and ratified by the applicant states and the EU members by a series of referendums and acts of parliament. For Bulgaria and Romania, which were excluded from the first wave of enlargement this period ended in January 2007 when they too acceded to the European Union.

There is a growing amount of literature on the Eastern enlargements that falls in one of two categories. The majority of academic texts debate the benefits and costs associated

with the enlargement process from the perspective of the European Union member states and candidate countries. Significant contributions to this strand are those by Baldwin who in a number of publications has attempted to calculate the costs and benefits arising from the enlargement(s) to the East (Baldwin 1994, 1995; Baldwin *et al.* 1997).

The European Union enlargements have also been studied in the context of the literature on democratisation. An influential comparative study by Vachudova (2005) that belongs to this stream argued in favour of the European Union's contribution to the reforms process. According to her, the European Union exerted 'passive' and 'active' leverage on domestic political elites which acted as a stimulus for economic and political reforms. Similarly, Mattli and Plumper (2002) argued that the desire to pursue European Union membership is related to both regime type and its willingness to implement economic reforms. Other contributions have pointed to the use of conditionality and differentiation as instruments in the formulation of the European Union criteria for membership and the adoption of *acquis Communautaire* (Grabbe 2002, 2003, 2006; Smith 2005b).<sup>73</sup>

In general the literature on the benefits and costs from enlargement consists of two types of contributions of 'supply' and 'demand' for enlargement (Mattli and Plumper 2002). Academic texts that deal with the supply side attempt to explain the reasons that motivated the old European Union member states to formulate an institutionalised path to full membership as well as their preferences in favour of some candidate countries over others (Baldwin 1994, 1995; Baldwin *et al.* 1997; Brancati 2001; Caves 1996; Dunning 1989; Gower 1993; Hollifield 1992a, 1992b; Schimmelfennig 2001; Schimmelfennig *et al.* 2002). Contributions to the demand side deal with the desire for European Union membership as well as the factors that influenced the timing of the individual countries' decisions to apply and pursue integration (Baldwin 1994, 1995; Baldwin *et al.* 1997; Lankes and Venables 1996; Mattli 1999; Mattli and Plumper 2002).

The cost and benefits strand from the enlargement literature provides an explanation of the political forces behind the Eastern enlargements. Most importantly the research offers evidence to show that there was no predetermined framework for the Eastern

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<sup>73</sup> On the effect of conditionality and differentiation on Bulgarian and Romanian politics see Bojkov (2004); Noutcheva and Bechev (2008); Spendzharova (2003).

enlargements and political decisions about enlargements were often taken circumstantially, amid contestation between the European Union member states and under growing pressure from the Central and Eastern European countries (especially the Visegrad group) to provide a pathway to accession. As Gower recognises initially the European Union's reaction to the transformation in Central and Eastern Europe was cautious extending only to expert and financial assistance and partial trade liberalisation under the PHARE programme and the Europe Agreements but gradually an enlargement policy was formulated for the conduct of negotiations and ultimately accession of the post-communist states (Gower 1999: 3).

The supply arguments can be grouped in three clusters (*negative externalities, economic gains and political and security considerations*) according to the type of factors that were deemed as important in deciding which of the Central and Eastern European countries to invite for negotiations (Brancati 2001). The argument of negative externalities assumes that the European Union member states would act in a way that is economically and politically beneficial to the Union as a whole. This means that new member states would be welcomed to the Union either because they are net contributors in economic terms or because the cost of keeping them outside of the European Union is higher than the cost of integrating them. Sources of negative externalities are usually domestic and they can result from economic mismanagement, social unrest or political instability.

One such source often referred to in the literature is illegal immigration. By integrating the Central and Eastern European countries the Union has eliminated the threat of illegal immigration to Western Europe. Moreover, the integration guarantees access to European funds and opportunities for trade and investment both of which in the long term will increase the living standards in the new member states and reduce the desire for their populations to emigrate (Hollifield 1992a, 1992b). Another benefit arising from east-west migration is that it may elevate some of the problems associated with Western Europe's rising dependency ratio (Baldwin 1994: 191-192).<sup>74</sup> Estimates for migration flows

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<sup>74</sup> Note that in a number of publications Baldwin discusses the negative effects of brain-drain of skilled labour from East to West. This refers to the observation that as skilled labour moves from the East to Western countries the Central and Eastern European region will become less attractive to foreign investors which will affect the level of foreign investment and opportunities for prosperity (Baldwin 1994: 192; Baldwin and Venables 1994).

performed by Baldwin prior to enlargement indicate that in any case the effects are negligible and the flow is not likely to be more than 5-10% of the Central and Eastern European countries' labour force (Baldwin 1994: 190-191).

The second supply argument relates to the economic benefits from enlargements which are deemed to be high for businesses residing in the European Union and firms with large export interests in Central and Eastern Europe. They therefore are the main supporters of enlargement. There are a number of explanations as to how the West has benefited from the eastern enlargements. Investment theories suggest that location-specific advantages such as skilled workforce, low material and labour costs and market proximity have acted as pull factors to the region (Caves 1996; Grabbe and Hughes 1998: 2). Other benefits include lower prices and better selection of goods for Western consumers and access to vast consumer markets to the East. In 1994 Baldwin argued that the European Union and Central and Eastern Europe were natural trading partners and trade between them has increased at double-digit rates since the beginning of the transition and the tendency is for it to continue to rise with the further liberalisation of trade (Baldwin 1994: 80).

Moreover, expansion has provided more opportunities for economies of scale since an increase in the level of production has lowered the output per unit.<sup>75</sup> Thirdly, the intensification of trade due to enlargement has allowed countries to exploit their comparative advantage. In other words countries have gained from specialising in the production and export of goods that they could produce at a relatively low cost because of the availability of specific resources.<sup>76</sup>

Last but not least, enlargement has mitigated the risks of investing in Central and Eastern Europe arising from political and economic instability, social unrest and corruption by

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<sup>75</sup> For a discussion on the potential for allocation, accumulation /or growth effects as a result enlargement to the East see Baldwin (1994: 159-160).

<sup>76</sup> Baldwin (1994: 160) discusses the opportunities to explore comparative advantages as a result of European integration. He argues that given the high level of skilled labour in Central and Eastern Europe compared with the old EU member states and the likelihood of migration of skilled workers towards West after enlargement both sides of the continent will benefit from integration. The free movement of human capital from East to West will free up resources in the West that can be employed in more productive activities. Naturally, for historical reasons the Central and Eastern European countries have comparative advantages in labour-intensive products, while the EU countries specialise in capital and technology-intensive products. See also Breuss (1995: 2, 5).

extending the European Union rules and regulations to the new member states as well as implementing mechanisms for post-accession monitoring.

Academic research suggests that the aggregate impact for the European Union from enlargement will be small and mostly positive (Baldwin 1994; Baldwin *et al.* 1997; Faini and Portes 1995; Winters 1995). Naturally, European Union member states with strong economic interests in the region of Central and Eastern Europe such as Germany, France and United Kingdom have emerged as stern supporters of the Eastern enlargements.<sup>77</sup> Historically, the European Union was more willing to begin accession talks and negotiations with candidate countries that were politically and economically most stable in order to minimise the risk to EU investors (Matti and Plumper 2002: 556).

The third supply argument builds up upon the economic gains theory. Schimmelfennig (2001) suggests that economic gains alone can not explain the preference for some candidate states over others especially since the old EU members that were expected to lose out from further enlargements have defended their national economic interests within the Union for a long time.<sup>78</sup> For instance, in the early 1990s Portugal blocked

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<sup>77</sup> Baldwin *et al.* (1997) developed a model to calculate the costs and benefits from the Eastern enlargements to the old EU member states. On the basis of their model the researchers concluded that although all European Union member states were expected to benefit from integration in economic terms, the gains were uneven with the United Kingdom, Germany and France emerging as the main beneficiaries. Grabbe and Hughes (1998: 28-29) support the findings of Baldwin *et al.* (1997) based on trade patterns between the European Union and the candidate states. For instance the researchers showed that Germany was the dominant trading partner for Central and Eastern Europe, accounting for over half of all European Union exports to the region by 1994. Another observation was that for all of the Central and Eastern European countries trade with the EU-12 was more important than trade with any other region or single trading partner, including intra-CEE trade. A number of other authors have estimated future growth in EU-CEE trade based on the gravity approach and a variety of other approaches and models. While trade was predicted to at least double before accession, the benefits for both sides were estimated to be greater after membership. See Baldwin (1992, 1993, 1994, 1995); Breuss (1995); Cadot *et al.* (1995); Collins and Rodik (1991); Hamilton and Winters (1992); Hughes and Hare (1992); Neven (1995); Wang and Winters (1992).

<sup>78</sup> For a similar argument refer to Epstein (2002). According to Baldwin enlargement to the East was expected to affect mostly the poorest old EU member states, which prior to the eastern enlargement were net beneficiaries of CAP and the structural funds. Both CAP and the structural funds account for about 80% of all EU spending. Baldwin (1994: 165-166, 1995: 477-478) also makes the interesting observation that even if the new member states were excluded from CAP after enlargement, their access to the Common Market would still present a problem to producers in Western Europe since the quality of their produce could be superior. Given the size of the agricultural sectors in countries like Poland and Romania this might substantially increase the level of competition of agricultural produce in Europe. For a discussion on the budgetary costs of the Eastern enlargement associated with CAP refer to Anderson and Tyers (1993); Breuss (1995: 8-14). For an in-depth description of CAP and structural expenditure arising from EU enlargement see Ardy (1999). Finally, note that initially the EU denied the candidate countries full access

further liberalisation trade with Central and Eastern Europe in textiles, France vetoed concessions on beef meat, and Spain blocked arguments on steel trade (Schimmelfennig 2001: 55-60).

According to Schimmelfennig at the heart of the Union's decision for enlargement was the norm based argumentation of the pro-integration member states which equated the Community's liberal values and norms with the notion of enlargement. They were largely successful in getting prevalence in the Union because they focused on the forerunners in Central and Eastern Europe such as Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic which demonstrated commitment to democracy, rule of law and market economy at an early stage of the transition. Their direction of economic and political development was consistent with the collective values of the Union and the proponents of enlargement used it to silence the opposing member states by claiming that obstruction of the enlargement process run against the very idea of European integration.

Connected with Schimmelfennig's argument of Community values and norms is Baldwin's definition of 'high politics' (Baldwin 1995: 475-477). He refers to the desire on the part of the old EU member states to pursue enlargement in order to guarantee the political stability and security on the continent. According to him this would be beneficial to both sides of Europe and for some member states such as Germany which shares a border with Central Europe, political considerations were a major drive to enlargement. The relevance of 'high politics' is mitigated by the dynamics of 'low politics' driven by affected interest groups such as farmers who might lose out or incur adjustment costs as a result of enlargement. European elites have had to strike the right balance between high and low politics which explains their hesitation for integration in the early years.

On the demand side, there are two main views points (*constructivist and pragmatic*) that explain the desire of the Central and Eastern European countries to apply for membership. The constructivist perspective argues that through membership the Central and Eastern European countries desire to restore their historical position within mainland

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to direct subsidies under CAP and refused to grant transitional periods for the payment of their contributions to the EU budget. For a full account on the Commission's approach see Mayhew (2001).

Europe.<sup>79</sup> This perspective adheres to the logic that the European Union has a moral obligation to create a Europe without divisions and overcome the conflicts of the post Second World War period through the policy of enlargement. For the Central and Eastern European countries EU membership represents a guarantee for the continuation of their transition to democracy and market economy and in this sense the eastern enlargements were driven by security and political motivations for stability in the region (Watson *et al.* 1997: 9).

The pragmatic view holds that the appeal for membership rests with the financial and technical assistance from the European Union as well as the economic prosperity and growth achieved through integration.<sup>80</sup> In Bulgaria and Romania EU membership was associated with the expectation to find resolution to domestic problems associated with corruption in the state institutions, crime and in the case of Bulgaria public assassinations. According to Grabbe and Hughes (1998: 1, 35) even prior to enlargement there was a substantial economic integration between western and Eastern Europe through increased trade liberalisation, growth in foreign direct investment, preferential access to European Union markets and increased competition.

By and large, the greatest economic benefit for the Central and Eastern European countries has been in the inflow of transitional capital into the region (Baldwin *et al.* 1997; Mattli 1999).<sup>81</sup> Mattli and Plumper (2002) and Nello (2002) reported that foreign direct investment (FDI) has grown from 3.6 USD billion in 1992 to 5 USD billion in 1994 and 11.3 billion in 1997 and throughout this period the European Union countries have been the most important source of FDI in the region.<sup>82</sup> Since membership the candidate states were forecasted to attract even higher levels of FDI as their access to free

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<sup>79</sup> For academic texts that discuss the idea of the 'return to Europe' as a motivating factor to Central and Eastern European countries for enlargement see Baldwin (1995: 480); Baun (2000: xvii); Gower (1999: 3); Grabbe and Hughes (1998: 1, 15); Watson *et al.* (1997: 9).

<sup>80</sup> According to Baldwin (1995: 480) the Central and Eastern European states can economically benefit in three ways from enlargement: through liberalisation of trade, to access as EU members to fund transfer through CAP, and via structural funds. See also Grabbe and Hughes (1998: 2).

<sup>81</sup> A number of academic contributions rely on gravity models of trade in order to predict the level of bilateral trade flows between the Central and Eastern European and the EU member states. Those predictions rely on dependant variables such as GNP, population and geographical distance. For instance see Baldwin (1994); Faini and Portes (1995); Hamilton and Winters (1992); Wang and Winters (1992).

<sup>82</sup> Note that research by Estin *et al.* (1997) shows that FDI to Central and Eastern Europe was unevenly distributed with some countries such as Germany playing a much greater role than others. Germany and the USA accounted for 20 % of total investment each, France accounted for 7 % and the UK for 4 %.

trade in the single European market was now guaranteed (Grabbe 2001; Kaminski 2001).<sup>83</sup>

In the literature of democratisation the topic of European Union membership and its impact on candidate states has been discussed in at least three major studies. According to Mattli and Plumper (2002: 550-574) the desire to pursue European Union membership is related to both regime type and its willingness to implement economic reforms. The researchers argue that the demand for membership is reciprocal to the level of democracy in a country. By the middle of the 1990s most of the Central and Eastern European states had completed the first round of reforms which were necessary in order to bring their economies under control. As shown in Chapter 2 of the thesis in Bulgaria the government of Dimitur Popov (1991) initiated price liberalisation, followed by restitution of the land and small scale privatisation that were started by the democratic government of Filip Dimitrov (1991-1992).

The second stage of reforms involved more fundamental changes to the economy such as large scale privatisation, enterprise restructuring and legal and administrative reforms which required the separation of the economic and political spheres of influence. Mattli and Plumper (2002) argue that political elites in Central and Eastern Europe responded differently to the second challenge. Political leaders in more democratised countries had a greater incentive to push ahead with second stage reforms which were in line with European rules and regulations.<sup>84</sup> Naturally those countries were the first to apply for EU membership. By contrast in less developed democracies such as Bulgaria and Romania reforms were delayed because of the blurred division between the economy and the state and the lack of electoral accountability of the political elite.

This analysis is consistent with a similar theory by Vachudova (2005) concerning the impact of the European Union on the countries from Central and Eastern Europe. She

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<sup>83</sup> According to Baldwin (1994: 192) and Baldwin and Venables (1994) foreign investment to Central and Eastern Europe might fall if substantial migration of skilled labour takes place from the new to the old member states as this will make the region less attractive to investors.

<sup>84</sup> Note that there are other definitions of enlargement in the academic literature. According to Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2002) enlargement is gradual horizontal institutionalisation where the gap of rules and regulations between the candidate countries and the EU member states gradually narrows due to the undertaking of pro-integration reforms by political elites.

distinguishes between liberal and illiberal states on the basis of the quality of political competition which is determined primarily by the presence or absence of an opposition to the communist regime strong enough to take power at the time of regime change. In liberal states which she identifies to be Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary the very idea of European Union membership was a sufficient incentive for political elites to implement reforms. Vachudova (2005) defines this as a 'passive leverage' of the European Union. By contrast, in illiberal states such as Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia, the cost of implementing reforms was initially too high for rent-seeking elites, which imitated a desire for EU membership in order to secure domestic popularity without pursuing changes towards democratisation. In those countries the EU 'active leverage' expressed through a formal criterion for EU membership and based on the three principles of 'asymmetric interdependence', 'enforcement' and 'meritocracy' raised the costs of exclusion to a level that forced the politicians in those countries to take the necessary steps towards membership.

A third study from the democratisation literature that relates to Bulgaria and Romania analyses the impact of EU conditionality on Bulgarian and Romanian politics prior to accession making the case that conditionality had acted as an incentive for the modernisation of the political, social and economic spheres of the candidate states (Spendzharova 2003). Spendzharova demonstrates through a detailed study of the EU Roadmaps for accession that the onus of Europeanisation had fallen on domestic elites who introduced societal reforms in order to meet the criteria for accession. The research provides evidence for EU's "active leverage" in influencing the direction of domestic politics.

The 2004 and 2007 Eastern enlargements are the most ambitious initiative of the European Union in recent times, which has transformed the face of the continent forever. This section examined the academic literature on Europeanisation that deals with the new member states. It discussed evidence related to the costs and benefits from EU membership to the established and candidate countries. Although beneficial to both sides of the continent EU membership was more advantageous to new members as costs of exclusion were high. The second part of the section discussed the literature on

democratisation which considered why some of the candidate states were more determined to pursue integration than others.

### **3.2 THE ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE (1989-1993)**

This section analyses of the initial response of the European Community to the break down of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe which was to assist their economic and political recovery and provide a commitment for membership. It demonstrates that before 1993 the relationship between the East and West was based on the provision of aid through the PHARE programme and the Association Agreements (Europe Agreements) which paved the way to full liberalisation of trade between both sides of the continent. The European Community's initial response was often criticised in the academic literature for not being far-reaching enough especially in regards to the limited applicability of the Europe Agreements as well as the size and allocation of funding under PHARE.

The strategy of the European Community in assisting the reconstruction of Central and Eastern Europe in the post-communist period involved two initiatives: the PHARE programme and the Association Agreements with Central and Eastern Europe. The PHARE programme was the European Community's most visible contribution to the reforms process in the early years (Baun 2000: 28; Gower 1993: 295, 1999: 4-5; Kramer 1993: 222-226; Mayhew 1998: 138-150). It was introduced in 1989 to provide technical and financial support for the economic restructuring of Poland and Hungary and then extended to the rest of the region.

PHARE operated by providing the new democracies with policy advice, western know-how, training and consultancy which were intended to guide the direction of the economic and political reforms in the region. On the initiative of the European Parliament the scope of the PHARE programme was widened in July 1992 with the PHARE Democracy programme the aim of which was to strengthen the process of democratic

consolidation in Central and Eastern Europe. The programme attributed a particular attention to the development of a civil society and a participatory form of political culture in the new democracies. The most important aspect of the PHARE programme was the financial dimension that served the purpose of speeding the economic reforms by unlocking funds from projects by other donors such as the European Investment Bank, the European Steel and Coal Community and through guarantee schemes, credit lines and capital grants as well as projects directly linked to reconstruction.

Although opened to all of the Central and Eastern European states in 1989-1990, the PHARE was successful to a varying degree across the region at the stage of initiation. This was because the Central and Eastern European countries had different starting points in the transition that affected their absorption capacities. At the top end of the scale were Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, which elected stable governments in their first and second national elections and were able to utilise the full scale of expertise and funds provided by PHARE. By contrast, Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia had more uneven starts with quick succession of governments, which decreased their ability to attract funding and loans under PHARE and benefit strategically from the policy advice and know-how.

For many of the Central and Eastern European states the PHARE programme was not far-reaching enough (Gower 1999: 5) There was considerable resentment and frustration at government level in regards to the size of financial assistance which was considerably less than the Marshall Aid received by Western Europe for reconstruction at the end of the Second World War. Moreover, part of the funding was spent on consultancy and expert fees from Western Europe and not on direct reconstruction of the new economies. This was often highlighted in national and elite debates as a major shortcoming of the scheme.

The assistance channelled through the PHARE programme was supplemented by the provisions of the Association Agreements (also known as Europe Agreements) which the

European Community agreed with all of the Central and Eastern European countries on individual basis and for a period of ten years between 1991 and 1995.<sup>85</sup>

The Europe Agreements had more wide-ranging objectives than simply providing financial and expert help. Their more ambitious purpose was to foster closer cooperation between both sides of Europe in the areas of economic integration as well as political dialogue and cultural cooperation (Hopkinson 1994: 3; Watson *et al.* 1997: 9). In other words the Europe agreements were conceived as a framework within which the associated countries can be prepared for accession through the consolidation of political reform and the promotion of democratisation and stability in the region.

The economic dimension of the Europe Agreements with Central and Eastern Europe was in fact an updated version of previous association agreements which the European Community had offered to Greece in 1961, Turkey in 1963, Malta in 1970 and Cyprus in 1972, countries that aspired to European Union membership (Croft *et al.* 1999: 65).<sup>86</sup> It involved primarily the liberalisation of trade of industrial products between the two sides but also some limited concessions for agricultural exports from the associate members to the European Union, European Union financial aid to the region, association institutions at Council and Parliament level and coordination and alignment of economic and related policies through the adoption of the European Union legislation (Baldwin 1994: 125-127).

In all of these cases the relationship envisaged between the European Community and the associate member states was one of asymmetry (Breuss 1995: 3; Gower 1999: 6; Grabbe and Hughes 1998: 24).<sup>87</sup> It was built on the underlying assumption that the European

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<sup>85</sup> In order for the Europe agreements to come into force they needed to be ratified by all member states of the European Union, the applicant's national parliament and the European Parliament. Therefore, until the ratification process was complete interim agreements were agreed which incorporated the trade provisions of the Europe agreements and trade between the East and West was partly liberalised. The first countries to sign Interim Agreements (IA) were Hungary and Poland in December 1991. On the IA or Europe Agreements see for instance Breuss (1995: 2-4); Gower (1999: 5-7). On the Europe Agreements refer to Baun (2000: 30-37); Kramer (1993: 227-230); Maresceau (1997b: 3-22).

<sup>86</sup> On the establishment of a free-trade area between the EU-CEECs through the Europe Agreements see Norberg (1997: 75-83). For an overview of the EC's competition rules and practices abiding in the Europe Agreements see Bossche (1997: 84-107).

<sup>87</sup> Note that more broadly the enlargement is described in the academic literature as an 'asymmetrical process' of which the Europe Agreements are one example. It involves taking over the EU's rules and

Community as the strong economic party should make most of the concessions while the associate members being in a weaker position should absorb the benefits from the relationship until the economic conditions on both sides equalised.

As a consequence of this objective, asymmetrical trade preferences were extended more rapidly to the associate states over a period of ten years (Baun 2000: 34; Hopkinson 1994: 3; Watson *et al.* 1997: 9). Grabbe and Hughes (1998: 24) reported that immediately after the Europe agreements came into effect duty and quantitative restrictions were removed on over a half of the Visegrad countries. By January 1993 the percentage of free trade increased to 60 % and it rose still to 85 % in 1998 (Grabbe and Hughes 1998:24). According to Sapir (1995: 89-107) an important aspect of the Europe agreements was that they tied the Central and Eastern European countries with trade liberalisation and countered domestic pressure for protectionism. The political dimension of the Europe Agreements was intended to complement the economic integration through the development of a European Political Area (Gower 1999: 6-7).

Political dialogue between the European Community and the new democracies was established through institutionalised bilateral regular meetings on a range of issues of mutual concern such as foreign policy, European security and environment. From the perspective of the Central and Eastern European states, however, political dialogue was a poor substitute for full membership and the opening of negotiations with the EFTA (European Free Trade Area) countries in February 1993 increased the pressure on the European Union to define a clear strategy for enlargement.

A number of authors have argued that the Europe Agreements were not far reaching enough. For instance, the Agreements were vague in defining what the European Union was going to do in order to accommodate enlargement but specific in regards to the obligations of the applicant countries. Another drawback was that the Agreements did not contain a timetable for enlargement but there was an expectation that the applicant countries would nevertheless begin to approximate their legislation to that of the Union. Moreover, the benefits to the associates were often undermined by safeguard clauses,

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regulations without the Central and Eastern European countries having much control over the reforms they undertook. Refer to Maniokas (2004: 20).

limited concessions by the European Union on sensitive products such as agriculture, chemicals and steel, erosion of benefits as similar concessions were offered to non-associate countries under the Generalised System of Preferences and anti-dumping measures directed at sectors such as steel and chemicals where the Central and Eastern European countries had a comparative advantage (Baldwin 1994: 126-127; Baun 2000: 36; Breuss 1995: 4; CEPR 1992; Croft 1999: 65-66; Gower 1999: 6; Hopkinson 1994: 3; Michalski and Wallace 1992: 139-140; Wallace and Sedelmeier 2000: 438; Watson *et al.* 1997: 9-10).<sup>88</sup>

Moreover it has been suggested that the European Community could have implemented the liberalisation of trade faster as well as being more generous in its provisions with candidate countries (Faini and Portes 1995: 1-18; Inotai 1995; Winters: 1995). Grabbe and Hughes (1998: 26, 29) argued that considering the size of the 'development gap' with Central and Eastern Europe and the fundamental changes undertaken by the candidate countries since 1989 the European Union should have been more generous with market access.<sup>89</sup>

On the political front, the agreements failed to provide a structured framework for political dialogue between the two sides which to satisfy the objective of cooperation. It is worth noting that once the Association Agreements were ratified they were interpreted by the Central and Eastern European states as a route to membership and in the cases of Hungary and Poland both countries applied for membership within two months of the ratification date (Inotai 1995: 1). The European Community on the other hand stressed the lack of linkage between the two and only after the European Council at Copenhagen were the European Agreements reoriented towards accession as part of a wider strategy for enlargement (Inotai 1995; Maresceau 1997b: 9, 11; Muller-Graff 1997: 34).

In the first three years after the collapse of communism in Central and Eastern Europe the efforts of the European Community were directed at assisting the economic and political

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<sup>88</sup> For a discussion of the safeguard measures and anti-dumping provisions under the Europe Agreements see: Hende (1997: 140-159) and Montaguti, (1997: 160-179). For a discussion on the political economy of trade between the Central and Eastern European countries in the sensitive sectors defined by the European Agreements see Rollo and Smith (1993).

<sup>89</sup> For a discussion of the development gap see Inotai (1994: 139-176).

recovery of the Eastern bloc. This was achieved through two major initiatives, the PHARE programme and the Europe Agreements on which this section elaborated. Both initiatives were often criticised by the political elites in the new democracies for their limited scope and applicability. A serious drawback of the PHARE programme was the size of the financial assistance which was in times smaller than the Marshall aid given to Western Europe at the end of the Second World War. Moreover, some of the funding rather than being invested in economic restructuring went back to Western Europe to pay for consultancy and expert fees. Similarly, the benefits arising from the Europe Agreements to the associate member states were undermined by safeguard clauses, limited concessions by the European Union on sensitive products and anti-dumping measures directed at sectors where the Central and Eastern European states had a comparative advantage. Above all the Europe Agreements failed to provide a clear commitment to future membership, only an instrument of association which was short of what the Central and Eastern countries would settle for. Partly in response to their demands and partly as a result to the internal debate within the European Union and external pressure from the United States, the European Council in Copenhagen in 1993 approved the first set of eligibility criteria for EU membership, with that making a political commitment to enlargement.

### **3.3 PRE-ACCESSION STRATEGY FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION ENLARGEMENTS TO THE EAST (1993-1997)**

The second period of the relationship between the European Union and the Central and Eastern European countries covers the time between the Copenhagen Council in 1993 and the Luxemburg Council in 1997. Two major developments occurred within this time frame from the point of view of integration. The European Union formulated a pre-accession strategy which consisted of structured dialogues between the candidate states and the European Union in a number of policy areas of mutual importance as well the publication of a White paper on the Single Market with the objective to assist the candidate countries in the adaptation of their market legislation to that of the member states. As part of the pre-accession strategy the PHARE programme and the Europe

Agreements were also reoriented. The second major event was an assessment on the basis of detailed questionnaires of the candidates' readiness to begin accession negotiations. A benchmark in the evaluations was the Copenhagen criteria. At the Luxemburg Council in 1997 a decision was taken to open accession negotiation with the better prepared candidates – Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia and Estonia, while Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Latvia and Lithuania were left behind. This was the first indication that the European Union would differentiate between the candidates and the enlargement to the East might proceed in waves.

In June 1993 the Copenhagen European Council agreed upon eligibility criteria for membership and expressed a political commitment to enlargement with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Prior to this decision, between 1990 and 1993, all Central and Eastern European states had filed declarations for membership ratified by their parliaments.<sup>90</sup>

The Copenhagen Council decided to admit the associated countries provided they were able to assume the obligations of membership. Preston (1995) calls this approach 'the classical method of enlargement' where the burden of adjustment lies with the applicant states which need to adopt a series of measures in line with current European Union practices and regulations and assume the whole body of the Community's *acquis*.<sup>91</sup>

The Copenhagen criteria required that a candidate country has achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities, the existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union. Membership presupposed the candidate's ability to take on the obligations of membership including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.

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<sup>90</sup> The dates of application for EU membership of Central and Eastern European countries are as follows: Hungary (3<sup>rd</sup> March 1994), Poland (5<sup>th</sup> April 1994), Slovakia (27<sup>th</sup> June 1995), Romania (22<sup>nd</sup> June 1995), (13<sup>th</sup> October 1995), Estonia (24<sup>th</sup> November 1995), Lithuania (8<sup>th</sup> December 1995), Bulgaria (14<sup>th</sup> December 1995), Czech Republic (17<sup>th</sup> January 1996), and Slovenia (10<sup>th</sup> June 1996).

<sup>91</sup> According to Inotai (1995) the Copenhagen criteria was discriminatory to the Central and Eastern European countries since it made it more difficult for applicant states to reach the point of accession in comparison to previous enlargements. Therefore, he argues that the criteria impinges rather than facilitates the enlargement process.

The Union's capacity to absorb new members and to maintain the momentum of integration was also to be taken into account when deciding the pace of the Eastern enlargement. Therefore, in theory the enlargement could be postponed by the member states even if they satisfied the criteria for membership if it was deemed that the European Union could not absorb new members (Hopkinson 1994: 4-5).

Grabbe and Hughes (1998: 5) argue that one of the major problems with the Copenhagen criteria was that they were extremely broad and not linked to a timetable for accession. Another area for contention was whether the candidate countries could meet the obligations for membership. Since no previous applicant state has assumed the full *acquis* on accession there were different interpretations among the European Union member states as to the ability of the candidates to cope with all requirements.

The need for an overall strategy for enlargement was addressed at the Essen European Council in December 1994, following the official applications for membership of Hungary and Poland to the Council of Ministers in March and April 1994. At Essen the European Union agreed on a pre-accession strategy for enlargement as a way of assisting the candidates in fulfilling the Copenhagen conditions for membership (Grabbe and Hughes 1998: 4-13; Watson *et al.* 1997: 11-15).<sup>92</sup>

The pre-accession strategy consisted of four instruments (Gower 1999: 8-10). It brought together the already existing relationship between Central and Eastern Europe and the European Union in the context of the PHARE programme and the Europe agreements which were refocused towards accession. For example, assistance through PHARE was directed to projects that involved intra-regional cooperation and infrastructural development, both of which enhanced medium term integration (Baun 2000: 60).

As far as the Europe agreements were concerned the European Union recognised that the bilateral nature of the political dialogue was unsatisfactory and replaced it with

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<sup>92</sup> For an informative discussion of the pre-accession strategy and its effects on the Visegrad countries refer to Baun (2000: 53-75) and Rupp (1999: 89-105).

multilateral meetings between heads of state and ministers from Central and Eastern Europe and the European Union on a regular basis.

A major change to the Europe Agreements was the acceleration in the liberalisation of trade between associated and member states. The initial timetable under which the European Union abolishes tariffs and quantitative restrictions for industrial products over a five year period was shortened, giving free access by the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1995 instead of the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1997 for the Visegrad countries (Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia) and by the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1996 instead of the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1998 for Bulgaria and Romania. After Essen, the schedule for Bulgaria and Romania was revised again and shortened with an additional year, which aligned them with the Visegrad group.

The third instrument of the pre-accession strategy was a structured dialogue between the applicant and European Union member states (Watson *et al.* 1997: 14-15). The idea was to familiarise the candidate countries with the decision making process and institutional set up within the Union prior to becoming full members as well as to encourage political dialogue and cooperation between future and current member states. To this effect, regular meetings were held from 1995 between government leaders and ministers of the European Union and their counterparts from the associated countries which over time proved particularly productive in the areas of justice and home affairs, foreign policy, environment, energy and agriculture. According to Watson *et al.* (1997: 14) the European Union was particularly eager to achieve closer cooperation in areas such as immigration and asylum policy, combating drugs and judicial and police cooperation. Although the arranged meetings had no decision-making powers or legislative capacity they had a great symbolic and psychological significance to the applicant states to maintain the momentum of changes.

Finally, at Essen the European Council called for the preparation of a White paper on the Single market which was a general reference document produced with the objective to guide the partner countries through the maze of legislation, structures and broad economic conditions essential to the functioning of the internal market. It suggested ways in which the approximation of the legislation to that of the European Union could begin,

by identifying key sectors where integration was necessary and suggesting how approximation could be achieved (Baun 2000: 64-66; Gaudissart and Sinnaeve 1997: 41-72; Gower 1999: 9-10; Watson *et al.* 1997: 12-13).

The White paper was perceived by the governments of the applicant countries as an action plan of how to structure their national integration strategies and it was adopted in record time as it was perceived by the applicant countries as an opportunity of making real progress towards the goal of accession.

The formulation of the accession strategy was a turning point in the European Union's strategy for enlargement and it was drafted as a response to pressures from the Central and Eastern European countries, policy analysts and some of the European Union member states (Baun 2000: 46-47). In a series of joint memoranda from 1992 and 1993 the Visegrad governments repeatedly demanded for a clear commitment from the European Union to enlargement. Policy analysts too argued that the European Union's response to the transitions in Central and Eastern Europe through policy instruments such as PHARE and the European Agreements was inadequate.

Pressure for a change of strategy was exerted by some European Union member states such as Germany which were concerned with the security implications of leaving the new democracies outside of the European framework. This was especially relevant in the context of the wars in former Yugoslavia after 1991 and the return to power in the early 1990s of former communists across Central and Eastern European countries. Both of those events and pressure from the United States to do more to integrate the new democracies within the European Union convinced the European institutions of the benefits of offering a pre-accession strategy.

The pre-accession strategy has been criticised for being inflexible in so far as it required the candidate states to adapt to European requirements without a defined timetable or a roadmap for accession. Some analysts have also argued that it should have been drawn up earlier (Grabbe and Hughes 1998: 4; Inotai 1995; Watson *et al.* 1997: 13).

Following the publication of the pre-accession strategy the remaining eight Central and Eastern European countries applied for membership by January 1996. All applications were processed in the same way. The Council requested an opinion from the Commission on the countries' readiness to enter negotiations.<sup>93</sup>

The opinions were prepared individually for each country on the basis of questionnaires sent to the applicant countries in April 1996 and data from bi-lateral meeting and other sources from the World Bank, United Nations, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, academic and policy publications on the nature and development of the transition.

In effect the Commission's opinions consisted of a detailed evaluation of each country's economic and political readiness for membership against the conditions of the Copenhagen criteria on the basis of which political decisions were taken as to the opening of the negotiations and the speed of accession. The final opinion on all candidate states was published within Agenda 2000 in the second part of 1997 (Croft *et al.* 1999: 60)<sup>94</sup>

The economic criteria of Copenhagen contain two elements: the existence of a functioning market economy and the capacity to withstand competitive pressure and market forces within the Union. The Commission concluded that Hungary and Poland were judged to be closest to meeting the first element of the Copenhagen criteria, while the Czech Republic and Slovenia were seen as 'not too much behind'. Estonia was seen to meet the first economic criterion, but not the second, while the situation in Slovakia was reversed.<sup>95</sup> The rest of the applicant countries were perceived to be far behind

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<sup>93</sup> On the preparation of the Commission's opinions see Baun (2000: 78-81) and Grabbe and Hughes (1998: 9-10).

<sup>94</sup> In response to an application for EU membership the European Council can either reject an application or request an opinion (*avis*) from the Commission on the applicant's preparedness to begin negotiations. The returned opinion can be either 'positive', 'negative' or 'conditional'. In the case of Finland, Sweden and Austria the opinion was positive which led to the opening of negotiations between the EU and those countries. If as in the case of Turkey the opinion is negative an alternative such as a customs union is proposed and a subsequent application is not precluded. Finally, a conditional offer suggests that the candidate is expected to fulfil some economic or political conditions before progressing to the stage of negotiations. This was the case with Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia. For an explanation of all aspects of Agenda 2000 see Baun (2000: 81-84).

<sup>95</sup> On the Baltic states and the domestic reaction to the *avis* see Herd (1999: 259-277). On Slovakian politics and the domestic reaction to the *avis* see Henderson (1999b: 221-241).

although the report contained encouraging statements about their progress (European Commission: 1997: 44).

In regards to the political criteria the rule of law was seen to be nowhere fully applying and there were issues with the respect for minority rights in a number of countries. However, formally only Slovakia was seen not to satisfy the political criteria for membership (European Commission 1997: 42).<sup>96</sup>

On the basis of the above evaluations the returned opinion in the cases of Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Latvia, and Lithuania was conditional rather than positive or negative. This meant that the European Union was not prepared to enter into negotiations with those states but instead of rejecting the applications it indicated the changes that the candidates had to make to be considered more favourably. By contrast, Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Estonia were positively evaluated and recommended to begin negotiations.

The second period of the relationship between the European Union and the Central and Eastern European states was formed around the publication of a pre-accession strategy for enlargement following the commitment of the European Council of Copenhagen to integration. The criteria refocused the exiting PHARE programme and Europe Agreements with the candidate states towards enlargement as well as introduced two new instruments, the structured dialogue and a White paper on the Single market, which to assist the candidates in their preparation for membership. Hand in hand with those initiatives the European Union began a process of evaluating the readiness of the applicant states to enter accession negotiations judged against the Copenhagen criteria for accession. The decision of the Commission was that Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Estonia had made sufficient progress to begin negotiations while Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Latvia and Lithuania received guidance in the areas they lagged behind.

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<sup>96</sup> On the domestic politics in Slovakia and the criteria for accession see Henderson (1999b: 221-241). For a discussion on EU's political conditionality and the role it has played in political developments in Slovakia see Pridham (1999: 1221-1244); Rybar and Malova (2004: 38-58).

### **3.4 ACCESSION NEGOTIATIONS AND POST - ACCESSION MONITORING (1997-2007)**

The third period between 1997 and 2002 was dominated by the start of accession negotiations between the first wave of Central and Eastern European states and the European Union. A central part of the process was the publication of Accession Partnerships which identified the short and medium term priorities for the adoption of the *acquis*. The negotiations involved multilateral and bilateral screening of all chapters of the *acquis* with the first group of countries and from 1999 with all applicants. At the Helsinki Council the European Commission re-evaluated its approach and adopted a 'regatta' strategy to enlargement. This meant that negotiations were opened with the remaining candidate states while each country was allowed to progress with its own speed. The negotiations process ended with the decision at the Copenhagen Council in 2002 that eight of the applicants were ready to become full member states from 2004, while Bulgaria and Romania were excluded from the first wave but given a target date from 2007.

The final part of the accession process involved close monitoring by the Commission of the implementation and enforcement of the *acquis* in the ten acceding states prior to and after the accession dates (Smith 2003: 116-117). The same procedure applied for Bulgaria and Romania, with a one and a half year lag due to their delayed entry. In the first case the usual concerns of the Commission expressed in the regular reports before accession related to levels of corruption while for the countries of the second enlargement it was the enforcement of reforms in the judiciary and public administration that required improvement.

At the Luxemburg Council in December 1997 the European Union adopted the Commission's opinion and agreed to open accession negotiations with Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Estonia and Cyprus in 1998. The Council's decision to start negotiations with some but not all of the Central and Eastern European states reflected the consensus between the old European Union member states that enlargement

to the East should proceed in phases in line with the economic strength and political maturity of the candidates (Watson *et al.* 1997: 16).

The opinion in favour of differentiation was first expressed at the Madrid Council in December 1995. At the occasion the United Kingdom and Germany expressed support for gradual accession starting with the more developed states: Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic. It is interesting to note that the European countries had different views as to which applicants should be first to accede. For instance Denmark and other Scandinavian members supported the Baltic countries, while France for historical reasons favoured Romania. The majority of the member states were in favour of France's idea of 'photo de famille' that the applicant countries should begin negotiations together but accede at different times (Grabbe and Hughes 1998: 10-11).

The decision of the Luxemburg Council pleased the frontrunners (Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and the Czech Republic) which were in favour of a differentiated and objective approach to enlargement. Their main concern prior to the Luxemburg decision had been that beginning accession talks with all applicants at the same time could slow their own membership to the club. Contrary, the countries that lacked momentum in the economic and political reforms such as Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia and Lithuania, were disappointed by the Luxemburg decision that negotiations had not been opened with all applicants simultaneously (Watson *et al.* 1997: 16).

Prior to the start of formal negotiations with the six applicants in March 1998, the European Council endorsed Accession Partnerships negotiated with each applicant individually (Preston 1999: 109-110). The purpose of the partnerships was twofold: they identified the short and medium-term sector priorities for the adoption of the *acquis* and were also used as the basis for accessing pre-accession aid through the PHARE programme, 70 % of which was allocated to infrastructure and 30 % to institution building. The majority of those resources were intended for twinning partnerships between the member states and the applicants.

The short-term priorities and objectives in various Accession Partnerships included in the case of Poland the beginning of a restructuring programme for the steel sector, for Lithuania the decommissioning of the Ignalina nuclear power plant, for Slovakia the organisation of free and democratic presidential, parliamentary and local elections in 1998 and for Bulgaria a plan for the decommissioning of the nuclear reactors of the Kozloduy power plant and the adoption of measures to combat corruption and organised crime (Baun 2000: 102). A common criticism of the Accession Partnerships by the applicant countries was that they left no space for flexibility and debate and were essentially dictated to the governments of those states by the European Union.

The first stage of negotiations focused on a detailed analytical examination (screening) of the 31 chapters of the *acquis communautaire* (Baun 2000: 105-107; Preston 1999: 109-110). This involved a chapter-by-chapter examination of the *acquis*, in the first, multilateral stage between the Commission and all applicants together, in order to agree on a common understanding of the legislation and policies in each chapter. In the second, bilateral stage, each applicant separately examined with the Commission the transposition and implementation of each directive in the chapter.

In order to demonstrate some progress in the screening process, uncontroversial chapters were screened first. Thus the process opened with an examination of SME policy, research and development, education and science, telecommunication and information technology, statistics and Common Foreign and Security Policy. By the end of 1998 the screening of 16 of the 31 chapters of the *acquis* had been completed for the six first wave applicants, with the remaining fifteen provisionally closed in 1999 (Preston 1999: 109-110).

Shortly after the beginning of the negotiation process with the first wave, the European Union decided to introduce screening in the remaining five Eastern European countries (Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovakia), which was started in April 1998, prior to them meeting the Copenhagen criteria (Smith 2000: 122). This decision was consistent with the EU's all-inclusive approach on the basis of which the pre-accession

strategy was drawn at Essen and confirmed the EU's commitment to enlargement with the whole of Eastern Europe in the long run.

By the end of 1999 some of the second wave countries were performing extremely well and were close to completing the Copenhagen criteria as well as progressing steadily with the screening of legislation. Slovakia after Meciar's loss of power was close to achieving political stability and Lithuania and Latvia were making satisfactory progress. There was measured optimism in these three countries that the European Union would recognise their achievements and allow them to join the first wave of candidates at the European Council in Helsinki.

Those expectations were met when the Helsinki Council in 1999 invited all six of the remaining states (Bulgaria and Romania conditionally plus Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania and Malta) to start negotiations for membership from February 2000. It adopted a 'regatta' approach to enlargement which meant that in theory the twelve candidates start from the same point and accession depends on how quickly they are able to complete the negotiations. Although the 'Luxemburg Six' had a time advantage of two years, having started negotiations two years earlier, it was possible that any of the 'Helsinki Six' could catch up or even overtake countries from the first group (Smith 2000: 122-123; 2001: 115).

Supporters of this strategy argued that it would be consistent with the principle of equal and non-discriminatory treatment of the applicants while permitting differentiation on the basis of objective (rather than political) criteria. The 'regatta' model was particularly favoured by the Nordic states who wanted to see the Baltic countries included in the first wave of enlargement. Other members supported the strategy because negotiations with more candidate states would have inevitably slowed the momentum for enlargement.

By recommending the opening of accession negotiations with all Central and Eastern European countries rather than just the three NATO entrants, the Commission also hoped to limit the effects of any 'double rejection shocks' for those countries not chosen for the first wave of either NATO or EU enlargement (Baun 2000: 87-88). For instance Estonia

was excluded from NATO's enlargement because of strong objections from Russia but its inclusion within the first wave of candidates for EU membership was a strong signal to the Baltic region. Similarly, the prospect for European Union membership offered to Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania was perceived as a positive gesture to the war-torn Western Balkans.

Between 2000 and 2002 the prime objective of all candidates was to open and close as many chapters as possible. There was some initial scepticism about the workability of the 'regatta approach' since by the time the 'Helsinki Six' had begun the negotiation process, the 'Luxemburg Six' had closed some of the chapters. In practice however the Helsinki group were able to catch up since they began to negotiate from the easier chapters while the Luxemburg group were moving to more difficult ones (Smith 2001: 116).

By the end of the second year Slovakia, Latvia and Lithuania had more chapters closed than countries from the first wave such as Poland and Estonia. This process was complimented by the Regular reports which the Commission published on the countries' progress towards meeting the Copenhagen criteria and while the political aspect of the criteria was largely met by all of the second wave hopefuls, there was some delay in fulfilling the economic requirements, particularly by Bulgaria and Romania, the two most lagging states.

At the Copenhagen Council in June 2002 the European Union made a decision that ten of the negotiating countries (eight from Central and Eastern Europe and Cyprus and Malta) would be ready to accede to the Union from the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2004 in time to take part in the European elections in June the same year. This meant that four of the 'Helsinki Six' – Latvia, Lithuania, Malta and Slovakia' had made enough progress to join the 'Luxemburg Six' even though they began negotiations in February 2000, almost two years after the Luxemburg group. Bulgaria and Romania were excluded from the first wave of enlargement but the Council gave them a target date of the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007 when they were expected to accede (Smith 2003: 115).

The third stage in the enlargement process was dominated by the accession negotiations between the European Union and the post-communist states. The purpose of the negotiations was to draw a map of priorities of how the transposition of the legislative body of the Union was to be implemented. In order to facilitate this adaptation the European Union agreed on Accession Partnerships with each candidate which defined the short and medium term sector priorities to membership. The Accession Partnerships were accompanied by screening of all chapters of the *acquis* multilaterally and bilaterally with the candidates. In 1999 at the Helsinki Council the European Union reviewed its strategy to enlargement and decided to open accession negotiations with all applicants. Following the progress of the negotiations in 2002 at the Copenhagen Council the European Union decided that eight of the candidate countries would be ready to for membership in 2004 while Bulgaria and Romania were excluded from the first wave and given a target date of accession.

After signing the accession treaty in Athens in April 2003 Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia were effectively members of the club. Each country had to each ratify their memberships and all but Cyprus chose to do so by referendums. In addition, each of the member states also had to ratify the Accession treaty as did the European parliament (Smith 2004: 113).

Bulgaria and Romania had more work to do before getting to their target date for accession in 2007. Their efforts were guided by the release of road maps in 2003 the purpose of which was to outline the short and medium term priorities that needed to be address in preparation for membership. The publication of the road maps was supplemented by a revised version of the Accession partnerships. In addition to assessing the countries' progress in meeting the Copenhagen criteria, in its regular reports for 2003, the European Commission also reviewed Bulgaria and Romania's progress in terms of the priorities set out in their respective partnerships.

In general the Commission found that both countries had made progress although Bulgaria was judged to be more advanced in its negotiations than Romania. By the end of 2003 Bulgaria had opened 30 chapters and provisionally closed 26 while Romania had

opened 30 and provisionally closed 22 chapters. The Commission's proposal for a financial package for the accession negotiations with Bulgaria and Romania paved the way for Bulgaria and Romania to complete their negotiations in 2004. The countries met signed their accession treaties in April 2005 and met their target date of membership in 2007 (Smith 2004: 114).

### **3.5 EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AND THE BULGARIAN EXPERIENCE**

The first period of European integration coincided with major developments in the Bulgarian party system that influenced the parties' positions on European integration and the progress that Bulgaria made. As Chapter 2 described, the main events that took place were the establishment of a multi-party system which replaced the political monopoly of the Bulgarian Communist Party; the agreement of a new institutional framework and the start of the bi-polar model of party politics following the 1990 parliamentary election. There was a high level of party competition between the Bulgarian Socialist Party and United Democratic Forces and by 1993 Bulgaria has held two elections which produced Socialist (1990) and Democratic (1991) governments. The bi-polar model was constructed primarily on domestic issues and the main political parties shared a principal agreement in favour of European integration. In the first period of integration Bulgaria accomplished the same progress as other post-communist countries from the region by signing Europe and PHARE Agreements.

In May 1990 the Socialist government of Andrei Lukanov and the European Community signed a Convention on Trade, Business and Economic Cooperation which envisaged the gradual elimination of Bulgarian imports to the Community and making mutual concessions in the sectors of trade of agricultural production. This was the first indication of Bulgaria's pro-integration efforts after the fall of communism. The Convention was superseded in its business part by the Provisional Agreement on Trade and Related Matters and a Europe Agreement signed in March 1993 by the Democratic government of Filip Dimitrov.

In December 1990 the Bulgarian Parliament adopted a decision whereby the willingness of Bulgaria to become a member state of the European Community was formally expressed. Bulgaria was one of the first countries from Central and Eastern Europe to show a formal interest in EU membership and one of the first to sign its PHARE Agreement (after Poland and Hungary) in March 1993.

The second period of European integration accounts for the time between the Copenhagen Council in 1993 and the Luxemburg Council in 1997. The period coincides with the bi-polar model of party politics in Bulgaria when there was rotation of power between Socialist and Democratic governments, frequent elections, delayed economic and social reforms and highly charged confrontation between the Bulgarian Socialist Party and United Democratic Forces. The domestic political set up had a negative effect on Bulgaria's efforts towards European integration as the country was lagging behind the progress made in economic and social terms by other post-communist states.

Following the publication of the Copenhagen criteria for EU membership the European Commission adopted a pre-accession strategy that consisted of 'structured dialogues' between the candidate states and the European Union, White Paper to assist the candidate countries in the approximation of their legislation towards that of the Single Market and re-orientation of the Europe Agreements and PHARE towards more interaction and close ties between candidate and member states.

As part of this initiative in April 1994 the first Joint Bulgaria-EU Committee was held. The outcome of the meeting was the setting up of sub-committees on the approximation of legislation, competition, agriculture, transport and customs cooperation which had advisory function on enacting the Copenhagen criteria. In March 1995 further attempts were made to establish a framework of institutions which to facilitate Bulgaria in the preparation for EU membership. At elite level a special European integration mechanism, involving a Government Committee, a Coordinating European integration mechanism, and a Secretariat on European integration at the Council of Ministers were created. Two months later, in May 1995 the first Bulgaria-EU Association Council took place which

discussed Bulgaria's strategy for European integration alongside regional stability and free movement of Bulgarian nationals to EU member states and the Schengen Group.

At the time of publication of the Pre-Accession Strategy the European Commission began evaluating the readiness of candidate states to enter accession negotiations on the basis of detailed questionnaires that assessed the progress the applicant countries had made in different sectors. In the case of Bulgaria the information required reflected the progress in the areas of customs union and taxation, agriculture, employment and social development, transport, financial control, education, foreign policy, justice and internal affairs, statistics and foreign economic cooperation. The questionnaire was delivered to the Delegation of the European Commission in Sofia in 1996 on the basis of which the Commission prepared an opinion regarding EU membership.

The opinion on Bulgaria indicated that the country had not made sufficient progress to meet the Copenhagen criteria alongside Romania, Slovakia, Latvia and Lithuania. At the time when the Opinion was published Bulgaria was in the middle of an economic crisis brought by the Socialist government of Zhan Videnov and the decision of the Commission did not surprise the political elite in Bulgaria. Political and economic instability coupled with the lack of reforms were the main reasons that led to unsatisfactory progress being made towards the goal of EU membership. The same factors were behind the earlier decision from September 1995 to include Bulgaria in the EU list of countries whose citizens required visas in order to cross the external borders of the Union regardless of the fact that Bulgaria was already an associate member state.

The third period of European integration runs between the Luxemburg Council in 1997 and the accession of Bulgaria (and Romania) to the European Union in 2007. This was a time when the relations between the mainstream parties in Bulgaria altered in the direction of coalition building and continuation of reforms. The bi-polar model of party politics was replaced with coalitional governments in 2001 and 2005 and EU membership became a valence issue of party competition in Bulgaria. All Bulgarian governments since 1997 completed full terms in office.

The Luxemburg Council in December 1997 adopted the decision of the Commission and began accession negotiations with the first wave of countries but remained committed to speed up the preparation for negotiations with Bulgaria and the rest of the candidates from the second wave by starting screening of their legislation. The European Commission was required to present regular reports on the progress made by each country to the Council starting in 1998.

Following those developments in March 1998 the Bulgarian government of United Democratic Forces adopted a National Strategy of Bulgaria's Accession to the EU which marked short, medium and long term objectives of the country for European integration. A short term priority was to secure a positive report by the European Commission in 1998. The medium and long goal was to open up accession negotiations and close all chapters by 2001.

In April 1998 the screening of Bulgaria's legislation began and a National Programme for the Adoption of the acquis was introduced which mapped the changes that had to be perused to bring the national legislation in line with European standards. Annual progress reports were published by the European Commission on Bulgaria in 1998 and 1999 when it was reported that Bulgaria broadly met the Copenhagen criteria but experienced problems in the fight of corruption, reform the judiciary and meeting the criteria for acceptance in the internal market.

The Helsinki decision to adopt a regatta approach to enlargement led to the beginning of accession negotiations between Bulgaria and the European Union. The initial step of the negotiations involved a bilateral intergovernmental conference in February 2000. Bulgaria appointed a Chief Negotiator and set up working groups which to formulate the national positions on the chapters.

Between 2000 and 2004 Bulgaria was involved in the negotiation process which was supported by the Accession Partnership and the Roadmap to Accession. The 2002 Regular report by the Commission recognised Bulgaria as a functioning market economy and there was an endorsement of the target date of accession set for January 2007.

Following the Commission's Report, at the end of October the European Council in Brussels requested the Commission to prepare a 'package' for Bulgaria and Romania to be presented at the Copenhagen meeting of the Heads of State in December 2002. The package was expected to contain a detailed 'roadmap' for accession of both countries and increased pre-accession assistance.

At the European Council in Copenhagen in December 2002 the roadmap for Bulgaria was adopted and support was expressed for Bulgaria's accession in 2007. This position was confirmed at the European Council in Thessaloniki in June 2003 where Bulgaria's aim to conclude negotiations in 2004 was approved.

The end of the accession negotiations were followed by signing of the Accession Treaty with Bulgaria in April 2005 which was ratified by the national parliaments of all EU member states by the end of 2006. The Treaty had a special clause according to which Bulgaria's membership could be postponed with one year if the country did not achieve sufficient progress in problematic areas such as organised crime and corruption. Bulgaria became a member state on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007 but the European Commission continues to monitor the progress in judicial matters and the absorption of EU funds.

The pace and time of the accession of Bulgaria to the European Union was influenced on one hand by the enlargement initiatives taken at EU level and on the other by the degree of party competition and the relationship between the main political parties during the three stages of integration. At the first stage Bulgaria oriented quickly towards European integration by signing Europe and PHARE Agreements with the European Union which was achieved during a short-lived period of consensus and institution building between the Bulgarian Socialist Party and United Democratic Forces. During the second stage Bulgaria failed to make sufficient progress due to frequent elections, high level of party competition and delay of political and economic reforms reflected in the opinion of the European Commission regarding the preparedness to begin accession negotiations. At the third stage Bulgaria was able to catch up to some degree with the rest of the post-communist countries by starting the screening of legislation and the negotiation process. The bi-polar model of party politics in Bulgaria was replaced by a coalitional model

which facilitated the progress made while EU membership was turned into a valence issue of political competition and a goal of strategic importance for Bulgaria.

### **3.6 CONCLUSIONS**

The enlargement process with the countries from Central and Eastern Europe occurred in three stages on which this chapter elaborated. During the initial period (1989-1993) the efforts of the European Community were directed at assisting the economic and political recovery of the Eastern bloc. This was achieved through two major initiatives, the PHARE programme and the Europe Agreements. Both initiatives were often criticised by the political elites in the new democracies for their limited scope and applicability. A serious drawback of the PHARE programme was the size of the financial assistance which was in times smaller than the Marshall aid given to Western Europe at the end of the Second World War. Moreover, some of the funding rather than being invested in economic restructuring went back to Western Europe to pay for consultancy and expert fees. Similarly, the benefits arising from the Europe Agreements to the associate member states were undermined by safeguard clauses, limited concessions by the European Union on sensitive products and anti-dumping measures directed at sectors where the Central and Eastern European states had a comparative advantage. Above all the Europe Agreements failed to provide a clear commitment to future membership, only an instrument of association. Partly in response to their demands and partly as a result to the internal debate within the European Union and external pressure from the United States the European Council in Copenhagen in 1993 approved a set of eligibility criteria for EU membership.

The second period (1993-1997) was formed around a pre-accession strategy for enlargement following the commitment of the European Council of Copenhagen to integration. The criteria refocused the exiting PHARE programme and Europe Agreements with the candidate states towards enlargement as well as introduced two new instruments, the structured dialogue and a White paper on the Single market, which to assist the candidates in their preparation for membership. Simultaneously, the European

Union began a process of evaluating the readiness of the applicant states to enter accession negotiations judged against the Copenhagen criteria for accession. The decision of the Commission was that Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Estonia had made sufficient progress to begin negotiations while Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Latvia and Lithuania received guidance in the areas they lagged behind.

The third stage (1997-2007) in the enlargement process was dominated by the accession negotiations between the European Union and the post-communist states. The purpose of the negotiations was to draw a map of priorities of how the transposition of the legislative body of the Union was to be implemented. In order to facilitate this adaptation the European Union agreed on Accession Partnerships with each candidate which defined the short and medium term sector priorities to membership. The Accession Partnerships were accompanied by screening of all chapters of the *acquis* multilaterally and bilaterally with the candidates. In 1999 at the Helsinki Council the European Union reviewed its strategy to enlargement and decided to open accession negotiations with all applicants. Following the progress of the negotiations in 2002 at the Copenhagen Council the European Union decided that eight of the candidate countries would be ready for membership in 2004 while Bulgaria and Romania were excluded from the first wave and given a target date of accession.

The pace and time of the accession of Bulgaria to the European Union on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007 was influenced on one hand by the enlargement initiatives taken at EU level and on the other by the degree of party competition and the relationship between the main political parties during the three stages of integration. At the first stage Bulgaria moved quickly towards European integration by signing Europe and PHARE Agreements with the European Union which was achieved during a short-lived period of consensus and institution building between the Bulgarian Socialist Party and United Democratic Forces. During the second stage Bulgaria failed to make sufficient progress due to frequent elections, high level of party competition and delay of political and economic reforms reflected in the opinion of the European Commission regarding the preparedness to begin accession negotiations. At the third stage Bulgaria was able to catch up to some degree with the rest of the post-communist countries by starting the screening of legislation and

the negotiation process. The bi-polar model of party politics in Bulgaria was replaced by a coalitional model which facilitated the progress made towards EU membership which was turned into a valence issue of political competition and a goal of strategic importance for Bulgaria as the empirical chapters 4, 5 and 6 of the thesis will demonstrate.

On the whole the slow response of the European Community to the changes taking place in Central and Eastern Europe and the lack of a clear framework for accession delayed the emergence of a European debate in Bulgaria. During the first stage of the relationship between Bulgaria and the EC the European debate revolved around the assistance package and potential economic benefits emerging from closer ties with Western Europe. Following the publication of the Copenhagen criteria there was more emphasis on conditionality and the possible bias in favour or against candidate countries. In the context of Bulgaria this nuance was strengthened after the black list of countries for visa purposes was announced which led to a wave of elite discontent in Bulgaria with the divisive approach of the EU towards enlargement. The uncertainty over European integration was overcome during the third stage between 1997 and 2007 when the gradual structuring of the process of accession created a sense of cooperation between the candidate countries and the EU and the European debate in Bulgaria gathered momentum and became more specific and goal oriented. In the next chapter the attention will turn to levels of public support on European integration in Bulgaria which will be explored in light of the current literatures on public opinion and enlargement in candidate and EU member states.

## **PART 2**

### **CHAPTER 4**

#### **PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION IN BULGARIA BEFORE ACCESSION TO THE EUROPEAN UNION**

##### **4.1 INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

The subject of public opinion and European integration has resurfaced with systematic regularity in academic publications at times when the European Union absorbs new waves of enlargement. Some topics have remained constant in the literature over time: what inspires the European publics to support or oppose integration? Is there a link between political partisanship, the performance of the state and public support for the European Union or do economic benefits arising from integration solely influence the views of the majority? Other issues have tapped on concerns directly related to enlargements: why is public support higher in Central and Eastern Europe in comparison to the old EU member states? Do countries from different waves diverge or converge in their support for European integration?

The topic of public support for European integration in Bulgaria has not received individual attention in the academic literature. There are nevertheless some valuable contributions that consider Bulgaria in comparative studies on public support for EU membership in the region (Tverdova and Anderson 2004; White *et al.* 2000). The objective of this chapter is to add to the existing literature on enlargement by explaining the Bulgarian case which stands out and is interesting to analyse for the following reasons.

Given the uneven and volatile political transition from communism to democracy one expects to find that public support for integration is lower in Bulgaria than in other candidate states due to the additional costs of adaptation arising from accession at a national level. This is because the less developed a country is the more changes it needs to make in order to reach the EU standards for membership. Contrary to the logic of this argument Bulgaria has emerged with one of the highest levels of public support for Europe (between 75-85%) before accession in comparison to other candidate states from the post-communist group.<sup>97</sup>

For example, according to the Central and Eastern Eurobarometer from 2002.2, Bulgaria is at 75% the third most supportive state of the EU after Romania (84%) and Slovenia (80%).<sup>98</sup> A closer look at the data shows that as well as having one of the highest degrees of support for Europe, comparatively speaking, Bulgaria enjoys one of the lowest percentages of public opposition to the idea at around 4%. Only Romania with a 2% opposition rate can compete with Bulgaria's optimism for Europe. This is in contrast to the opposition in countries from the same league such as - Estonia, Latvia and the Czech Republic that have opposition rates above the group's average of 14%. Moreover in 2002

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<sup>97</sup> For pre-accession data see Candidate Countries Eurobarometer 2001-2004. From the latest Standard Eurobarometer 70, conducted in October-November 2008, public support for EU membership has dramatically decreased in Bulgaria after accession. When asked the question: 'As a whole do you think EU membership is 'a good thing'; 'a bad thing' or 'neither good, nor bad' 48 % of respondents thought it was 'a good thing'; 37 % supported 'neither good, nor bad'; and 8 % gave a response 'bad'; 7 % were undecided.

<sup>98</sup> Refer to Table 4.1. In order to verify that the data in Table 4.1 is representative, support and opposition levels to EU membership have been cross checked with data from the years immediately prior and after the 2002.2 survey for Bulgaria. According to CCEB 2001, 80 % of Bulgarians were in favour of EU membership and 4 % were against it and in the 2003.2 CCEB survey it was reported that 74 % were in favour and 4 % were against EU membership. This demonstrates that the data used in Table 4.1. is representative for Bulgaria of support and opposition levels from the pre-accession period.

Bulgaria had 21% of the population that remained undecided about Europe which suggests that after accession there could be a further increase in support for the European idea.

**Table 4.1: Support for EU Membership in Central and Eastern Europe**

<i>Country</i>	<i>Vote for EU Membership</i>	<i>Vote Against EU Membership</i>	<i>Undecided</i>	<i>Total</i>
Romania	84%	2%	14%	100%
Slovenia	80%	10%	10%	100%
Lithuania	75%	12%	13%	100%
<b>Bulgaria</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Hungary	73%	10%	17%	100%
Slovakia	71%	10%	19%	100%
Poland	70%	14%	16%	100%
<b>Average</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>100%</b>
Czech Rep.	61%	17%	22%	100%
Latvia	51%	27%	22%	100%
Estonia	43%	31%	26%	100%

\* *Question: 'At a referendum would vote for or against Bulgaria's EU membership?'*

\* *Source: Calculated from the CCEB Survey (raw data files), February 2002.*

Bulgarians have remained firm on the idea of European membership over time despite the lack of a well formulated strategy for enlargement from the European Union. As Chapter 3 demonstrates decisions about enlargements to the East were taken on an ad-hoc basis and amid contestation between the old EU member states. Until 1993 and the publication of the Copenhagen criteria the Union was unwilling to make a concrete commitment to enlargement and delayed setting specific dates and roadmaps for accession. This lack of clarity regarding integration as well as the unstable political and economic situation in Bulgaria meant that the country lagged in its integration efforts for which it was often criticised by the European institutions.

Chapters 2 and 3 of the thesis outline some of those developments. For instance, the third chapter discusses the public outcry and disappointment in 1995 when Bulgaria was

included in the European Commission's 'black list' of countries whose citizens required visas when crossing the external borders of the Union. This was followed by the decision of the Luxemburg Council in 1997 to delay the start of accession negotiations with Bulgaria as the country was judged to be insufficiently prepared alongside Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovenia, to enter accession talks. Another measure was the inclusion of a unique 'back-up' clause in the Accession Treaties of Bulgaria and Romania that could postpone their membership date with a year to 2008.

Thirdly, it is worth considering whether the high level of public support for membership in Bulgaria was influenced by the unwavering political commitment to integration. What is remarkable about the Bulgarian case is that in the 17 years from the break down of the communist system in 1989 until EU membership in 2007 all governmental parties were committed to the objective of integration. This persisted even during the bi-polar model of political relations when EU membership emerged as the only issue of consensus between the left and right forces in the country. At the 2001 and 2005 parliamentary elections EU membership became a valence issue on which all major parties competed in front of the electorate.

The latest contributions in the area of public opinion on integration relate to the recent enlargements of the European Union with the countries from Central and Eastern Europe. The bulk of the existing literature comprises of studies that apply public opinion theories, previously developed for Western European countries to the context of Central and Eastern Europe (Cichowski 2000a, 2000b; Ehin 2001; Tucker *et al.* 2002; Tverdova and Anderson 2004; White *et al.* 2000). The majority of the research is comparative in nature and relies on a single year survey data from Central and Eastern Eurobarometer. Cichowski, Tverdova and Anderson, and Tucker *et al.* based their analysis on Central and Eastern Eurobarometer 7.0 from 1996, Ehin utilised New Baltic Eurobarometer III from 1996 and White *et al.* conducted their own surveys in the region between 1997 and 1998. All six studies tested established theories of European integration, both utilitarian and

value based, but their results were mixed and provided no definite conclusions about the nature of public support for European integration.<sup>99</sup>

Poland is the only new member state that has been researched independently with both qualitative and quantitative methods before and after accession (Bielasiak 2002; Guerra 2008; Kucia 1999; Szczerbiak 2001). However, because of different methodologies the findings are difficult to piece together to construct a macro-perspective of Polish public opinion on the European Union. At best the studies illuminate certain aspects of the integration process such as the 'emotional' versus 'rational' direction of the European debate or provide explanations for the declining levels of support prior to EU membership.

On the whole the literature on public support for European integration in the new European Union member states is influenced by past research related to Western Europe. There are four approaches that offer competing explanations for variations in public support for European integration which have been extended to the post-communist region.

Most popular among researchers are the utilitarian and economic based models (Anderson and Reichert 1996; Carrubba 1997; Eichenberg and Dalton 1993; Gabel 2000; Gabel and Palmer 1995; Gabel and Whitten 1997; Smith and Wanke 1993). They hypothesise that support for European integration is determined by expectations of economic gains associated with membership, which depend upon the socio-economic profile of the respondents or the economic performance of the member state measured in terms of GDP, unemployment or inflation as well as levels of trade with other EU member states; direct financial transfers from the EU, length of EU membership or concerns for national security. In other words, support for European integration is a function of cost/benefit analysis at individual or national level.

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<sup>99</sup> The research of Tucker *et al.* (2002) is different from the rest of the research on Central and Eastern Europe. It provides a new framework for explaining support or opposition to European integration in the region. The central argument is that residents of these countries would decide whether they are for or against the EU on the basis of whether they have gained or lost from the transition to democracy. Transitional winners would be in favour of membership while transitional losers would be against it.

A second set of theories takes a different view and relates support for European integration to higher levels of cognitive mobilisation or involvement in politics. According to Inglehart (1970) the more people know about the European Union, the less threatening it becomes to them and they feel inclined to support it. In addition value orientation can also influence people's opinions on integration. Those with post-materialist value orientations will be more supportive of integration while materialists will be more sceptical and concerned with bread and butter issues such as security and economic growth and not abstract concepts like integration (Inglehart 1977).<sup>100</sup>

A third theory links support for EU membership to the performance of the state, the national institutions or the political party that respondents support (Anderson 1998; Anderson and Kaltenthaler 1996; Kritzing 2003; Sanchez-Cuenca 2000). The underlying argument of this approach is that individuals rely on 'proxies' in forming their views on integration. They use information about something on which they are well informed (such as the performance of the state) to make judgments about something they are relatively unfamiliar with (like the EU).

A fourth approach suggests that support for European integration can co-vary with national identity. In places where citizens have a strong relationship with their state support for integration may be limited (Carey 2002; Carey and Lebo 2001).<sup>101</sup> Recent studies have advocated that European integration may be perceived as a 'threat' to one's way of life or the distribution of national resources which can account for negative attitudes to enlargement (McLaren 2002, 2006).

The remaining part of this section will review the academic literature on the four approaches to integration as well as their applicability to Central and Eastern Europe. It will proceed with the utilitarian model of Gabel (1998b) of individual level support for EU membership and draw on some macro-economic models that link support for integration with the level of trade with other EU countries, net returns from the EU budget, national security and the economic performance of the member state. Inglehart's

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<sup>100</sup> Note that Janssen (1991) argued that this relationship is likely to be based on the higher levels of cognitive mobilisation among postmaterialists and not on the assumption that their values are different.

<sup>101</sup> Also see Christin and Trechsel (2001) who argue that in the case of Switzerland national identity is not statistically significant in shaping attitudes towards European integration.

models of cognitive mobilisation and value orientations (Inglehart 1970, 1977) will then be evaluated followed by the 'proxy' theory of Anderson (1998) that ties support for integration with political partisanship as well as the performance of the state, the incumbent government or the position of the political parties on the party system. Finally, the section will address the question of national identity and its impact on European integration as well as the proposition that integration may be perceived as a cultural threat in existing member states.

#### **4.1.1 UTILITARIAN AND ECONOMIC MODELS OF SUPPORT FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION**

The point of departure of the utilitarian model of Gabel is the Eastonian model of integration which suggests that citizens structure their attitudes towards European integration based on utilitarian and affective evaluations of the integration process (Gabel 1998b: 15-35).

As Gabel (1998b: 109-110) explains 'utilitarian attitudes reflect citizens' appraisals of the costs and benefits of integration and can change over time. This dimension provides a channel through which citizens' considerations of the welfare implications of integration can influence their support for integration. In contrast, affective attitudes reflect an emotional or psychological attachment or allegiance to European integration that is generally stable over time'.

Both dimensions are positively correlated to support for integration, though utilitarian evaluations are much stronger when affective attitudes are weak. Since the majority of European citizens hold low levels of affective attachments to the European Union and are relatively uninformed about the European project utilitarian considerations are paramount in the formation of their attitudes to European integration.

At the heart of the utilitarian model is the proposition that citizens vary in their support for integration because they bear different costs and benefits arising from integration depending on their socioeconomic position (Gabel 1998b; Gabel and Palmer 1995).

Gabel (1998b) used individual level Eurobarometer data for the period 1975-1992 to test four hypotheses related to the profile of respondents in the then EU member states.

He found that well educated people and those on higher incomes are more likely to support European integration because they are easily adaptable in a liberalised labour market and can benefit from greater investment opportunities provided by the mobility of financial capital.

By contrast, those with limited 'human capital', who are poorly educated and with less valuable and mutable skills face higher competition for their jobs and are more likely to perceive European integration as a threat to their welfare. Similarly, respondents on low incomes are generally hurt by capital liberalisation since capital mobility constrains government welfare spending on which they are reliant.

Finally, Gabel (1998b) and Gabel and Palmer (1995) demonstrated that Europeans residing in borderline regions with another EU country are generally more supportive of integration as they benefit from cross-border trade. Farmers too expressed greater utilitarian support for integration since they benefited from the distributive effects of the CAP policy in the form of direct payments from the EU budget.<sup>102</sup>

In the academic literature on Western Europe the utilitarian model has been supported by a number of studies. McLaren (2002) compared it empirically to her own 'cultural threat' model and found equal support for both of them. In her study she replicated Gabel's research for both the original and later EU member states on the basis of Eurobarometer data from 1994 and then extended the analysis to measure the effects of 'cultural threat' on the same two groups of countries.

Her findings were consistent with Gabel's 'human capital' hypothesis for which she found statistically '*much* more' support than Gabel himself (McLaren 2002:560). In particular, those with 'high education' were more supportive of the EU than those with

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<sup>102</sup> But note that Anderson and Reichert (1996) on the basis of Eurobarometer data from 1982, 1986 and 1990 found that farmers were no more supportive of the EU than other occupational groups contrary to the utilitarian expectations. Cichowski (2003a) found that farmers in Central and Eastern Europe were in fact more likely to oppose EU membership than any other occupational group.

low level of education, but other factors that mattered were occupational type and living in borderline regions.<sup>103</sup>

McLaren argued that citizens of the EU member states may feel hostile towards the European project in great part because of their perceptions of threats posed by other cultures to their state. She distinguished between ‘realistic’ and ‘symbolic’ threats: the latter being threats to one’s way of life, while the former expressing concerns with the distribution of resources of one group of people to another.<sup>104</sup> When comparing the utilitarian and the cultural threat models she found that self interest and cultural threat carry approximately equal weight in the explanation of support for integration between the two groups of member states.

Other studies tested the validity of the utilitarian model by proposing new variables that relate to support. For instance, Nelsen and Guth (2000) were interested in explaining gender differences of support for integration and particularly why women appeared to be less enthusiastic about integration than men.<sup>105</sup>

Their study was based on 1994 Eurobarometer data and they applied regression analysis separately to both genders, comparing the results. In line with Gabel (1998b) they found that ‘those who were poorly educated, working class, and pessimistic about the economic situation are less enthusiastic about the EU’ (Nelsen and Guth 2000:281).

Women were found to be influenced by their educational status which was lower than that of men. Men on the other hand were reported to be strongly influenced by working

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<sup>103</sup> Anderson and Reichert (1996) similarly reported that higher levels of education and higher incomes are positively correlated with support for European integration over time. They based their analysis on Eurobarometer data from 1982, 1986 and 1990, both for the original and later member states. See also Gabel and Whitten (1997) who found that occupational skills, education and income are positively related to support for integration.

<sup>104</sup> Karp and Bowler (2006:382) also argue that concerns with the redistribution of resources are a major element in the formulation of public attitudes towards widening and deepening of the European Union. For example, in their analysis they point out that ‘citizens from countries that are net contributors are less likely to favour deepening and more likely to favour broadening, presumably due to an expectation that other countries may lessen the burden’. Likewise, farmers and those that fear the cost of expansion have negative attitudes to enlargement because enlargement threatens their benefits arising from integration.

<sup>105</sup> But note that Anderson and Reichert (1996) found that age and gender were unreliable predictors for support towards European integration in the original and later EU member states.

class status and concerns about protecting their manual jobs in a liberalised labour market.

Some findings from the study run contrary to expectations. For instance, although the study hypothesised that women must be less supportive of integration because of their traditional role in the family, the results showed that men were less supportive on the basis of values. In the same vein, the size of the respondent's family was found to be a significant indicator of support among women but the direction of that influence was in reverse to expectations and having more children indicated higher support for integration. Finally, having a relationship with the church had a positive impact on attitudes towards integration for both men and women. Further study by the same researchers proved that religious affiliation is one of the best predictors of support for integration (Nelsen and Guth 2003; Nelsen *et al.* 2001). The religious communities in the EU member states are found to be more supportive of the EU than the secular youth. The effects are stronger for Catholics than Protestants but in all cases religious beliefs correlate positively with support for the European Union.

All of the above studies have a common thread: they provide strong evidential support that higher levels of education relate to higher support for European integration. Nevertheless, the research fails to explain an obvious paradox in Gabel's model that questions the validity of the 'human capital' hypothesis. This is the observation that in certain countries unskilled workers are found to be more pro-integration than professionals in other European countries (Gabel 1998b). If human capital is what determines level of support for integration then citizens across the EU should be equally affected by it.

Brinegar and Jolly (2005) suggest that national skill endowment conditions and attenuates the effects of skill which is why the level of support for the EU differs between occupations and states. In other words in a country with a high level of unskilled labour and relatively scarce skilled labour the unskilled workers will support integration more than the skilled ones because for them it would open up new markets for goods and services. By contrast, for the professionals it would reduce their income advantage gained

by holding scarce factors of production which would make them less supportive of integration.

As means of evaluating the robustness of the human capital argument against the importance of national contextual factors as determinants of public support for integration Brinegar and Jolly (2005) developed a model which tests the relationships between citizens' skill levels measured by level of education and national skill endowment, welfare state type and varieties of capitalism as independent variables.

Their findings indicate that national contextual factors are relevant for the explanation of public support for integration. Specifically, they find that 'low skilled workers in the high-skill-endowment countries exhibit significantly less support for European integration, a result of their relatively less advantageous economic position in the EU zone. Respondents with higher education in the low-skill-endowment countries support European integration less than the low-skilled workers' (Brinegar and Jolly 2005: 174). Welfare state type is also found to be relevant. In general 'support for European integration decreases much faster among respondents in social democratic welfare states than in residual welfare states as education level increases' (Brinegar and Jolly 2005: 174).

Some researchers have argued that it is possible for citizens to be in favour of European integration not only because of expectations for direct gains from EU membership as hypothesised by Gabel and Palmer (1995) but also because they feel their nation state on balance accumulates more benefits from integration than costs (Anderson and Reichert 1993; Carrubba 1997; Eichenberg and Dalton 1993; Gabel and Palmer 1995; Gabel and Whitten 1997; Smith and Wanke 1993).

Macro level approaches relate support for European integration to a wide range of economic factors. Gabel and Palmer (1995), Eichenberg and Dalton (1993) and Gabel and Whitten (1997) demonstrated that a nation's level of intra-EU trade and the balance of that trade were positively related to its citizens' support for integration. Gabel and Palmer (1995) and Gabel and Whitten (1997) showed that support for integration was

positively linked to national security benefits from Western European cooperation, while Eichenberg and Dalton (1993) and Gabel and Whitten (1997) demonstrated that support for European integration co-varied with national economic conditions measured by inflation, unemployment and GDP. From the three variables inflation was found to have the strongest explanatory power in both studies and support for integration increased with the worsening of national economic conditions. While Duch and Taylor (1997) discovered little evidence of macroeconomic influences on regional support they found that regions boasting comparative economic advantages exhibited more support for integration.

According to Anderson and Reichert (1996) the macro level studies suffer from two major drawbacks. By relying on time-series and cross-national data they assume that national (and individual) economic benefits affect citizens similarly at different points in time as well as that they have analogous effects across all countries included in the study. However, this may not necessarily be the case since the process of European integration and the EU have changed over time: the EEC of 1975 is different from the EU of 2005. Therefore, it would be plausible to expect that survey questions about integration taken at different points in time would elicit responses about different objects.

With that in mind, the advantages of Anderson and Reichert's study over the rest of the economic macro-level research is that they rely on Eurobarometer data for three individual years (1982, 1986 and 1990) and distinguish between the original six member states and the later members (Spain and Portugal). This allows them to clarify the motivations for EU membership at different points in time and select those that appear constant over time.

Their findings are in line with previous research: they indicate that in 1986 and 1990 individuals who lived in countries that trade more with other EU member states, derived greater benefits from the EU budget or lived in countries that have been members of the EU for longer were on the whole more supportive of their country's membership. Moreover, some variation in support between the two groups of member states was detected: while the budget return was found to be consistently significant over time for

both old and new member states the statistical relationship was reported to be stronger in the original members. Similarly, the EU trade variable was only significant in older member states, where it had the same effects over time.

When applied to Central and Eastern Europe the utilitarian and economic models were supported to some degree by most studies. Tverdova and Anderson (2004) reported that in six East European (then) candidate countries – Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia and Slovakia – support for EU membership was strongly linked to expectations for personal or collective benefits arising from integration. Respondents in occupations that related to higher returns from EU membership were more likely to vote for it in a referendum than citizens in less advantageous positions.

The researchers, however, found no evidence for the ‘human capital’ hypothesis which is central to the utilitarian model and as previously shown in this section well supported by research on Western Europe. Instead, citizens in the six candidate states with higher education were more likely to be in favour of EU membership than be undecided but level of education was not a factor in distinguishing between supporters or opponents of integration. The researchers questioned the validity of this finding and contended that it may be an unreliable indicator of support on methodological grounds. Their reasoning was that since levels of education could be a measure of both human capital and political awareness the results may have confounded the two variables, as independent measures for both were not available in the dataset.

A similar study by Cichowski (2000a) conducted on the same set of 1996 Eurobarometer data as Tverdova and Anderson (2004) tested utilitarian and economic variables in four Central and Eastern European countries: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary and Slovenia. Their results showed that levels of education and occupations were in fact the two utilitarian/cognitive variables with the strongest explanatory power in relation to support for EU membership. Individuals in occupations within the private sector or the civil service were on average more supportive of integration than other sectors. Significantly, farmers were found to be more likely than anyone else to oppose EU membership contrary to Gabel’s hypothesis about the distributive effects of CAP. The

research gave credibility to the 'human capital' hypothesis and found a strong relationship between levels of education and support for the EU across all five countries.

Specifically, Cichowski (2000a) attempted to measure the impact of education on support for EU membership and distinguished between different countries from the data set. For instance she reported that Czechs with high education are twice as likely to support membership in the EU as their counterparts with elementary education. Likewise, Estonians with secondary education were 20 % more supportive of membership than those with elementary level. By contrast, Slovenians were evenly supportive of membership regardless of their level of education, with the better educated part of the sample being only slightly more supportive than the rest.

A third study by White *et al.* (2000) relates support for EU membership in four Central and Eastern European states: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Ukraine to the social characteristics of respondents. The researchers find that support for EU membership is linked to age, education, income and residence while gender is irrelevant to levels of support.

As hypothesised by the utilitarian model in the four countries young, better educated people and those living in cities were found to be more supportive of EU membership than respondents who were old, less educated and living in villages or small towns. Contrary to research on Western Europe income reduced support for EU membership while gender was perceived as having no impact on support, with both men and women being equally likely to oppose or support integration.<sup>106</sup>

Looking at the Bulgarian sub-sample of the study some interesting observations emerge: on the whole Bulgarians in 1997/1998 were as enthusiastic about EU membership as citizens of the other three states (White *et al.* 2000: 332). 74% of Bulgarians compared to 68% of Czechs, 77% of Slovaks and 75% of Ukrainians were in favour of EU membership. When these results were broken down by social and economic categories in

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<sup>106</sup> Anderson and Reichert (1996) found that age and gender were unreliable predictors of support towards European integration in Western Europe. Nelsen and Guth (2000) deduced exactly the opposite and argued that gender mattered in the formation of opinions on integration with women being less enthusiastic about integration than men.

quite a few of them Bulgarians were more supportive than other nationalities. For instance, in the group of 'people under 30', 92% of Bulgarians in comparison to 84% of respondents from the region were in favour of membership. From those living in the capital or big cities again Bulgarians emerge as the most enthusiastic: 87% of Bulgarians in comparison to 81% from Central and Eastern Europe were in favour of membership. Similarly, from the group of better educated people with degrees 94% of Bulgarians were EU supporters which compared to 87% from the region.

Although the research on Central and Eastern Europe lends credibility to the utilitarian and economic models on the whole as the last three studies illustrate the results are often conflicting, rejecting and supporting different utilitarian variables without consistency across studies. Ehin (2001) argues that this may be because the socio-economic characteristics on which the utilitarian model relies are untrustworthy predictors of 'individual competitiveness' in the context of the new member states. She hypothesises that in the post-communist region there is a different structure of the labour market resulting from the process of democratisation and its side effects such as the loss in value of the socialist-era education and greater social mobility during the transition both upwards and downwards the social ladder which affect differently levels of support.

Ehin's findings derived from statistical research on the Baltic countries indicate higher support rates for integration among males and highly educated individuals in line with utilitarian expectations. Income appears to be an insignificant factor while unemployment is positively related to support for integration in the case of Latvia. This suggests that besides the economic expectations in Central and Eastern Europe support may be related to the redistributive norms of the European welfare state.

This section explained the utilitarian and economic models of support for European integration and their applicability to the countries from Central and Eastern Europe. Both approaches linked support for European integration to individual or national benefits arising from membership in the context of Western Europe. The utilitarian model determined levels of support through the socio-economic profile of respondents and considered a wide spectrum of socio-tropic variables such as income, gender, education,

residence, occupation and age. The evidence from different studies suggested that education and occupation have the strongest explanatory power in relation to support while gender and age were often disputed. At a national level support for European integration was linked to the nation's intra-EU trade and balance of that trade, the length of EU membership, national security benefits arising from Western European cooperation and the economic performance of the nation state measured by inflation, GDP or unemployment. When applied to Central and Eastern Europe the utilitarian model produced conflicting results with different studies supporting and rejecting different utilitarian variables without consistency across studies. This may be because the utilitarian model relies on untrustworthy predictors of 'individual competitiveness' in the context of the new member states due to the different structure of the labour market, the loss in value in education and the social mobility resulting from the transition but more comparative evidence from the region is necessary to conclude this with certainty. The next section sets out to review an alternative model of support for European integration based on cognitive mobilisation and changing value systems.

#### **4.1.2 COGNITIVE MOBILISATION AND VALUE BASED MODELS OF SUPPORT FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION**

The theory of cognitive mobilisation gained popularity in the 1970s through the work of Ronald Inglehart who explained support for European integration as a consequence of the post Second World War social and economic changes taking place in Western industrial societies. In particular he argued that 'rising educational levels of recent decades, coupled with the growing availability of information about things happening in distant places, is conducive to an increasingly cosmopolitan outlook on the part of Western publics' (Inglehart and Rabier 1978:86).

As people became better educated, exposed to more information through new technologies and the media and enjoyed better lifestyles as a result of improving economic conditions they internalised post-materialist values in lieu of their past materialist orientations (Inglehart 1977). So they became more concerned with environmental issues, human rights and world peace instead of unemployment, inflation

or housing which were no longer issues of priority. The effects of these societal shifts in Western Europe led to an increasing support for European integration particularly in the groups of young, better educated and economically well-off strata of societies.

Inglehart's theories of cognitive mobilisation and value orientations predate the utilitarian models of support for European integration but they have been difficult to apply in both Western and Eastern Europe. Only a handful of studies have tried to test their empirical veracity, all of them rejecting the theoretical reasoning of the value based model and finding limited evidence for the impact of cognitive mobilisation.

Three such studies by Janssen (1991), Anderson and Reichert (1996), and Gabel (1998a) looked for relationships between support for European integration and age, education, income and post-materialism utilising Eurobarometer surveys. Their research indicated that education and income were positively related to support for European integration in Western Europe but age and post-materialism had no effect on levels of support.

Janssen (1991) argued that in Western Europe support for European integration at the micro-level was unstable and related to vague familiarity on the part of the Western publics with the EU in general. According to him 'The issue of integration may be too difficult, too abstract or not interesting enough for the average citizen to form a well thought-out attitude (Janssen 1991:467). Since value orientations are not important determinants of levels of support materialists and post-materialists differ in their views on integration because post-materialists are better skilled (cognitively mobilised) and have the capacity to understand the European institutions better than the less skilled categories of respondents.

Later studies by Anderson and Reichert (1996) and Gabel (1998a) confirmed Janssen's scepticism of the political value theory on the basis of comparative studies on original and later EU member states. Both studies reported notable differences between the two groups of countries. While they found a positive relationship between post-materialist values and EU support among respondents from the original member states in line with Inglehart's hypothesis, there was much more support for EU membership among

materialists in the new member states. Gabel (1998a) used this finding to argue that the models of political values and cognitive mobilisation were poor predictors of support for integration when compared to the utilitarian and class partisanship models.

When applied to Central and Eastern Europe both models were difficult to validate and their results were less conclusive than those from Western Europe. The political value theory posed a particular challenge to researchers who could not distinguish between materialists and post-materialists because the citizens from the post-communist region had different value priorities to their Western counterparts stemming from their evolving environment.

This being the case most researchers adapted alternative measures of post-materialist values such as identification with democracy or support for democratic norms and market economy. For instance Ehin (2001) hypothesised that in the Baltic countries strong identification with democracy would yield higher support for integration and those respondents who were in favour of democracy would be more supportive of integration than publics with an authoritarian outlook. Following the same logic Tverdova and Anderson (2004) and White *et al.* (2000) expected that support for democracy, democratic norms or market economy would relate positively to support for integration in Central and Eastern Europe.

The research findings from the candidate states did not yield any firm results. Tverdova and Anderson (2004) confirmed a positive relationship between support for market economy and EU membership with respondents in this category being significantly less likely to be undecided or oppose membership in a referendum. However, support for democratic transition or general sense that the country was moving in the right direction did not help to distinguish among supporters of EU membership on one hand and opponents, undecided respondents or non-voters on the other.

Similarly, White *et al.* (2000) reported a positive link between support for the market economy and favourable attitude to EU membership but contrary to the value based theory found that respondents who placed more emphasis on materialist values such as

'order and discipline' were more supportive of membership than those who chose 'freedom'. The researchers interpreted this finding through the general emphasis and commitment by the EU on having a strong legal framework.

In the third study by Ehin (2001) the expectation that strong identification with democratic norms would yield higher support for integration was not supported and the effect of authoritarianism was found to be statistically insignificant for the region as a whole. In the Lithuanian sub-sample authoritarian values were even positively related to support for integration.

A fundamental weakness of research studies that rely on the utilitarian, cognitive mobilisation and value based models is that they provide different explanations for the same evidence and as Gabel (1998a) points out 'without controlling for alternative explanations, it is impossible to test accurately these competing theoretical claims'. For example, education may be positively correlated with support for integration because it raises cognitive mobilisation or because it allows people to benefit comparatively more economically in a European market. Therefore, Gabel (1998a) questions the use of bivariate analysis in academic contributions which may 'conceal intervening or spurious relationships'.

Ehin (2001: 36) too concludes that 'a common weakness of efforts to test the utilitarian and value-based theories is the overly confident use of standard socio-economic characteristics'. Researchers have used age, education and income as proxies for post-materialist values while utilitarian explanations regard the same variables as indicators of individual competitiveness. As both hypotheses expect that socio-economic characteristics (with the exception of age) to be positively related to support for European integration, observed correlations contribute little to our ability to choose between rival theoretical perspectives.

This section showed that although theoretically convincing, the theories of cognitive mobilisation and value orientations were largely unsupported by the evidence from research on Western and Eastern Europe. Various studies reported lack of consistency

between post-materialist values and support for European integration as well as difficulty in distinguishing between Inglehart's theories and the utilitarian model which provided alternative explanations for the same results.

The following section looks at a third set of integration theories that relate support for the EU to the performance of the state, the national institutions or the political party that respondents support. According to this third approach individuals rely on 'proxies' in forming their views on integration. They use information about something they are well informed (such as the performance of the state or domestic politics) to make judgments about something they are relatively unfamiliar with (like the EU).

#### **4.1.3 PROXY MODELS OF SUPPORT FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION**

It is generally accepted that European integration is an elite driven project and public opinion is lagging behind in shifting support to European level. Anderson (1998) and Anderson and Kaltenthaler (1996) argue that political parties shape public opinion on European integration as voters follow the cues of the political parties that they support on issues connected to the EU. In practice this means that citizens use political parties as 'proxies' when formulating their views on integration and therefore supporters of pro-European parties are more likely to be pro-European while supporters of parties that are against the EU are expected to hold anti-European views. The proxy theory assumes that people are relatively uninformed about European integration to make independent evaluations and they compensate this gap in knowledge by constructing a reality about the EU that fits their understanding of the political world.

If political parties play an important role in forming public opinion on European integration then how do they arrive at their positions on the EU in the first place? In the academic literature there are two competing views on what factors influence party positions on integration that can be defined as the rational versus the ideology approaches.

The rational approach assumes that parties in Europe behave in a responsible way by weighting up national economic interests and historical considerations prior to forming their perspectives on integration. Because political parties at a national level take the same factors into account they tend to converge in their positions on the EU.<sup>107</sup>

The ideology approach assumes the opposite is true. It holds that politicians are irrational actors and their views on integration are determined by the ideology of the political party that they represent. This explains why political parties have different perspectives on integration defined in most cases by the party's position and function in the party system (Aspinwall 2002, 2006).

Recent contributions to the academic literature by Aspinwall (2002, 2006) support the ideology approach. Aspinwall (2002) argues that centrist parties in the old EU member states are more pro-integrationist than those on the left and right of the party system because of their weaker protectionist attitude to domestic policies and openness to trans-national cooperation with other EU member states. Left and right parties on the other hand are traditionally seen to favour policies that ascertain domestic autonomy such as state intervention and control, income distribution, national ownership, social and economic protection and the preservation of national identity.<sup>108</sup>

The study of Aspinwall (2002) tested the importance of ideology as a determinant of party preferences on the EU by studying data from 92 European political parties from Western Europe which he correlated with both party nationality and party ideology. The statistical results confirmed that ideology had a stronger explanatory power than national interests in all of the studied cases.

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<sup>107</sup> On the importance of national economic interests see Moravcsik (1993, 1997, and 1998). On historical considerations in Western Europe see Mancini (2000); Marcussen *et al.* (1999); Wallace (1991).

<sup>108</sup> The relationship between the place of political parties on the continuum of left-right and their preferences on the EU determined by belonging to party families has been extensively researched in the academic literature. For significant contributions to this debate refer to Hix (1999); Hix and Lord (1997); Marks and Wilson (2000). On the nature and ideology of right parties in Western Europe see Betz (1994); Fieschi *et al.* (1996); Taggart (1998). Note that the distinction between left – right parties and parties in government does not necessarily extend to Central and Eastern Europe. Cichowski (2000a: 1270) reported that in her sample of candidate countries ‘support for political parties does not follow a left-right pattern and it is not necessarily linked to support for establishment parties’.

Moreover, in a further study party ideology was found to be a decisive factor in shaping government positions on integration. Extending his research to parties in government Aspinwall (2006:108) showed that distance from the centre appeared to be less important to governments than their location in linear left-right space. Other variables that correlated strongly with government positions on integration were financial transfers to EU member states as well as experience of the Second World War and particularly whether countries were on the winning or the losing side after the war. Winners like Britain were found to be significantly less pro-integration than losers like Germany.

The proxy theory is based on the proposition that Europeans structure their attitudes towards the EU in the same way as they construct their political preferences at a national level, i.e. on a continuum of left to right. This being the case the public in member states should either favour or reject the EU. In practice however citizens favour certain aspects of integration and reject others. Anderson and Gabel (2002) examined the structure of EU citizens' preferences over EU policy. They claimed that if the traditional left/right dimension also structures public preferences over EU policies 'the parties of the Left at the domestic level will form a natural coalition at European level as their constituents' policy interests will converge. This would serve to buttress the existing coalitions of national parties in the European Parliament. However, if citizens' policy space is different from this traditional Left/Right dimension, then the current party coalitions at the EU level may unravel (Anderson and Gabel 2002: 895).

The researchers tested four existing models of EU policy space as part of their analysis: the international model, the regulation model, the Hix-Lord model and the Hooghe-Marks model by conducting confirmatory factor analysis of Eurobarometer survey data. Their findings concluded that the European political space is one-dimensional and not strictly structured around the domestic left-right positions. While some economic concerns such as developing programmes to fight unemployment and consumer protection related to the left-right were found to be relevant at the EU level, other issues such as national sovereignty and new politics were not translated to the European stage.

Another reason why the proxy theory may be a poor predictor of public preferences on the EU is because elites and publics support different aspects of European integration (Hooghe 2003). Hooghe tested and compared the desire for Europeanisation of 13 policies across national, European elites and public opinion. She found that elites were in favour of Europeanising policies that could lead to economies of scale when transferred to the European level. Examples of such policies were immigration, foreign policy, environment, defence, currency and Third World aid. By contrast the European publics were concerned with having a more social Europe and favoured Europeanising policies that could protect them against the volatility of the labour market such as employment, social policy, cohesion policy, environment and industrial policy. Predictably, both elites and publics converged in their support for Europeanising high-spending policies such as social policy, health and education.

The proxy theories assume that Europeans rely on shortcuts when deciding what positions to take on the EU. One such proxy is domestic politics but publics could also be influenced by the performance of the national institutions or the state in forming their views on integration. Sanchez-Cuenca (2000) argued that in Western Europe support for European integration is ultimately a function of national and supranational politics (Sanchez-Cuenca 2000). The worse the citizens' opinion of national institutions is and the better their opinion of supranational ones the stronger their support for European integration. (Sanchez-Cuenca 2000: 169).

This hypothesis was validated in the context of existing EU member states by measuring levels of corruption and development of welfare systems. Countries with high levels of corruption such as Italy, Spain and Greece were found to be more pro-European, while countries with low level of corruption such as Denmark and Sweden were less pro-European. The disparity in support between the two groups of countries indicated that people who live in corrupt countries tend to distrust their government, making the European project more attractive. In these countries Europe is perceived as a solution for domestic problems that cannot be resolved at a national level. The reverse relationship is true for the development of welfare states and support for integration: the better

developed the national welfare system, the higher the support for the state and the lower the support for European integration.

The overall performance of the state could also be used as a proxy of levels of support. As citizens lack knowledge about the EU but are familiar with their state they may arrive at their views on European integration on the basis of how well or badly the state functions on the whole. According to Kritzinger (2003) who studied four EU member states (UK, Italy, Germany and France) the state could be seen as being inefficient in a number of ways such as having a high level of corruption, political instability, low responsibility on the part of the political parties, high unemployment. Following the same logic as Sanchez-Cuenca under such circumstances the support for the EU will increase as the responsibility for change will be transferred from the state to the EU. Equally, if the state is perceived to work efficiently there would be less need to support integration.

A fourth proxy of support for integration is national identity. A strong sense of national identity is expected to foster negative attitudes towards European integration. A recent study by Christin and Trechsel (2002) explored the relationship between national identity and perception of threats to national interests in Switzerland and support for European integration. In their research the scientists found that contrary to expectations having a strong sense of national identity is not overall statistically significant in shaping attitudes towards European integration. But some aspects of the Swiss identity were found to be strongly correlated to support: particularly allegiance to the political principle of neutrality arising from the lack of a common Swiss culture was negatively linked to public support. Economic evaluations also mattered with the impact of EU membership on the national economy and institutional stability having the strongest explanatory power for lack of public support for integration.

A number of attempts have been made to test the proxy theories in Central and Eastern Europe. For instance Ehin provided evidence to show that greater support for the national government increases the likelihood of supporting EU membership in the Baltic countries. The relationship between attitudes to the national government and European integration was reported to be strongest in Latvia and weakest in Estonia. In the Baltic context it was explained with the lack of public awareness about European affairs

coupled with the widespread enthusiasm for European integration at elite level which translated into positive attitudes towards the EU where trust in government was high (Ehin 2001).

Two other studies by Tverdova and Anderson (2004) and Cichowski (2000a) used political parties as proxies for public support for integration. The studies reported conflicting findings. While Cichowski (2000a) found party cues useful in the context of Central and Eastern Europe for predicting public support, Tverdova and Anderson (2004) reported the opposite. In the second study the researchers hypothesised that the lack of support for the proxy theory may be linked to the gap in awareness about the positions that parties hold in regards to the European Union and the limited debate on the issue in the researched countries. Another contributing factor was the overwhelming consensus on the EU among the political elites which made it difficult to identify perspective EU opponents.

The section summarised the proxy approach to European integration. According to this strand of the literature public opinion on EU membership is shaped by proxies such as political parties, the performance of the state, national institutions or national identity. The core logic of the proxy argument is that European citizens use information about things that they are familiar with in order to make evaluations about the EU which is an abstract concept.

The majority of the research which relies on the proxy theory assumes a link between support for political parties and EU membership. According to Aspinwall (2006) and Taggart (1998) centrist parties are more pro-integration than those on the left or right of the party system as well as that the distance from the centre is less important to governments than their location in the linear left-right space. However the relevance of party cues as determinants of support for European integration is constrained by the extent to which European citizens structure their preferences for the EU in the same way as they structure their support for political parties. Research on this issue by Anderson and Gabel (2002) found that the European political space is one-dimensional and not strictly structured around the domestic left-right positions. Another limitation discussed

by Hooghe (2003) is that elites and publics support different aspects of European integration. While elites favour policies that lead to economies of scale, publics favour policies that are socially oriented.

Other variations of the proxy theory assume that support for European integration varies with the performance of the state or the national institutions. In places where support at national level is high, support for European integration is low and vice versa. In the same way European integration can be determined by national identity. In theory if national identity is well developed support for the EU can be limited although research on Switzerland by Christin and Trechsel (2001) did not support the validity of this proposition.

Only a handful of studies have attempted to test the proxy theory in the context of Central and Eastern Europe. In relation to party cues Cichowski (2000a) found no evidence to support that political elite influences public opinion on integration. In a different study Tverdova and Anderson (2004) reported the opposite that party positions on EU membership are useful indicators of public support for integration. In a third study Ehin (2001) established a positive link between support for the national government and support for European integration. On the whole all studies referred to a general lack of awareness about the EU among the publics in the candidate states and the existence of an overwhelming pro-European elite support for integration.

The literature review section of this chapter discussed four approaches (the utilitarian model of Gabel, the cognitive mobilisation and value orientations theory of Inglehart, the proxy theory of Anderson and the significance of national identity) that provide alternative explanations of public support for European integration in the EU member and candidate states. The utilitarian model linked support for European integration to the socio-economic characteristics of respondents. In particular young, well educated urban respondents were most supportive of the EU. The second model of cognitive mobilisation and value orientations related the increasing support for EU membership to a shift in values from materialist to post-materialist that is most visible in the young and affluent strata of societies. The third theory explored the relationship between support for EU

membership and the positions of political parties as well as the performance of the state and national institutions. The fourth model was collapsed with the third to show support for European integration as a proxy of national identity.

The following section describes the methodology of my research on public support for EU membership in Bulgaria. It begins by explaining the choice of data set and in particular why similarly to other studies I relied on Eurobarometer surveys to test public support for integration. This is followed by a justification of the method of cross tabulations followed by a description of the dependent and explanatory variables of the study. The section sets the ground for presenting the research findings of the chapter and their discussion in the context of the existing theories on public support for integration.

## **4.2 METHODOLOGY**

### **4.2.1 THE DATA SET**

This study utilises raw data on Bulgaria and Central and Eastern Europe from the Central and Eastern Eurobarometer 1997 (CEEB 8) and Candidate Countries Eurobarometer 2002 (CCEB 2002.2) surveys, published by the European Commission and obtained via the Data Archive UK.

Traditionally Eurobarometer surveys have been used by researchers since the 1990s to test various aspects of public opinion in Western and Eastern Europe and they remain the most popular resource for studying public opinion on European integration (Anderson 1998; Anderson and Gabel 2002; Carey 2002; Christin and Trechsel 2001; Cichowski 2000a; Gabel and Palmer 1995; Gabel and Whitten 1997; Hooghe 2003; McLaren 2002; Nelsen and Guth 2000, 2003; Sanchez-Cuenca 2000; Tverdova and Anderson 2004; Tucker *et al.* 2002). Compared to other data sets Eurobarometer has the advantage of

asking the same or similar questions over time and across countries which makes the surveys an excellent material for comparative research (Cichowski: 2000a: 1255).<sup>109</sup>

The Eurobarometer series are the most exhaustive source of public opinion in relation to European integration that are at present available for Bulgaria. The first Eurobarometer on Bulgaria was compiled in 1990 and since then the survey has run annually in two sequences from 1990 until 1997 (called Central and Eastern Eurobarometer) and from 2001 forward (called Candidate Countries Eurobarometer). Although it has broadened in scope over the years to encompass more aspects of the European debate most of the core questions asked in the original surveys were asked in the second cycle, which makes it possible, to trace public opinion over time.<sup>110</sup>

The Central and Eastern Eurobarometer surveys were carried out annually on behalf of the European Commission between 1990 and 1997. The surveys monitored the economic and political changes and attitudes towards Europe and the European Union in up to 20 countries of the region. The regular Central and Eastern Eurobarometer sample size is about 1000 respondents per country aged 15 or older. The fieldwork for Central and Eastern Eurobarometer 8 was conducted in October and November 1997 while the research on Bulgaria took place the 10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> November 1997.

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<sup>109</sup> At the initial stage of research I considered the use of national survey data instead or alongside Eurobarometer. The only available data at national level was from a series of surveys on public opinion towards EU membership that was prepared by Alpha Research in Bulgaria for the period 1999 – 2001. There were no obvious benefits of this survey over Eurobarometer: the survey did not cover the early years of transition; it was for a limited period of three years; the number of questions was limited (20) and it lacked the thematic grouping of questions that makes Eurobarometer easy to work with. Above all, the survey did not cover other countries from the post-communist region, therefore excluding the possibility for comparative research.

<sup>110</sup> The CEEB 8 from 1997 includes questions on the following topics which were also covered in CCEB 2002.2 survey from 2002: judgement on the general development of the country, satisfaction with democracy, attitudes to free market economy, assessment of the respect for human rights, knowledge of and attitudes to the EU, UN, European Council, attitudes to joining the EU, primary beneficiaries of the relations between the EU and one's own country, sources of information about the policies and institutions of the EU, advantaged/disadvantaged groups from EU membership, interest in information about topic areas of the EU such as agriculture, foreign and security policy, environment, human rights, eligibility to vote, party preference, occupational position, nationality, knowledge of a foreign language, income, region, city size. The main difference between the two years is that the 2002 survey has four times more questions than the 1997 survey. New topic areas were introduced such as the EU constitution, EU currency, EU policy priorities, and attitudes towards foreigners, European elections as well as more questions on the already existing topics.

The Candidate Countries Eurobarometer surveys were launched in October 2001 in the thirteen countries that were applying for European Union membership at the time: ten Central and Eastern European states and Cyprus, Malta, Turkey. Similarly, to the Central and Eastern Eurobarometer surveys the Candidate Countries Eurobarometer surveys relied on samples of 1000 respondents per country aged 15 or older. The fieldwork for the Candidate Countries Eurobarometer 2002.2 survey took place between September and October 2002.

The CEEB 8 and CCEB 2002.2 surveys were selected from each part of the series as they have the most questions in common that could be used as explanatory variables to test the established theories on European integration described in the literature review section of this chapter on Bulgaria: the utilitarian model, cognitive mobilisation and value orientation and the proxy theories. Another consideration in regards to the Central and Eastern Eurobarometer surveys was to choose a survey which was conducted after the date of Bulgaria's application for EU membership in 1995 since I anticipated that the application might have raised the respondents' awareness of the EU.<sup>111</sup>

The findings of this chapter are presented in a comparable table format where the results for Bulgaria are placed next to the average results for Central and Eastern Europe. I have excluded any countries included in the CEEB 8 and CCEB 2002.2 surveys that do not historically belong to the post-communist region. Therefore to arrive at the CEE average I have aggregated data on Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. What Bulgaria and the latter group of candidate countries have in common is a shared experience of communism and former close ties with the USSR as well as they all applied for EU membership within a short period of each other.

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<sup>111</sup> Tverdova and Anderson (2004: 8) raised this point in their selection of Central and Eastern Eurobarometer and more importantly highlighted the impact that heightened public awareness might have on the proxy theory. In short the researchers proposed that better informed publics may need to rely less on party cues to express a preference on EU membership.

#### 4.2.2 THE METHOD

There is a growing body of scholarship that examines the correlates of public opinion and European integration on the basis of single year Eurobarometer surveys by applying statistical (usually regression) analysis and comparing the outcomes between the countries included in the Eurobarometer samples in order to test established theories of European integration (Brinegar and Jolly 2005; Carey 2002; Christin and Trechsel 2001; Cichowski 2000a; Ehin 2001; McLaren 2002; Nelsen and Guth 2000; Sanchez-Cuenca 2000; Tverdova and Anderson 2004; Tucker *et al.* 2002). Some studies have preferred to combine their own survey data with Eurobarometer in order to ensure greater reliability of their findings.<sup>112</sup> There are a limited number of contributions that test economic variables against support for European integration in a time series regression based on multiple Eurobarometers, therefore allowing for comparison between countries and over time (Anderson and Reichert 1996; Gabel and Whitten 1997).

A major drawback of current research on public opinion is that it is usually constrained to the particular year for which a Eurobarometer survey is selected. Researchers justify their choice of a survey with an appropriate country sample or the type of questions asked in the chosen year. For instance in relation to Central and Eastern Europe the preferred Eurobarometer survey is Central and Eastern Eurobarometer No. 7 (CEEB 1996) that was used on three occasions by Cichowski (2000a), Tucker *et al.* (2002) and Tverdova and Anderson (2004). At the time when their research was published the CEEB No. 7 was the most detailed survey available on the region.

However, results from a single year at best demonstrate the position of public opinion towards the EU at one point in time and can be influenced by external events that are difficult to control and could distort the research findings. Election campaigns, natural disasters or economic factors such as high inflation or unemployment at the point when the poll was taken may alter the respondents' perceptions of the EU. Unless another

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<sup>112</sup> For instance Gabel and Palmer (1995) combined Eurobarometer data with surveys obtained by Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), while Hooghe (2003) used Eurobarometer 54.1 together with data on elite preferences from a survey of top Commission officials and data on national elites from a special elite survey.

measurement of support is registered in the future it is impossible to demonstrate on the basis of a single year a sustained attitude towards integration (Anderson 1998: 578).

The method applied in this chapter is cross-tabulations that test the relationships between the dependent variable ‘support for European membership’ and social and economic variables commonly used in other studies as explanatory variables of support. The cross-tabulations were produced with SPSS version 11 software package independently for 1997 and 2002 and for each of the two years there were two separate sets of cross-tabulations for Bulgaria and Central and Eastern Europe. The measure of the dependent variable was kept the same and where possible the independent variables were also the same or similar to allow maximum comparability of the results.

This approach has an advantage over regression analysis by allowing for comparability of the research findings on one hand between Bulgaria and Central and Eastern Europe and on the other hand across the two points in time without having to resort to more complex statistical methods.<sup>113</sup> In other words the choice of cross tabulations over regression analysis does not hamper the ability to analyse associations from the data sets.

In order to simplify the results I collapsed some of the response categories into one. This was done on five occasions. Firstly, three of the categories of the measure of the dependent variable – ‘undecided’, ‘would not vote’ and ‘no opinion’ were collapsed into ‘undecided’. The reasoning for doing this was that the respondents in all cases lacked a specific preference either for or against Europe.

Secondly, in relation to education and age some alterations were made with the data from the 2002 survey to make it directly comparable to the 1997 results. In the case of Bulgaria the categories ‘no education’, ‘elementary’ and ‘primary’ were collapsed into ‘primary or less’ and the same was done for ‘college (semi-higher)’ and ‘university (higher)’ which was presented as ‘higher education/university/college’.<sup>114</sup> Thirdly, the

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<sup>113</sup> For a comprehensive text on cross-tabulations and its application in social sciences see Greenacre and Blasins (1994).

<sup>114</sup> As the educational systems across Central and Eastern Europe differ in structure it was necessary to adapt the data for each country individually to the same categories as those used for Bulgaria. The introduced alterations are as follows:

respondents' age was collapsed into the same categories as those of 1997. In addition, the samples in relation to age, education and occupational sectors were reduced by the number of respondents that refused to identify themselves with a specific category and gave a 'no answer' to simplify the data set.

In connection to party affiliation the votes for the four major parties in Bulgaria – the Bulgarian Socialist Party, United Democratic Forces, Movement for Rights and Freedoms and National Movement Simeon II were collapsed into 'vote for main party',<sup>115</sup> while the categories 'would not vote' and 'would vote blank (spoil vote)' were

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For the Czech Republic the category 'primary school' was presented as 'primary or less'; 'secondary school' was presented as 'secondary completed', while 'non-university degree' and 'university degree' were collapsed into 'higher education/university/college'.

In the case of Estonia, 'less than primary' was interpreted as 'primary or less', while 'primary or uncompleted secondary', 'vocational school without secondary education', and 'vocational school with secondary education' were collapsed into 'secondary uncompleted'. Finally, 'secondary education' was counted as 'secondary completed' and similarly 'higher education' was presented as 'higher education/university/college'.

For Hungary the categories 'uncompleted primary school' and 'primary school' were collapsed into 'primary or less'. Then 'three or less-year secondary school' was understood to mean 'secondary uncompleted', while 'four or five year secondary school' was counted as 'secondary completed'. Lastly, 'college and university degree' fitted into 'higher education/university/college'.

The educational systems in Latvia and Lithuania appear to be the same and therefore identical changes were introduced in relation to both countries. The category 'primary/basic education or less' was presented as 'primary or less', while 'secondary' and 'secondary special' were collapsed into 'secondary completed'. The category 'higher education' corresponds to 'higher education/university/college'.

In the case of Poland the category 'primary or less' included the original categories 'uncompleted primary school' and 'primary school'. 'Basic vocational' was treated as 'secondary uncompleted', while 'general and technical secondary school' fitted into 'secondary completed'. Also, 'university degree or more' was presented as 'higher education/university/college'.

Romania has the most complex educational system from the whole region so many changes were necessary to the data to make it comparable to the other countries. Basically, the categories 'no degree' and 'primary school' were collapsed into 'primary or less'. The category 'gymnasium' was interpreted to mean 'secondary uncompleted', while 'secondary completed' consisted of three original categories: 'high school - level 1', 'vocational school' and 'high school – level 2'. In the end the categories 'post high/college' and 'university degree or more' were collapsed into 'higher education/university/college'.

In relation to Slovakia the category 'primary or less' included respondents that gave their education as 'elementary'. 'Secondary uncompleted' included those with 'secondary school without school leaving exam-apprenticed', while 'secondary completed' counted everyone with 'secondary school with school leaving exam'. Those with university degrees simply fell into the 'higher education/university/college' category.

Finally, in the case of Slovenia 'uncompleted primary school' and 'primary school' were collapsed as 'primary or less', while 'non-university degree', 'university degree or more', 'magisterij/specializacija' and 'doktorat' were collapsed into 'higher education/university/college'. 'Secondary uncompleted' included those with 'three or less year secondary school' and 'secondary completed' included respondents with 'four of five year secondary education'.

<sup>115</sup> In order to arrive at the regional (CEE) average of the category 'vote for main party' it was necessary to select the main parties from each country. The selection criterion in this respect was to count as main parties, parties that were capable of potentially capturing at least 5% of the vote. On the basis of this condition for 1997 the votes for the following parties were included in the data set. For the Czech Republic: 1) Christian and Democratic Union – Czech People's Party, 2) Czech Social Democratic Party, 3)

presented simply as ‘would not vote’. The distinction between supporters of main parties and non-voters in the Bulgarian case was useful to test the extent to which party cues were responsible for influencing public opinion in favour of European accession.<sup>116</sup> As far as the method of grouping (categorising) of parties is concerned, political scientists have made similar assumptions when defining party positions on Europe (Cichowski 2000a).

#### 4.2.3 DEPENDENT VARIABLE

I defined the dependent variable as ‘level of public support for EU membership in Bulgaria’, which was operationalised by the question: ‘If there were to be a referendum tomorrow on the question of Bulgaria’s membership of the European Union, would you personally vote for or against it?’ The question was asked in CEEB 8 and CCEB 2002.2 surveys as questions number 9 and 24 respectively.

Past research on European integration has utilised two questions as measurement of support for integration. Earlier studies on Western Europe have used the question

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Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, 4) Civic Democratic Party. For Estonia: 1) Estonian Centre Party [EKE], 2) Moderates, 3) Estonian Pensioners and Families League, 4) Estonian Reform Party. For Hungary: 1) Smallholders Party, 2) Hungarian Socialist Party, 3) Federation of Young Democrats. For Latvia: 1) Master Democratic Party, 2) Latvian Social Democratic Workers Party, 3) Latvian Way Union, 4) Fatherland and Freedom Alliance. For Lithuania: 1) Lithuanian Social Democratic Party, 2) Lithuanian Democratic Labour Party, 3) Lithuanian Centre Union, 4) Homeland Union – Lithuanian Conservatives. For Poland: 1) Polish Peasants’ Party, 2) Solidarity, 3) Democratic Left Alliance, 4) Freedom Union. For Romania: 1) Greater Romania Party, 2) Romanian Social Democratic Party, 2) Christians and Democratic Peasants’ Party, 3) Social Democratic Union. For Slovakia: 1) Party of the Democratic Left, 2) Democratic Union of Slovakia, 3) Movement for Democratic Slovakia, 4) Christian Democratic Movement. For Slovenia: 1) Social Democratic Party of Slovenia, 2) Liberal Democracy of Slovenia, 3) Slovenian People’s Party, 4) United List of Social Democrats.

Similarly for 2003 the relevant parties included: For the Czech Republic: the same parties as in 1997. For Estonia: 1) Centre Party, 2) Estonian Peoples’ Party, 3) Reform Party, 4) Res Publica. For Hungary: 1) Hungarian Civic Party, 2) Hungarian Socialist Party. For Latvia: 1) New Time, 2) Peoples’ Party, 3) Political Union for Human Rights in United Latvia, 4) Union of Greens and Farmers. For Lithuania: 1) Lithuanian Liberal Union, 2) Lithuanian Social Democratic Party, 3) Liberal Democratic Party. For Poland: 1) Democratic Left Alliance, 2) Law and Justice, 3) Citizen Platform, 4) Self – Defence. For Romania: 1) The Social Democratic Party, 2) The Great Romania Party, 3) The National Liberal Party. For Slovakia: 1) Movement for a Democratic Slovakia – people, 2) Cristian Democratic Movement, 3) Slovak Democratic and Christian Union, 4) SMER, 5) Party of the Hungarian Coalition. For Slovenia: 1) Liberal Democracy of Slovenia, 2) United List of Social Democrats, 3) Social Democratic Party of Slovenia, 4) Youth Party of Slovenia.

<sup>116</sup> According to Anderson (1998) citizens use party cues as shortcuts in deciding whether to support or oppose EU membership. Supporters of political parties with pro-European programmes are more likely to be in favour of integration and vice versa.

‘Generally speaking do you think that (your country’s) membership of the European Community is a good thing, a bad thing, or neither good nor bad?’ (Anderson 1998; Anderson and Reichert 1996; Carey 2002; Gabel and Palmer 1995; Gabel and Whitten 1997). In some cases, this question was supplemented by a second question which also taps on attitudes to European integration ‘In general, are you (very much/ to some extent) for or against efforts being made to unify Western Europe?’ (Gabel and Palmer 1995; Gabel and Whitten 1997).

The question that I rely on from the two Eurobarometers has been popular with researchers analysing attitudes to European integration in the candidate states of Central and Eastern Europe (Cichowski 2000a; Ehin 2001; Tverdova and Anderson 2004; Tucker *et al.* 2002). In my case I was looking for a question that would appear in both of the studied years (1997 and 2002) and would relate specifically to EU membership.

There were many questions that tapped public attitudes towards the EU such as ‘And, in general do you have a very positive, fairly positive, neutral, fairly negative or very negative image of the EU’, ‘Do you think that your (country’s) membership of the European Union would be ...?’ (a good thing, a bad thing, neither good nor bad) or ‘Would you say that your impressions of the aims and activities of the European Union are generally...?’ (positive, neutral, negative)’.

None of the three questions was as well suited for a dependent variable because the responses they elicited related to the respondents’ perceptions of the EU built on image and impressions of the European Union. By contrast the referendum question asked about a specific action from the respondents in the form of voting. I considered this to be a more accurate measure of support for integration because as the academic literature on public opinion illustrates citizens may hold negative opinions of the EU but nevertheless vote in favour of membership and vice versa because of economic benefits to them and/or their country, cultural threat from integration, or following cues from the political parties they support (Anderson 1998; Gabel 1998b; McLaren 2002).

#### **4.2.4 INDEPENDENT VARIABLES AND HYPOTHESES**

The independent variables were measured by survey questions that assess economic benefits, demographic characteristics, party cues (support for mainstream parties) and European identity from the 1997 and 2002 questionnaires.

##### **4.2.4.1 Utilitarian and Cognitive Variables: Economic Benefits from EU membership and demographic characteristics**

Economic benefits were measured by responses to three questions: ‘Who do you think benefits the most out of the relationship between [our country] and the European Union?’ (Our country, both equally benefit, The European Union),<sup>117</sup> ‘Do you think that becoming a member of the European Union would bring [our country]...?’ (Advantages, as many advantages as disadvantages, disadvantages), ‘Do you think that [our country] becoming a member of the European Union would bring you personally ...?’ (Advantages, as many advantages as disadvantages, disadvantages). I included the standard demographic indicators for occupation, age and education.

All of the above questions were selected to explore the relevance of the utilitarian model of support for EU membership in the candidate states. The utilitarian model suggests that respondents are supportive of integration because on a personal level they benefit from EU membership.<sup>118</sup> However the extent to which this benefit is utilised is dependent on the respondents’ socio-economic characteristics. According to Gabel and Palmer (1995), citizens with high level of education, high incomes and living in borderline regions gain the most from the EU.

The model was strongly supported by past research on the candidate states from Central and Eastern Europe (Cichowski 2000a; Tverdova and Anderson 2004; White *et al.* 2000). Tverdova and Anderson (2004) reported that support for EU membership was strongly linked to expectations for personal or collective benefits arising from integration.

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<sup>117</sup> The same question was used by Tverdova and Anderson (2004: 11).

<sup>118</sup> For academic tests that explain or apply the utilitarian model to EU member states see Anderson and Reichert 1996; Gabel 1998b; Gabel and Palmer 1995; Nelsen and Guth 2000.

Education and occupation were the two variables that were most often found to correlate positively with support. By contrast age and gender have sometimes been reported as irrelevant.

Macro level models of support suggest that respondents might support the EU not only because of personal benefits arising from integration but because their state will benefit from membership (Anderson and Reichert 1996; Carrubba 1997; Eichenberg and Dalton 1993; Gabel and Palmer 1995; Gabel and Whitten 1997; Smith and Wanke 1993). It is therefore useful to test whether the relationship between collective benefits from EU membership and support for it applies to Central and Eastern Europe.

On the basis of the academic evidence I determined the hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 4.1:** Citizens who expect their state to benefit from EU membership are more supportive of it.<sup>119</sup>

**Hypothesis 4.2:** Citizens who expect to personally benefit from EU membership are more supportive of it.<sup>120</sup>

**Hypothesis 4.3:** Citizens in occupations that are likely to yield high incomes are more supportive of EU membership.

**Hypothesis 4.4:** Support for EU membership decreases with age.

**Hypothesis 4.5:** Support for EU membership increases with education.<sup>121</sup>

#### **4.2.4.2 Political Proxy Variable: Party Cues**

Party cues is a variable determined from responses to the following question: ‘If there were a general election tomorrow, which party would you vote for or might you be

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<sup>119</sup> The same hypothesis was tested as in Hypothesis 6 (Tverdova and Anderson 2004: 7).

<sup>120</sup> The same hypothesis was tested as in Hypothesis 7 (Tverdova and Anderson 2004: 7).

<sup>121</sup> The same hypothesis was tested as in Hypothesis 9 (Tverdova and Anderson 2004: 7).

inclined to vote for?’ The responses were coded in two categories of ‘vote for main party’ and ‘would not vote’.<sup>122</sup>

The variable party cues was included in this chapter in order to test Anderson’s theory of political proxies which suggests that in deciding what position to take on integration individuals adopt the position of the political party that they support (Anderson 1998). Citizens use party cues since information about the EU is often complex and abstract to make independent evaluations. Therefore, supporters of parties with clear pro- integration platforms support membership and visa versa.<sup>123</sup>

Only a handful of studies have tested the proxy theory in Central and Eastern Europe. The evidence has been mixed: while Cichowski (2000a) found party cues to be reliable indicators of support for EU membership in the post-communist environment, Tverdova and Anderson (2004) reported the opposite. They speculated that the lack of support for the theory could be explained with lack of debate and general awareness about Europe among the applicants’ publics. A compounding factor was the strong political consensus on the issue of EU membership which made it difficult to identify perspective EU opponents.

The data that I rely upon in this chapter overcomes some of the drawbacks suggested by Tverdova and Anderson (2004). As chapters 5 and 6 of the thesis demonstrate in both of the survey years (1997 and 2002) there was a political debate in Bulgaria on the topic of EU membership. Prior to the 1997 and 2001 general elections all main political parties acknowledged EU membership as a key objective in their election campaigns. In 2002 there were more parliamentary debates on topics related to the EU than in any other year during the transition period. Above all the cross tabulations allow us to distinguish between levels of support for the EU among party and non-party supporters as well as between levels of opposition. The overwhelming political consensus on EU membership in Bulgaria should have generated a higher number of opponents in the category of non-voters if Anderson’s theory of political proxy is to be verified in the Bulgarian case.

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<sup>122</sup> Tverdova and Anderson (2004: 10) and Cichowski (2000a: 1264) use the same question as a measure of party cues in Central and Eastern Europe.

<sup>123</sup> As a whole the thesis recognizes that the direction of influence between the mass and elite positions on European integration in Bulgaria are both ways as illustrated in Figure 1.1 in Appendix A.

Another measure of validity is the higher percentage of EU supporters among followers of mainstream parties.

I hypothesise that:

**Hypothesis 4.6:** Supporters of main political parties are more supportive of EU membership than those without party affiliation.

**Hypothesis 4.7:** Opposition to EU membership is greater among citizens who do not support mainstream political parties.

#### **4.2.4.3 Identity Variable: European Identity**

European identity was measured by the questions: ‘Would you say that the impressions of the aims and activities of the European Union are generally...?’ (positive, neutral, negative) and ‘And, in general, do you have ... (positive, neutral, negative) image of the European Union?’ from 1997 and 2002 respectively.

The most extensive study on national identity in EU member states was published by McLaren (2002, 2006) who argued that EU respondents may feel hostile towards the European project because of perceived threats posed by other cultures to their state. She distinguished between ‘realistic’ threats and ‘symbolic’ threats: the latter being threats to one’s way of life, while the former expressing concerns with the distribution of resources of one group of people to another. Therefore, a strong sense of national identity may foster negative attitudes towards European integration. In the case of Switzerland Christin and Trechsel (2001) rejected the importance of national identity as a determinant of support for integration although some aspects of national identity even in this case proved to be statistically significant.

Equally, a positive attitude towards the EU may indicate that there is a declined support for the state or the national institutions. Sanchez-Cuenca (2000) and Kritzinger (2003) demonstrated that citizens use the performance of the state and the national institutions as

proxies of support for integration. When the state fails to resolve domestic issues the citizens transfer their expectations to the EU. As support for the EU goes up, support for the state goes down. Since national identity requires a strong image of the state, in places where support for the state is low, national identity is low too. I therefore hypothesise that:

**Hypothesis 4.8:** Citizens possessing positive evaluations of the aims and activities of the European Union are more likely to support EU membership and vice versa.

From a comparative perspective and on the basis of public support and opposition levels to EU membership presented in Table 4.1. of this chapter I expect to find higher than average public support and lower than average opposition to EU membership in Bulgaria in all categories of respondents. I also anticipate that public support has increase over time while the share of opponents to EU membership has remained the same. These expectations I have translated into the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 4.9:** Public support for EU membership is higher in Bulgaria than the average for Central and Eastern Europe, while opposition to membership is lower.

**Hypothesis 4.10:** Public support for EU membership has increased in Bulgaria over time, while levels of opposition have decreased.

This section described the methodology of the study. In the first part the section explained the benefits of using Eurobarometer surveys for comparative research on Central and Eastern Europe. It then introduced the method of cross-tabulations and compared it to the more popular method of regression analysis. The second part of the section justified the choice of dependent and independent variables as well as their relationship in a set of ten hypotheses. The next section presents the results of the study in a comparative perspective.

## **4.3 RESULTS**

We have seen certain factors, utilitarian, value based and identity, can affect citizen attitudes of support for the EU. The hypotheses posed in the previous section suggest predictable outcomes regarding the effects of utilitarian, political value and identity factors on support for EU membership. The following cross-tabulations will test the explanatory value of utilitarian, value based and identity predictors in understanding citizens' attitudes in Bulgaria and Central and Eastern Europe.

### **4.3.1. UTILITARIAN AND COGNITIVE PREDICTORS**

According to the utilitarian model of Gabel support for EU membership is positively correlated to individual benefits arising from integration (Gabel 1998a, 1998b; Gabel and Palmer 1995). Macro level economic models of support suggest that respondents are in favour of their country's application because of perceived benefits for their nation state. Both Tverdova and Anderson (2004) and Cichowski (2000a) found evidence from Central and Eastern Europe that supports certain aspect of the utilitarian and economic models of support for integration. In this section I will first test the utilitarian and economic models of support in Bulgaria at collective and individual levels before proceeding to analyse the relationships between three utilitarian predictors of support – occupation, age and education.

Consistent with the evidence from the academic literature on Central and Eastern Europe I hypothesised that Bulgarians who expect their nation state or they personally to benefit from EU membership were more supportive of it. Both hypotheses (4.1 and 4.2) are supported by the findings from Tables 4.2 and 4.3. At a collective level the Eurobarometer data illustrates that support for EU membership is strongly motivated by expectations of national benefits arising from integration. Moreover, the share of those motivated by benefits has risen across the two studied years consistent with hypothesis 4.10. While in 1997, 85% of respondents who felt that Bulgaria will benefit most from the relationship with Europe, were willing to support EU membership, by 2002 the figure was up to 96%. At a personal level the data reflects the same pattern. Although, this

question was not asked in 1997, the data for 2002 in Table 4.4 shows that 97% of those who expected to derive advantages from EU membership were willing in referenda to support it.

The relationship between benefits and support for European membership could be viewed from the perspective of opposition. Predictably, opposition to European membership is high among those with sceptical views about the benefits of integration at national and individual levels. 32% of those who believed in 1997 that the EU will benefit the most from the relationship with Bulgaria were determined to vote against it. Similarly, in 2002 48% of respondents who considered that the EU will bring Bulgaria disadvantages were prepared to reject the membership in referenda. Even, when this relationship was tested at individual level there was little deviation from the above pattern. In 2002, 29% of those that believed the EU will bring them disadvantages were against Bulgaria's application.

In all cases the share of undecided respondents remained high. However, one notices a tendency for those with a positive outlook on Bulgaria's prospectus to benefit from its membership of the EU to be less likely to fall into the undecided category. In 1997, 14% of respondents of the opinion that Bulgaria has more to benefit from its association with the EU were undecided of whether to support the membership application, compared to 40% undecided among those who believed the EU was to benefit the most. Similarly, in 2002, 4% of respondents who believed that becoming a member of the EU would bring Bulgaria advantages were undecided on how to vote which is in contrast to the 44% undecided among those that expected disadvantages from the association. Equally, when people were confident that the EU would bring them personally advantages they were less likely to be undecided. In 2002, only 3% of respondents that expected to gain advantages from the EU were unsure on how to vote. At the same time 46% of those who expected the EU will bring them disadvantages were undecided on membership.

On the whole, Bulgarians who expected to gain from EU membership were more enthusiastic about the prospect of it when compared to the region. This finding supports hypothesis 4.9. For instance in 1997, 85% of Bulgarians who believed that Bulgaria will benefit most from relations with the EU and 82% of those who expected both sides to

benefit equally were supportive of Bulgaria's integration while 76% and 72% of Central Europeans from the same categories were of that opinion. Over time this pattern was sustained as data from 2002 illustrates. 96% of Bulgarians compared to 95% from Central Europe were in favour of membership because they believed it would result in advantages for their country. Even in cases when respondents predicted the same level of advantages as disadvantages to arise from the association with the EU, Bulgarians emerged as more committed to membership (at 63%) than the rest of the region (at 60%). Finally, at a personal level the pattern continues to hold as 97% of Bulgarians who predicted the EU will bring them advantages and 76% of those who expected an equal share of advantages as disadvantages declared themselves in favour of the Bulgarian application in comparison to 95% and 68% respectively from the rest of the accession countries.

While Bulgarians led in support for EU membership on the basis of benefits in comparison to the rest of the region, they come at the bottom in relation to opposition. This finding confirms the second part of hypothesis 4.9. In 1997 only 1% of Bulgarians of the opinion that Bulgaria has more to gain from the EU and 2% of those who believed that benefits will be equally divided across Bulgaria and the Union were against Bulgaria's membership in comparison to 4% from both groups for Central and Eastern Europe. The 2002 data confirms this observation. 5% of Bulgarians who believed that EU membership will bring as many advantages as disadvantages to their country were nevertheless against membership in contrast to 13% from the region. Likewise, 48% of those in Bulgaria who expected the EU to result in disadvantages for their country were opposed to membership compared to the regional average of 63%. On a personal level the relationship between opposition levels in Bulgaria and the rest of Europe remains unchanged. While 4% of Bulgarians that predicted as many advantages from membership as disadvantages were against membership this was matched by 11% across the other countries. Similarly, 29% of Bulgarians with negative expectations from membership were opposed to the idea of membership compared to 54% from Central Europe.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Data from Eurobarometer surveys conducted at the time after accession to the EU in Bulgaria reveal that the group of respondents who believe that Bulgaria has benefited from EU membership is decreasing while those that believe that the country has lost out has risen considerably in the time after membership. This brings the Bulgarian case closer to the experiences of other post-communist countries where support is lower and opposition to EU membership higher. For instance, reported results from the question: 'As a

Bulgaria and Central and Eastern Europe had a similar level of undecided citizens in 1997. 14% of Bulgarians and 19% of Europeans who expected their country to benefit most from the relationship with the EU were undecided on membership. Likewise, 40% of Bulgarians and 38% of regional voters who predicted that most of the benefits will go to the EU were unsure on their position in referenda. By 2002 the distance between undecided voters in Bulgaria and Central and Eastern Europe had changed with levels decreasing in Central and Eastern Europe while remaining high in Bulgaria. In Table 4.3 the new relationship is easy to observe particularly among respondents with negative expectations from membership where 44% of Bulgarians were undecided on the subject compared to 28% of the Central Europeans. From table 4.4, the same pattern emerges. 46% of Bulgarians who expected to be worse off as a result of the EU were undecided on the issue of membership while 28% of respondents from the region found themselves in the same position.

**Table 4.2: Benefits from Relations with the EU and Attitudes to EU Membership**

<b>Benefits from EU Relations</b>	<b>Vote for EU Membership</b>		<b>Vote against EU Membership</b>		<b>Undecided</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>
Bulgaria / Our Country	<b>85%</b>	76%	<b>1%</b>	4%	<b>14%</b>	19%	<b>100%</b>	100%
Both equally benefit	<b>82%</b>	72%	<b>2%</b>	4%	<b>17%</b>	24%	<b>100%</b>	100%
The European Union	<b>27%</b>	31%	<b>32%</b>	31%	<b>40%</b>	38%	<b>100%</b>	100%
Total	<b>78%</b>	65%	<b>4%</b>	10%	<b>17%</b>	25%	<b>100%</b>	100%

\* *Question: 'Who do you think benefits the most out of the relationship between [Our Country] and the European Union?'*

\* *Source: Calculated from CEEB Survey (raw data) files, November 1997.*

\* *Sample size of respondents from Bulgaria: 1087.*

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whole do you think Bulgaria has won or lost from EU membership?' show that in the spring of 2007 (EB67.2) 50% of respondents gave a positive response to the question followed by 52% in EB 68.1, 47 % in 69.1 and 43 % in EB 70.1 in 2008. The negative responses are 18, 14, 23, 27% respectively. The latest Eurobarometer 70.1 has the lowest levels of support and the highest levels of opposition to EU membership in Bulgaria.

**Table 4.3: Advantages/Disadvantages from EU Membership and Attitudes to EU Membership**

<b>Advantages / Disadvantages from EU membership for Bulgaria</b>	<b>Vote for EU Membership</b>		<b>Vote Against EU Membership</b>		<b>Undecided</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>
advantages	<b>96%</b>	95%	<b>0%</b>	1%	<b>4%</b>	4%	<b>100%</b>	100%
as many advantages as disadvantages	<b>63%</b>	60%	<b>5%</b>	13%	<b>32%</b>	27%	<b>100%</b>	100%
disadvantages	<b>8%</b>	10%	<b>48%</b>	63%	<b>44%</b>	28%	<b>100%</b>	100%
undecided	<b>21%</b>	29%	<b>4%</b>	8%	<b>75%</b>	63%	<b>100%</b>	100%
Total	<b>75%</b>	68%	<b>4%</b>	14%	<b>21%</b>	18%	<b>100%</b>	100%

\* *Question: 'Do you think that becoming a member of the European Union would bring [Our Country] ...?'*

\* *Source: Calculated from CCEB Survey (raw data) files, February 2002.*

\* *Sample size of respondents from Bulgaria: 1046.*

**Table 4.4: Personal Advantages/Disadvantages from EU Membership**

<b>Personal Advantages / Disadvantages from EU membership</b>	<b>Vote for EU Membership</b>		<b>Vote Against EU Membership</b>		<b>Undecided</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>
advantages	<b>97%</b>	95%	<b>0%</b>	1%	<b>3%</b>	3%	<b>100%</b>	100%
as many advantages as disadvantages	<b>76%</b>	68%	<b>4%</b>	11%	<b>20%</b>	21%	<b>100%</b>	100%
disadvantages	<b>24%</b>	19%	<b>29%</b>	54%	<b>46%</b>	28%	<b>100%</b>	100%
undecided	<b>48%</b>	54%	<b>2%</b>	7%	<b>46%</b>	38%	<b>100%</b>	100%
Total	<b>75%</b>	68%	<b>4%</b>	14%	<b>21%</b>	18%	<b>100%</b>	100%

\* *Question: 'Do you think that [Our Country] becoming a member of the European Union would bring you personally...?'*

\* *Source: Calculated from CCEB Survey (raw data) files, February 2002.*

\* *Sample size of respondents from Bulgaria: 1046.*

I now turn my attention to utilitarian predictors of support for integration and in the second part of this section I will discuss the relationships between support for EU membership and occupation, age and education in Bulgaria. The three socioeconomic indicators were selected as according to Gabel (1998b) they are the most precise predictors that distinguish between supporters and opponents to EU membership. In the case of education it is also a cognitive predictor of support for membership as defined by Inglehart (1977). In line with mainstream research I therefore hypothesised that citizens in occupations that were likely to yield high incomes were more supportive of EU membership as well as that support for EU membership would decrease with age but increase with levels of education.

Tables 4.5 and 4.6 demonstrate that hypothesis 4.4 is supported. Bulgarians in occupations that would yield high incomes are found to be more supportive of integration than those with limited economic prospects. In both 1997 and 2002 the largest groups of supporters for membership were self-employed business proprietors at 96% and 90%, respectively, students at 71% and 88%, public sector employees and managers. According to Gabel (1998b) those groups would benefit the most from integration because of their levels of education as well as ability to enjoy the benefits of an integrated market such as larger consumer base, better skilled working force and lower tax burden. The students in particular have the advantage of being competitive in the European market which allows them to negotiate a higher price for their skills.

One interesting observation from the Bulgarian data on occupation is that support for Europe is extremely high even among people in occupations that have traditionally been perceived to lose out from integration. It appears that in Bulgaria even the traditional 'losers' from EU membership are willing to support it in a referendum. Such categories are the pensioners, unemployed and housewives. Tables 4.5 and 4.6 reveal that in 1997 40% of pensioners were in favour of Bulgaria's application but by 2002 this figure went up to 64%. Similarly, 45% of the Bulgarian housewives were prepared to vote in favour of integration in 1997 but their share increased to 71% in 2002. Even the unemployed supporters increased in number from 54% in 1997 to 70% in 2002.

While support for the EU continued to grow over the studied period, opposition to European membership among many categories in Bulgaria was very low (4%) or non-existent. Where opposition was detected it was always associated with the less advantaged from membership groups of society. For instance in 1997 5% of state workers and 3% of the unemployed would vote against the EU in a referenda. In 2002 the same pattern was evident: 4% of the unemployed, 6% of the pensioners, 4% of the unskilled manual workers and 2% of the skilled manual workers were against the EU.

The less advantaged from membership were also more likely to be undecided on integration. 55% of housewives felt in this category in 1997 and 29% in 2002. Similarly, 54% of pensioners and 44% of the unemployed in 1997 were undecided and 29% and 26% were in this position in 2002.

When comparing the Bulgarian data for occupation with the results from Central and Eastern Europe support for the EU in Bulgaria appears to be much higher in certain occupations than the regional average while opposition is lower than in other countries. This is consistent with my expectation in hypothesis 4.9. The results from Tables 4.5 and 4.6 show that in 1997 85% of public sector employees in Bulgaria were supportive of EU membership compared to only 62% from Central and Eastern Europe. Likewise 96% of self-employed respondents supported Bulgaria's integration while only 66% of Central Europeans were of the same opinion in respect of their countries' membership.

The exceptionally high levels of support for EU membership in Bulgaria are matched by low opposition across all occupational sectors. This was speculated in hypothesis 4.9. In 1997 12% of self employed citizens from Central and Eastern Europe were against the EU while there was 0% opposition from the same sector in Bulgaria. Similarly, 13% of farmers and 10% of housewives were against the EU in Central and Eastern Europe while in Bulgaria these groups had no objections. Finally, in 2002 4% of the unemployed were dissatisfied with European membership which is three times below the Central and Eastern European average of 15% for this occupational group.

Age is another utilitarian factor that correlates well with public support for EU membership in the academic literature. In general younger people are reported to be more supportive of EU membership than older respondents. For instance, White *et al.* (2000) found age to be a useful predictor of attitudes to integration in applicant countries. I hypothesised that support for EU membership in Bulgaria will decrease with age and the results from Tables 4.5 and 4.6 support this hypothesis. Consistently with previous cross tabulations hypothesis 4.10 is also supported by the evidence derived from age as support for EU membership in Bulgaria increased between 1997 and 2002 while opposition in all age categories decreased. Thirdly according to hypothesis 4.9 support for EU membership in Bulgaria is higher than the average for Central and Eastern Europe, while opposition to membership is lower.

To confirm those findings I refer to the results from tables 4.5 and 4.6 for age. Looking at the data from 1997 67% of the under 29 years and 70% of those between 30 and 44 years were in favour of Bulgaria's membership to the EU. Thereafter, the percentage of supporters steadily decreases to 62% in the age group 45-59, 41% of the 60-74 year olds and 29% of the over 75s. The same trend is evident in 2002. 82% of those under 29 and 80% of the 30-44 year olds were in favour of EU membership. Then the support rate goes down to 78% in the age group 45-59, 69% among the 60-74 years olds and 53% of those over 75.

The utilitarian theory suggests that younger people are more supportive of European integration because they have the most to gain from an integrated market as they are mobile, have longer working lives and are likely to hold more transferrable skills gained through education than older respondents. In Bulgaria those benefits are more pronounced than in Central and Eastern Europe as the development gap between the EU and Bulgaria is greater than that between other candidate states and the European Union.

The relationship between education and support for EU membership is reversed to that between age and support. Gabel (1998b) argued that education alongside occupation was one of the best predictors of support for European integration. In general the better educated respondents are more supportive of EU membership and support increases with

level of education. Comparative research on Central and Eastern Europe by Cichowski (2000a) and Tverdova and Anderson (2004) confirmed Gabel's findings. My research shows that in Bulgaria the results from tables 4.5 and 4.6 are supportive of the utilitarian hypothesis. As with age hypothesis 4.10 and 4.9 are also confirmed by the results since support for EU membership increased over time in all educational categories while opposition decreased. At the same time comparatively to the region support in Bulgaria is higher than the average for all levels of education while opposition to membership is lower.

Referring to the Bulgarian sample in respect of education it is evident that respondents with primary education or less were least likely to support EU membership. 47% of citizens in this category said they would vote in favour of Bulgaria's application in referenda in 1997 and 55% gave the same response in 2002. Of those who had secondary education 78% were positive about membership in 1997 and 84% in 2002. The highest category of supporters appear to be respondents with higher education – 83 and 89% respectively.

Across both years opposition to European membership in Bulgaria has remained at around 4% for both age and education. Naturally, opposition is higher among older respondents. In 1997 less than 1 % of respondents less than 29 years were against membership compared to about 4% of the plus 75. Equally, about 2% of the under 29 group in 2002 would vote against integration compared to 10% of those over 75 years of age.

Similarly, opposition to membership decreases with the respondent's level of education. In 1997 8% of those with primary education were against membership compared to 5% of the university graduates. Likewise, in 2002 6% of the primary educated respondents were negative about Bulgaria's bid, while only 2% of those with degrees shared the same doubts.

Finally, one notices that the share of undecided respondents goes up with age and goes down with education. In 1997 35% of the 45-59 age group were undecided on

membership while 67% of the over 75s were of the same opinion. Also, in 2002 39% of respondents with primary education or less were unsure about how to vote on membership, while 9% of the people with degrees were in the same position.

The data on age and education from Bulgaria shows that support for Europe is higher among all educational categories and age groups than in the rest of the region. For instance according to 1997 CEEB 78% of people with secondary education in Bulgaria were in favour of Europe in contrast to 63% from Central Europe. Similarly, 83% of graduates were pro-European in Bulgaria which is matched by 68% of degree holders from other countries. In 2002 84% with secondary education were positive about membership while 71% from the region were of the same opinion. Also, 89% with university degrees were enthusiastic about Europe in Bulgaria while the regional average for this group is 79%.

In terms of age the picture is pretty identical. In 1997 of those between 15 and 29 years of age 67% were in favour of Europe in Bulgaria compared to 57% from the region. Of the 30-44 year olds 70% were positive about membership in Bulgaria and 59% in Central Europe. Analogously, in 2002 80% of the 30-44 years olds were pro-European in Bulgaria but only 69% of the same category was of identical opinion from the rest of the region. Likewise, 78% of those between 45-59 years of age were supportive of Bulgaria's membership compared to 68% of Central Europeans.

Apart from the higher levels of support in Bulgaria one notices that there are lower levels of opposition to membership than in the rest of Europe across all educational and age categories of respondents. In 1997 only 2% of people with secondary education were against membership in Bulgaria in contrast to 9% from the rest of the region. Also in the same year 4% of university graduates were opposed to the Bulgarian accession while the average for the region is 12%. In the same manner in 2002 6% of the 60 to 74 year olds were against membership in Bulgaria compared to 15% of Central Europeans. Similarly, 1% of the 30 to 44 years of age were opposed to integration in Bulgaria while the figure for the whole of Europe is 14%.

This section tested the utilitarian model of support for EU membership in Bulgaria. It demonstrated that support for the EU is strongly motivated by expectations for personal and collective benefits arising from integration. Respondents in occupations that would yield high incomes were very supportive of the EU as well as the better educated and younger respondents. Moreover, there was evidence that support for membership has increased considerably between the two studied years.

Comparing the public attitudes in Bulgaria with Central and Eastern Europe one notices that the level of support for integration is extremely high even among traditionally disadvantaged groups such as pensioners. At the same time the degree of opposition to integration is minimal. In all cases Bulgarians were more pro-European than their regional counterparts. Besides this finding the section showed that Bulgaria conforms to the experiences of other post-communist countries from the region where there was significant support based on the utilitarian characteristics of respondents.

**Table 4.5: Occupational Sector, Age, Education and Attitudes to EU Membership in Bulgaria (1997)**

	<i>Vote for EU Membership</i>		<i>Vote against EU Membership</i>		<i>Undecided</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>
<b>Occupational Sector</b>								
Public Sector	85%	62%	0%	11%	15%	27%	100%	100%
State-owned Enterprise	66%	61%	5%	9%	29%	29%	100%	100%
Self-Employed	96%	66%	0%	12%	4%	22%	100%	100%
Private Sector	77%	57%	4%	11%	20%	32%	100%	100%
Agricultural Sector	65%	45%	0%	13%	35%	41%	100%	100%
Pensioner	40%	49%	6%	9%	54%	42%	100%	100%
Student	71%	57%	0%	7%	29%	36%	100%	100%
Housewife	45%	48%	0%	10%	55%	43%	100%	100%
Temporarily Not Working	54%	53%	3%	7%	44%	40%	100%	100%
Other	64%	56%	0%	9%	36%	35%	100%	100%
Total	58%	55%	4%	9%	38%	36%	100%	100%
<b>Age</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>
29 Years and Younger	67%	57%	0%	9%	33%	35%	100%	100%
30 - 44	70%	59%	4%	9%	25%	32%	100%	100%
45 - 59	62%	57%	3%	10%	35%	33%	100%	100%
60 - 74	41%	48%	7%	10%	52%	42%	100%	100%
75 Years and Older	29%	44%	4%	7%	67%	49%	100%	100%
Total	58%	55%	4%	9%	38%	36%	100%	100%
<b>Education</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>
Primary or Less	47%	48%	8%	10%	46%	42%	100%	100%
Secondary Uncompleted	-	61%	-	10%	-	29%	-	100%
Secondary Completed	78%	63%	2%	9%	20%	27%	100%	100%
Higher Education / University / College	83%	68%	4%	12%	12%	20%	100%	100%
Total	68%	60%	4%	10%	27%	30%	100%	100%

\* Source: Calculated from CEEB Survey (raw data) files, November 1997.

\* Sample size of respondents from Bulgaria: 1087.

**Table 4.6: Occupational Sector, Age, Education and Attitudes to EU Membership in Bulgaria (2002)**

<i>Occupational Sector</i>	<i>Vote for EU Membership</i>		<i>Vote against EU Membership</i>		<i>Undecided</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>
Responsible for Ordinary Shopping	<b>71%</b>	64%	<b>0%</b>	14%	<b>29%</b>	22%	<b>100%</b>	100%
Student	<b>88%</b>	78%	<b>0%</b>	9%	<b>12%</b>	13%	<b>100%</b>	100%
Unemployed	<b>70%</b>	64%	<b>4%</b>	15%	<b>26%</b>	21%	<b>100%</b>	100%
Retired	<b>64%</b>	63%	<b>6%</b>	14%	<b>29%</b>	23%	<b>100%</b>	100%
Farmer	<b>60%</b>	58%	<b>0%</b>	16%	<b>40%</b>	25%	<b>100%</b>	100%
Fisherman	-	67%	-	33%	-	0%	-	100%
Professional	<b>60%</b>	79%	<b>20%</b>	12%	<b>20%</b>	9%	<b>100%</b>	100%
Owner of a Shop	<b>79%</b>	73%	<b>0%</b>	11%	<b>21%</b>	16%	<b>100%</b>	100%
Business Proprietors	<b>90%</b>	78%	<b>0%</b>	9%	<b>10%</b>	13%	<b>100%</b>	100%
Employed Professional	<b>90%</b>	74%	<b>0%</b>	12%	<b>10%</b>	14%	<b>100%</b>	100%
General Management	<b>100%</b>	85%	<b>0%</b>	7%	<b>0%</b>	9%	<b>100%</b>	100%
Middle Management	<b>92%</b>	82%	<b>3%</b>	8%	<b>5%</b>	10%	<b>100%</b>	100%
Employed at Desk	<b>83%</b>	72%	<b>4%</b>	14%	<b>13%</b>	13%	<b>100%</b>	100%
Employed but Travelling	<b>90%</b>	69%	<b>0%</b>	14%	<b>10%</b>	17%	<b>100%</b>	100%
Service Job	<b>89%</b>	70%	<b>0%</b>	14%	<b>11%</b>	16%	<b>100%</b>	100%
Supervisor	<b>100%</b>	69%	<b>0%</b>	10%	<b>0%</b>	21%	<b>100%</b>	100%
Skilled Manual Worker	<b>89%</b>	65%	<b>2%</b>	19%	<b>9%</b>	16%	<b>100%</b>	100%
Other (unskilled) Manual Worker, Servant	<b>76%</b>	57%	<b>4%</b>	17%	<b>20%</b>	26%	<b>100%</b>	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>75%</b>	68%	<b>4%</b>	14%	<b>21%</b>	18%	<b>100%</b>	100%
<b>Age</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>
29 Years and Younger	<b>82%</b>	74%	<b>2%</b>	12%	<b>16%</b>	14%	<b>100%</b>	100%
30 - 44	<b>80%</b>	69%	<b>1%</b>	14%	<b>19%</b>	17%	<b>100%</b>	100%
45 - 59	<b>78%</b>	68%	<b>4%</b>	15%	<b>18%</b>	18%	<b>100%</b>	100%
60 - 74	<b>69%</b>	63%	<b>6%</b>	15%	<b>26%</b>	22%	<b>100%</b>	100%
75 Years and Older	<b>53%</b>	59%	<b>10%</b>	12%	<b>37%</b>	29%	<b>100%</b>	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>75%</b>	68%	<b>4%</b>	14%	<b>21%</b>	18%	<b>100%</b>	100%
<b>Education</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>
Primary or Less	<b>55%</b>	58%	<b>6%</b>	13%	<b>39%</b>	29%	<b>100%</b>	100%
Secondary Uncompleted	-	61%	-	17%	-	21%	-	100%
Secondary Completed	<b>84%</b>	71%	<b>3%</b>	14%	<b>13%</b>	15%	<b>100%</b>	100%
Higher Education / University / College	<b>89%</b>	79%	<b>2%</b>	10%	<b>9%</b>	11%	<b>100%</b>	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>75%</b>	68%	<b>4%</b>	14%	<b>21%</b>	18%	<b>100%</b>	100%

\* Source: Calculated from CCEB Survey (raw data) files, February 2002.

\* Sample size of respondents from Bulgaria: 1046.

#### 4.3.2 POLITICAL PROXY PREDICTORS: PARTY CUES

Table 4.7 illustrates the relationship between partisan attachment and support for European integration in Bulgaria. It suggests that party politics may play a significant role in structuring Bulgarian attitudes about integration. The relationship was established in order to test Anderson's theory of political proxies in Bulgaria (Anderson 1998). According to the theory citizens rely on party cues when forming their views on integration. From this it follows that supporters of pro-European parties will be more in favour of integration than supporters of parties with anti-European positions. Evidence from Central and Eastern Europe so far has been mixed: Cichowski (2000a) found support for the hypothesis while Tverdova and Anderson (2004) rejected it.

In order to test the theory I relied on two hypotheses. Hypothesis 4.6 anticipates that supporters of mainstream political parties in Bulgaria are more supportive of EU membership than those without party affiliation. Hypothesis 4.7 suggests that opposition to EU membership is greater among citizens who do not support mainstream political parties.<sup>125</sup>

The justification for both hypotheses is as follows: since in Bulgaria the major political parties from the transition period (Bulgarian Communist/Socialist Party, United Democratic Forces, Movement for Rights and Freedoms and National Movement Simeon II) shared a consensus on EU membership by grouping them together in the category of 'main party' one expects to find higher support among their members. Under the same logic if all parties support integration, opposition to EU membership should be higher among non-voters.

Although the results from Table 4.7 do not allow us to distinguish between centrist, left and right parties in order to evaluate the strength of party ideology as a determinant of party positions on integration it is nevertheless possible from the data set to test Aspinwall's theory whether centrist parties are more pro-integration than left or right

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<sup>125</sup> Although this point suggests a preference shaping approach in the sense that parties influence the direction of public support for European integration as a whole the thesis recognises that the interaction between the mass and elite spheres is both ways as illustrated in Figure 1.1 in Appendix A.

parties (Aspinwall 2002). Since in 1997 in Bulgaria there were no centrist parties in the category of 'main party' and in 2002 there was the centrist National Movement Simeon II support among party members would have considerably increased if party ideology plays a role in party positions on integration.

The Eurobarometer data for 1997 and 2002 confirms hypothesis 4.6. Table 4.7 shows that supporters of main parties in Bulgaria are more likely to vote for European membership than those who are politically unbiased. In 1997 68% of respondents who said they would vote for a main party were prepared to support European membership in referenda compared to 42% of European supporters among the politically non-aligned. The same observation can be made for 2002. 77% of party supporters were in favour of the EU in contrast to 69% of the non-supporters.

Moreover, people with party affiliation are less likely to be undecided on the topic of membership than those without political orientation. In 1997 in Bulgaria 29% of party supporters were undecided on their position in regards to the EU which parallels 54% of the voters without political preferences. The same pattern is repeated in 2002: 18% of party supporters were undecided on membership but the figure is 26% among non-voters.

The results from Table 4.7 reject hypothesis 4.7. Regardless of whether respondents support a main political party or not the level of opposition to EU membership in Bulgaria is identical. In 1997, the percentage of those against membership was 4% for both groups and in 2002 it was 5%. On one hand this shows that opposition to the EU is not politically motivated but respondents are on the whole more likely to be undecided than against integration.

The finding highlights that at the time when the Eurobarometer surveys were conducted there were no Eurosceptic parties in Bulgaria, hence the same level of opposition between party and non-party supporters. Political party Attack, which holds softly eurosceptic views was formed in 2005 and prior to that any opposition to EU membership in Bulgaria was due to respondents with concerns in regards to national interests usually immigration

from Turkey or issues regarding the energy sector that were not represented at party level.

As noted from the previous cross-tabulations support for the EU in Bulgaria across both categories is always higher than the average for Central and Eastern Europe. This finding is in line with hypothesis 4.9. From table 4.7 it is evident that in 1997 68% of main party supporters in Bulgaria were in favour of membership in contrast to 64% from Central Europe. Of those that would not vote 42% were positive about the EU in Bulgaria compared to 41% from the region. Over time the pattern is sustained. In 2002 77% of Bulgarian voters affiliated to a main party were willing to support Bulgaria's application while the figure for Central and Eastern Europe is 74%. Of those that would not vote in an election 69% were pro-European in Bulgaria compared to 54% from the accession countries.

Comparing levels of opposition the opposite relationship emerges. Levels of opposition in Bulgaria are in both years lower than those for the region. In 1997 only 4% of Bulgarians were against membership which is paralleled by 9% and 13% respectively of Central Europeans. By the same token in 2002 5% of Bulgarians were sceptical of membership while 13% of European voters that would vote for a main party and 16% of those who would not vote were of the same opinion in Central and Eastern Europe.

Finally, the evidence is inconclusive regarding the role of party ideology as a determinant of party positions on integration and further investigation is necessary to confirm the theory with certainty. Although the data on Bulgaria shows that levels of support among party supporters have increased over time from 68% to 77% after the centrist party National Movement Simeon II gained representation in 2001 so has support among non-voters. The second group has grown with a faster rate of 27% compared to 9% over time. This is comparable to Central and Eastern Europe where support among the politically non-aligned has outgrown support among party supporters by 3%. It appears that in the case of the accession states party ideology was of a lesser importance than in Western Europe. At the time of the surveys in 1997 and 2002 the party systems in the region were still in flux and voters were less informed or concerned with the ideologies of the parties

that they supported. The parties too entered the political competition with unclear identities and often resorted to partisan tactics in order to gain the public vote.

This section examined Anderson's theory of political proxies in the context of Bulgaria and Central and Eastern Europe. The findings provided support for the hypothesis that in Bulgaria supporters of parties with pro-European orientation were more likely to favour integration than those without political preferences. Levels of opposition however remained identical in Bulgaria between voters and non-voters. Comparing the results of Bulgaria with those from Central and Eastern Europe support for the EU was higher and opposition lower than the average for the region. In Bulgaria and the rest of the accession states support for integration accumulated over time. The section showed that ideology was not a strong determinant of party positions on integration. In fact in Bulgaria and Central and Eastern Europe support for the EU among non-party supporters was higher than support among voters for main parties.

**Table 4.7: Voting Intentions and Attitudes to EU Membership**

<b>Voting Intentions</b>	<b>Vote for EU Membership</b>				<b>Vote Against EU Membership</b>				<b>Undecided</b>			
	<b>1997</b>		<b>2002</b>		<b>1997</b>		<b>2002</b>		<b>1997</b>		<b>2002</b>	
	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>	<b>BG</b>	<b>CEE</b>
Vote for Main Party	<b>68%</b>	64%	<b>77%</b>	74%	<b>4%</b>	9%	<b>5%</b>	13%	<b>29%</b>	27%	<b>18%</b>	13%
Would not Vote	<b>42%</b>	41%	<b>69%</b>	54%	<b>4%</b>	13%	<b>5%</b>	16%	<b>54%</b>	47%	<b>26%</b>	30%

*\* Question: 'If there were a General Election tomorrow, which party would you vote for, or might you be inclined to vote for?'*

*\* Sources: Calculated from CEEB Survey (raw data) files, November 1997.*

*Calculated from CCEB Survey (raw data) files, February 2002.*

*\* Sample size of respondents from Bulgaria: 1087 from 1997 and 1046 from 2002.*

### 4.3.3 EUROPEAN IDENTITY PREDICTORS

I hypothesised that Bulgarians possessing positive evaluations of the aims and activities of the European Union were more likely to support EU membership and vice versa. In the case of Bulgaria the frequent dissolution and rotation of governments during post-communism indicated that support might be higher and opposition lower than in the rest of Central and Eastern Europe as citizens shifted their expectations for economic and political reforms (in particular market liberalisation) from the domestic political parties to the EU.

Secondly, contrary to recent scholarship by McLaren (2002, 2006) research shows that EU membership was not internalised as a 'threat' to national identity in the candidate states of the EU. This is because of the symbolic and historical significance that EU membership bears on the national consciousness of the post-communist region. As Henderson (1999a, 1999b) recognises the public debate about the EU in Central and Eastern Europe has been a debate about the 'return to Europe' where national and European identities are intertwined and reinforcing of one another.

Tables 4.8 and 4.9 demonstrate that hypothesis 4.8 is supported. In 1997 89% of Bulgarians with positive impressions of the aims and activities of the European Union were in favour of the country's bid for membership (Table 4.8). By 2002 the share of EU supporters had grown by 5% to 94% of the population as anticipated by hypothesis 4.10. In both years Bulgarians who were neutral about the Union were more likely to support the membership application (47% in 1997 and 52% in 2002) than to oppose it (6 and 5% respectively). Even among respondents with negative impressions of the EU there was a substantial group (26% in 1997 and 19% in 2002) that was nevertheless prepared to vote in favour of the Bulgarian application. Therefore, the findings indicate that there is a generalisable relationship between impressions of the EU and levels of support for membership: a positive outlook of the EU correlates with higher levels of support for EU membership.

Hypothesis 4.8 is confirmed also in levels of opposition to EU membership. As hypothesised, Bulgarian respondents with negative impressions of the EU were more likely to vote against membership in referenda. Over time the trend is downward. As expected by hypothesis 4.10 the share of Bulgarians against the EU reduced significantly by 9% between 1997 and 2002.

The undecided respondents on whether to support Bulgaria's application to the EU were not a homogenous group. Predictably, the largest share was neutral or in other words undecided on the EU (47% in 1997 and 43% in 2002). Apart from this observation, those with negative impressions of the European Union were more likely to be undecided than those with positive images. In 1997 22% of respondents who were negative about the EU were also undecided on membership compared to only 10% with positive perceptions. Likewise, in 2002 38% of those with negative images of the Union were unsure of their view on membership in contrast to 5% of undecided among respondents with positive views. This finding suggests that there is a strong likelihood that the European debate in Bulgaria will remain positive beyond accession. However, judging by the high percentage of still undecided respondents this will only be possible if the costs of membership are not too high.

I then address the question of how levels of support and opposition to EU membership compare between Bulgaria and Central and Eastern Europe. The results from Tables 4.8 and 4.9 support hypothesis 4.9 that public support for EU membership is higher in Bulgaria than the average for Central and Eastern Europe, while opposition to membership is lower. For example in 1997 89% of Bulgarians that had a positive image of the EU were in favour of the country's application to the Union in comparison to 84% of the Central Europeans from the same category. In the case of neutral respondents 47% of Bulgarians and 41% of Central and Eastern European nationals were positive about EU membership. From those with negative impressions 26% of Bulgarians and 21% of Central and Eastern European residents were committed to vote for Europe in referenda. The same pattern is repeated in 2002. 94% of Bulgarians with positive views compared to 92% of those from Central Europe were for European membership. The share of neutral respondents in this year was almost identical – 52% for Bulgaria and 51% for Central and

Eastern Europe. However, of those with negative impressions 19% of Bulgarians were supportive of membership in contrast to 16% from the region.

Hand in hand with the high levels of support for Europe, Bulgaria has lower levels of opposition than the regional average. In 1997 1% of Bulgarians with a positive image of the EU were prepared to vote against membership which parallels 3% of Central Europeans. From those of neutral opinion on Europe 6% of Bulgarians were against membership in comparison to 13% from Central and Eastern Europe. The divergence in opposition levels between Bulgaria and Central and Eastern Europe is even more evident from the 2002 data. Among Bulgarians with positive image of Europe no one opposed EU membership, while 2% of Central Europeans in the same category took this position. Of the neutral respondents only 5% of Bulgarians were against EU membership in contrast to 15% from the Central and Eastern European countries. Analogously, 43% of Bulgarians with negative views on Europe were opposed to Bulgaria's application while the share of those respondents from Central and Eastern Europe was 61%. Taken together these findings favour the notion that public support in Bulgaria is higher while opposition lower than in Central and Eastern Europe and this relationship is stable over time.

Shifting the attention to undecided respondents in the early stages of the transition Bulgaria had very similar levels to those from Central Europe. The data from 1997 shows that 10% of people with positive impressions of the European Union in Bulgaria were unclear on their position on membership and 12% in Central and Eastern Europe. Similarly, 47% of neutral voters in Bulgaria and 46% of respondents from Central and Eastern Europe were undecided on membership in the same year. By 2002 the parallel of undecided voters in Bulgaria and Central and Eastern Europe had altered, with the share of undecided respondents in Bulgaria being above the levels from Central Europe. This pattern is particularly evident among respondents with neutral or negative impressions of Europe. For instance 43% of neutral voters in Bulgaria were unsure about EU membership in comparison to 34% from the region. Equivalently, 38% of Bulgarians with negative perceptions were undecided on membership, while only 23% of Central Europeans from the same league shared this opinion. The finding suggests that the European debate in Bulgaria is maturing with a slower pace especially in relation to

arguments against membership. This being the case one can expect that the share of undecided respondents between Bulgarian and the other applicant states will converge again with the realisation of the costs of EU membership in Bulgaria and especially if anti-EU parties become established in the political arena.

This section illustrated that European identity measured by the impressions of the aims and activities of the European Union is a strong predictor of support for EU membership in Bulgaria. Respondents with positive evaluations of the EU were more supportive of EU membership and vice versa. From a comparative perspective public support for EU membership is higher in Bulgaria than the rest of the region, while opposition is lower. This however might change after the public debate in Bulgaria matures with the certainty of accession and especially when anti-EU parties emerge. Finally, the research sample indicates that over time EU membership has increased in Bulgaria while opposition has decreased.

There are two principal findings that follow from this research. Above all the results demonstrate that support for EU membership is considerably higher and opposition lower in Bulgaria in comparison to Central and Eastern Europe. In both cases public support for integration increased with the likelihood of accession while opposition decreased. Other findings confirmed what is already known from past research. For instance utilitarian factors arising from expectations for benefits correlated positively with public support for integration. Occupation, education and age determined public attitudes to the EU with predictable outcomes and national identity was positively linked to support. In the final part the study presented evidence that political partisanship influenced public attitudes to the EU but the results were inconclusive as to whether ideology was a strong determinant of party positions in Bulgaria.

**Table 4.8: Support for EU Membership by Impressions of the EU (1997)**

<i>Image of the European Union</i>	<i>Vote for EU Membership</i>		<i>Vote against EU Membership</i>		<i>Undecided</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<b>BG</b>	CEE	<b>BG</b>	CEE	<b>BG</b>	CEE	<b>BG</b>	CEE
Positive	<b>89%</b>	84%	<b>1%</b>	3%	<b>10%</b>	12%	<b>100%</b>	100%
Neutral	<b>47%</b>	41%	<b>6%</b>	13%	<b>47%</b>	46%	<b>100%</b>	100%
Negative	<b>26%</b>	21%	<b>52%</b>	52%	<b>22%</b>	27%	<b>100%</b>	100%
Total	<b>77%</b>	63%	<b>4%</b>	10%	<b>19%</b>	26%	<b>100%</b>	100%

\* *Question: 'Would you say that the impressions of the aims and activities of the European Union are generally ...?'*

\* *Calculated from CEEB Survey (raw data) files, November 1997.*

\* *Sample size of respondents from Bulgaria: 1087.*

**Table 4.9: Support for EU Membership by Impressions of the EU (2002)**

<i>Image of the European Union</i>	<i>Vote for EU Membership</i>		<i>Vote against EU Membership</i>		<i>Undecided</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<b>BG</b>	CEE	<b>BG</b>	CEE	<b>BG</b>	CEE	<b>BG</b>	CEE
Positive	<b>94%</b>	93%	<b>0%</b>	2%	<b>5%</b>	5%	<b>100%</b>	100%
Neutral	<b>52%</b>	51%	<b>5%</b>	15%	<b>43%</b>	34%	<b>100%</b>	100%
Negative	<b>19%</b>	16%	<b>43%</b>	61%	<b>38%</b>	23%	<b>100%</b>	100%
Undecided	<b>23%</b>	38%	<b>7%</b>	10%	<b>70%</b>	52%	<b>100%</b>	100%
Total	<b>75%</b>	68%	<b>4%</b>	14%	<b>21%</b>	18%	<b>100%</b>	100%

\* *Question: 'And, in general, do you have ... image of the European Union?'*

\* *Source: Calculated from CCEB Survey (raw data) files, February 2002.*

\* *Sample size of respondents from Bulgaria: 1046.*

#### 4.4 ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

EU membership remains the greatest post-communist achievement for the citizens of Central and Eastern Europe. The results presented in this chapter from surveys undertaken before accession show an overwhelming public support for EU membership in Bulgaria, much higher than the average for the region. The research provides new insights as to how the European debate in Bulgaria is constructed by applying conventional models of support and comparing the findings from Bulgaria at two points in time with data from Central and Eastern Europe.

Consistent with previous contributions the analysis confirms that citizens' support for European integration in Bulgaria is determined by utilitarian and political value factors as well as European identity. On one hand my study complements recent public opinion scholarship that relies on utilitarian variables of support as well as studies that conceptualise public support as a proxy of domestic politics (Gabel 1998b; Gabel and Palmer 1995).<sup>126</sup> Equally important some of the findings demonstrate the limitations of public opinion models developed for member state publics when directly transposed to applicant countries. In this section of the chapter I will present the conclusions of my research and their interpretation in the Bulgarian context.

The evidence points out to two principal conclusions that emerge from the data sets. Firstly, public support for EU membership in Bulgaria is considerably higher and opposition lower than in the rest of the accession states. This relationship is stable over time and holds for all categories of respondents.

What does this tell us about the European debate in Bulgaria? From the point of view of the existing literature of public opinion on integration it lends support to the theory of Tucker *et al.* (2002) that post-communist societies are divided into 'winners' and 'losers'; the first group being citizens who benefit from the transitional reforms while the latter being those who absorb the costs of the transition.

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<sup>126</sup> For studies that utilise those theories in Central and Eastern Europe refer to Cichowski (2000a, 2000b); Tverdova and Anderson (2004).

In my research I transposed Tucker's model from individual to national level in order to test the strength of his theory. I showed that applicant states like Bulgaria (and Romania) which exhibit higher levels of support have more to gain from EU membership than nations like Latvia and Estonia. The research demonstrates the strength of Tucker's theory which is relevant in the context of states in transition as well as at the level of individual respondents.

The higher support in Bulgaria and Romania could be accounted by a number of factors such as entering the transition from a lower economic base, experiences of unstable political environments or periods of social unrest.

Both countries had the longest transitions from the post-communist group stretching for 17 years from the collapse of communism to EU membership and had at least one major occurrence of social unrest: in Romania immediately after the break down of the communist system in 1989 that culminated with the execution of Ceausescu and in Bulgaria the collapse of the state economy in 1996-1997 led to the 'triple drain' crisis explained in chapter 2 of the thesis (Dobrinsky 2000). Moreover, the frequent rotation and dissolution of governments and the persistence of the bi-polar model of party politics in Bulgaria delayed the economic and social reforms which raised the public expectations for rewards from integration above the level of other applicant countries.

Another factor is the EU's enlargement strategy to the region of Central and Eastern Europe explained in the previous chapter 3 which transformed EU membership into a national cause for the populaces in Bulgaria and Romania and this way contributed to the higher degree of public support in both countries.

At the beginning of the transition in Bulgaria there were two foreign policy alternatives that could be undertaken. The pro-Western (EU) route was favoured by the right party United Democratic Forces and the pro-Russian alternative was supported by the Bulgarian Communist/Socialist Party. The pro-Russian option was considered immediately after the break down of communism due to the remaining in power of the

Bulgarian Communist Party, but after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Bulgaria re-oriented towards EU membership like to the rest of the region.

Lacking a pre-formulated strategy to enlargement the European Commission took a piece meal approach to the Eastern enlargement which was founded on the principles of objectivity and differentiation in evaluating the preparedness of the candidates.<sup>127</sup> For Bulgaria (and Romania) this meant that on a number of occasions they were excluded from the main group of applicants which raised the public expectations for EU membership.

Chapter 3 elaborates on occasions when the European Union's enlargement strategy differentiated between Bulgaria, Romania and other applicants. In 1995 a decision was taken by the European Commission to include Bulgaria (and Romania) in the 'black list' of countries whose citizens required visas in order to cross the external borders of the Union at a time when both counties had the status of applicant states. In 1997 the Luxemburg Council supported a two wave strategy to enlargement based on the economic strength and political maturity of the candidates which excluded Bulgaria from the first group (Watson *et al.* 1997: 11). The ability of states such as Slovakia to make sufficient progress and take advantage of the revised decision at the Helsinki Council in favour of a regatta approach to enlargement intensified the public perception in Bulgaria that EU membership was an achievable goal and the ultimate recognition for the implementation of social and economic reforms.

In the eyes of many Bulgarians the EU's decision to separate Bulgaria (and Romania) from the main group of post-communist countries was seen as justifiable but the public opinion shifted against the subsequent decisions to include a back-up clause in the Accession Treaties of both countries that could have delayed their entry to 2008. Similarly, the introduction of an unprecedented level of post-accession monitoring in problematic areas such as judiciary was perceived as discriminatory and served the agenda of the nationalistic party Coalition Union Attack to discredit Bulgaria's entry to the EU by presenting it as a second class membership. This however was balanced out by

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<sup>127</sup> On the EU strategy to enlargement, see Gower (1999); Grabbe and Hughes (1998).

the efforts of all mainstream parties to take credit for fulfilling the target date of January 2007 and overall levels of public support in favour of the EU in Bulgaria remained high prior and after accession.

From this follows the third explanation of the high level of public support for EU membership which can be attributed to the political consensus on integration between the main political actors in Bulgaria: the Bulgarian Socialist Party, United Democratic Forces and Movement for Rights and Freedoms. The consensus was unchallenged until 2005 when a delayed political opposition to the EU emerged in the face of the softly Eurosceptic party Coalition Union Attack.

As chapters 5 and 6 demonstrate to begin with at elite level the issue of EU membership was discussed in fairly abstract terms by all major parties within the sphere of foreign policy. With time the integration goals became more specific as the EU's strategy for enlargement was formulated and especially after Bulgaria's formal application for EU membership in 1995. A culmination of the political consensus was reached at the 2001 parliamentary election when EU membership became a valence issue of political competition.

This meant that the European debate in Bulgaria was overall geared towards the benefits as opposed to costs from accession but as in other applicant states it was only a matter of time before a eurosceptic party appeared on the political horizon. In the Bulgarian case this happened later in the integration process which explains why public opposition to EU membership was barely detectable at the pre-accession stage.

Another reason is the nature of the eurosceptic grouping Coalition Union Attack which above all is a nationalistic, anti-system party. Its primary concerns are the Turkish, Muslim and Roma minorities in Bulgaria that it aims to discredit. Since the 2005 general election the party has expressed strong opinions against the ruling coalition and EU membership has been sidelined at all times to those two issues.

In fact as a softly Eurosceptic party Coalition Union Attack was not against the idea of EU membership per se but objected to the closure of the Kozloduy nuclear reactors which it interpreted as the 'Bulgarian price' for integration. In general the rhetoric of its leadership at the 2006 Presidential campaign left the impression that the party stood against the conditions of Bulgaria's accession although it remained supportive of the political cause.

Since I attribute the higher public support and lower opposition to EU membership at least partly to the behaviour of political parties in Bulgaria the finding indirectly supports Anderson's theory of political proxies (Anderson 1998). As it will be seen later in this section when the proxy theory is discussed against the data from Bulgaria the positions of political parties influenced the views of Bulgarians on integration. This was found to be valid for the whole duration of the period of transition and confirms the findings from Cichowski (2000a) in relation to other countries in Central and Eastern Europe.

Fourthly, Bulgarians were more supportive of EU membership because there were no distinctive disadvantaged groups that could form a tangible opposition to integration. As shown in the chapter, while in Central and Eastern Europe the farmers, manual workers and pensioners were framed by the utilitarian literature on integration as less supportive of EU membership in Bulgaria even among these categories of respondents support was exceptionally high.

The workers at the Kozloduy nuclear power plant were the only social group that actively opposed EU membership but they were a negligible lobby of around 2000 citizens and practically had no effect on the direction of public opinion on integration. More widely, the closure of the Kozloduy reactors was perceived by the Bulgarian public as a necessary sacrifice to achieve membership although some interpreted it as a weakness of the Bulgarian political elite to safeguard the national interests of Bulgaria in the negotiations. However, similar developments in Slovakia and the Baltic countries concerning the closure of nuclear power plants in the region mitigated the perception of the ruling elite and the Bulgarian public considered the historical goal of membership as being worth more than the organisation of the energy sector.

According to Primatarova (2007) who participated in the negotiations for Kozloduy as part of the 'Energy' chapter, the demand for the closure of the nuclear reactors resulted from shifting preferences in favour of nuclear energy in the EU but the conditionality approach with which it was implemented in Bulgaria and the safety argument used by the EU to justify it served to foster political populism and Euroscepticism that hindered the revival of another power plant in Belene, the construction of which was frozen following the Chernobyl disaster in 1986.

Not only Bulgarians were more supportive of EU membership than other countries in Central and Eastern Europe but as the second overall finding of my research shows public support for EU membership increased while opposition to integration decreased with the nearing of accession. This relationship was confirmed in all cross-tabulations for all categories of respondents. The data reveals that this was not always the case with the post-communist region where support and opposition increased proportionately over time.

The rise in public support for EU membership in Bulgaria relates to better awareness and familiarity with the EU over time due to the intensification of the accession process, the general consensus among the political parties that EU membership is a good thing, the delay in the emergence of Eurosceptic parties and the geo-political orientation of the rest of Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans towards European integration. In particular the strategic role of the European Union in the resolution of the conflicts in Yugoslavia in the 1990s convinced the Bulgarian public that the EU is the most reliable foreign policy alternative for Central and Eastern Europe. If during the Cold War the USSR provided security protection that small states like Bulgaria required after the break down of the communist systems it was the European Union that the public anticipated would fill in the security vacuum in Bulgaria.

More importantly the start of the integration process created opportunities for Bulgarians to experience some of the benefits associated with EU membership such as visa free travel in Europe. In Bulgaria (and Romania) more than in other candidate states the visa

issue had high resonance in the public domain because it related to the 1995 decision of the European Commission to include Bulgaria and Romania in the list of countries whose citizens required permission in order to cross the external borders of the Union. This restriction was eventually lifted in 2000 and as chapter 6 of the thesis shows the visa issue was debated twice in the National Assembly in Bulgaria, once when the restriction was imposed and again when it was removed. Both debates are two of the most important on European integration from the post-communist period.<sup>128</sup> Since the Eurobarometer samples on which the research relies were taken before and after 2000 it is likely that the increased support for membership is in part due to the ability to travel.

The rest of the conclusions follow from testing established theories of public opinion concerning European identity, utilitarian characteristics and political proxies against data on Bulgaria. European identity appears to be a strong indicator of citizens' perceptions on integration. The research indicates that Bulgarians possessing positive evaluations of the aims and activities of the European Union are more likely to support EU membership and vice versa. Furthermore, those with positive opinions of the EU are less likely to be undecided on integration.

One explanation for the relationship between European identity measured by the respondents' evaluations of the EU and support for integration is that prior to accession Bulgarians used the EU as a proxy for the performance of the political elite. As the ruling class in Bulgaria systematically failed to resolve pressing social and economic concerns which were highlighted in the regular reports of the European Commission, support for the European Union increased.

Both 1997 and 2002 were critical years in that respect. In 1996/1997 Bulgaria experienced the 'winter of discontent' which was marked by public protests, rallies and all night vigils against the Socialist government of Zhan Videnov. The economy suffered from simultaneous crisis in the fiscal, banking and currency sectors at which point the IMF was invited to safeguard the situation.

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<sup>128</sup> Refer to Table 6.1 in Appendix D, Debates 3 and 10.

In 2002 public support for the governing National Movement Simeon II was affected by a series of internal disputes within the party structure, corruption scandals as well as the unlikely prospect that the government would deliver on its pre-election pledges to improve the standard of living of Bulgarians in 800 days and introduce new morality in politics.

Therefore, the results from my research support previous findings by Sanchez-Cuenca (2000) and Kritzinger (2003) that the performance of the state and the national institutions were used by citizens of EU member states as proxies of support for integration.<sup>129</sup> The logic of their arguments which applies to Bulgaria is that when trust at national level is low support for the EU will rise as a result of collective expectations that the domestic problems will be addressed at a European level.

My findings however disagree with McLaren's notion of EU membership as a 'threat' to national identity (McLaren 2002, 2006). Her research relates to established EU member states where concerns for the distribution of resources (realistic threats) and the intrusion to one's way of life (symbolic threats) were feasible. By contrast in Bulgaria (and the rest of Central and Eastern Europe) national identities were perceived as part of the European identity. This was confirmed by the widespread vision of 'return to Europe' which embodied the pre-Cold War unity of the continent.

In Bulgaria the idea was first revived with the election of Bulgaria's former tsar, Simeon Saxcoburggotsky with an overwhelming majority at the 2001 parliamentary elections. Therefore there is evidence to suggest that more so than in other parts of the post-communist region in Bulgaria the public desire to be reinstated at the heart of the European continent was apparent. It related to an aspiration for recognition of being the same as other EU member states, a vision achievable in the collective consciousness through EU membership.

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<sup>129</sup> In my research I use the independent variable 'European identity' as opposed to the performance of the 'national state' or the 'national institutions' used by Sanchez-Cuenca (2000) and Kritzinger (2003). Given the nature of my data set it was impossible to replicate their research but I infer from their work that in cases like Bulgaria where European identity is strong, trust in the state or national institutions is low.

The research confirms the validity of the utilitarian model in the context of Bulgaria and Central and Eastern Europe. Respondents who expected to personally benefit from EU membership were found to be more supportive of integration. Similarly, those who anticipated that their state would derive more advantages than disadvantages from the EU were more supportive of the EU.

Gabel (1998b) and Gabel and Palmer (1995) found that in EU member states the occupation and education of respondents was particularly indicative of the direction of support. This correlates well with my data from Bulgaria. The findings demonstrate that citizens in occupations that would yield high incomes were more supportive of integration than those with limited economic prospects. Similarly better educated and younger individuals were more supportive of the EU.

It is important to note that the utilitarian model is the best supported theory that explains public support for European integration in Central and Eastern Europe. Both Tverdova and Anderson (2004) and Cichowski (2000a) provide support for some of the utilitarian characteristics. In the case of Bulgaria support is high among groups that are normally found to be less supportive of integration in other Central and Eastern European countries such as pensioners and the unemployed. Respondents supportive of the EU would be less likely to be undecided on the topic of integration and vice versa. Both findings fit the classical utilitarian explanations which associate higher levels of supports with more benefits from integration. Better paid and educated individuals would, according to Gabel (1998b), be enthusiastic about the EU as they have the skills and capabilities to compete and derive higher rewards in an integrated market.

The considerable support for the EU in Bulgaria among groups that are normally perceived to lose out from integration is attributed to factors that I use to explain higher public support in Bulgaria comparatively to Central and Eastern Europe. For instance the rising public awareness about European affairs over time, the political consensus on integration in favour of membership, the delay in the emergence of Eurosceptic parties before accession and the geo-political orientation of other countries from the region

towards the EU have influenced the opinions of those respondents in Bulgaria normally sceptical about integration in favour of the European project.

Besides the importance of occupation and education my findings show that age has a strong explanatory value. The present research has been divided on the usefulness of this predictor of support. While some studies found age useful Anderson and Reichert (1996) reported that it was unreliable in the context of existing member states. There is no research so far that has tested age on data from Bulgaria and Central and Eastern Europe and my study fills this gap in the academic literature by providing some preliminary results.

Finally, the results suggest that political parties in Bulgaria have played an important role in influencing public attitudes towards European integration. It lends support to a growing body of literature on both Western and Eastern Europe arguing that political parties matter to integration (Anderson 1998; Cichowski 2000a; Rattinger 1994; Taggart 1998). In Bulgaria support for EU membership was found to be higher among supporters of mainstream parties while opposition to the EU was the same regardless of whether respondents were supporters of main parties or without political beliefs.

Equally of interest, the party data provides evidence that party ideology might be irrelevant to how citizens structure their positions on EU membership in Bulgaria. This is consistent with recent research by Cichowski (2000a) who concluded that one must look beyond the general left-right partisan attachments to understand the role of parties to public attitudes of the EU in the post-communist region.

According to Aspinwall (2002) centrist parties in Western Europe are more pro-integration than left or right parties but in Bulgaria the entering of government of the centrist party National Movement Simeon II raised the level of EU support among party followers only slightly while at the same time support for the EU among non-voters increased more aggressively between the two studied years.

This indicates that as in other Central and Eastern European countries in Bulgaria too during the period of transition political parties had weaker party identities than political parties in Western Europe. This is because after regime change both parties and electorates required time to develop their identities and political preferences. Meanwhile voters switched regularly between alternatives while the political parties merged and split with each other.

Bulgaria is a very good example of this phenomenon and chapter 2 explains in detail the dynamics of the party system formation in the period of transition. The persistence of the bi-polar model of party politics for a decade, the frequent splits and dissolutions in the political right and the constant emergence of new parties provide evidence that ideology is less important in Bulgaria than past research anticipated.

The overall conclusion of my research of public support for European integration is that Bulgaria conforms to the experiences of other post-communist countries from the region. The chapter showed evidence that supports the utilitarian, cognitive and proxy models of support. Bulgaria is therefore a typical case of a post-communist country and the higher levels of public support comparatively to the region can be attributed to a delayed transition.

This chapter discussed levels of public support for the EU in Bulgaria, while chapters 5 and 6 will explain the elite support for EU membership based on the election programmes (Chapter 5) of the main political parties and the parliamentary debates (Chapter 6) on European integration from the period of transition.

## **PART 3**

### **CHAPTER 5**

#### **ELITE SUPPORT FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION IN BULGARIA BEFORE ACCESSION TO THE EUROPEAN UNION – EVIDENCE FROM ELECTION PROGRAMMES**

##### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

Election programmes and party manifestos have been used in the Western European party literature to determine the ideological and policy positions of political parties. Content analysis of party documents complements evidence from mass, elite and expert surveys in monitoring and comparing the positions of political parties (Castles and Mair 1984; Huber and Inglehart 1995; Knutsen 1998; Laver 1998a, 1998b; Laver and Hunt 1992; Mair and Castles 1997).<sup>130</sup> Unlike expert surveys where country specialists determine the policy positions of parties for a specific election, party manifestos offer the benefit of determining shifts in party positions between countries and over time.

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<sup>130</sup> For a critical overview of the use and limitations of expert surveys see Budge (2000).

The study of manifestos since the 1970s has allowed the development of a substantial body of academic literature which investigates the extent to which political parties honour their election pledges once elected to government (Petry 1988; Pomper 1968; Rallings 1987; Rose 1980). The majority of the studies measure whether pledges are implemented as a percentage of budget spending or number of enforced administrative or legal acts (Budge and Hofferbert 1990; Ginsberg 1976; Hofferbert and Budge 1992; Hofferbert and Klingemann 1990; Kalogeropoulou 1989; King *et al.* 1993; Petry 1988, 1991, 1995).

A number of authors have extended the use of election programmes to test aspects of coalition theory (Budge and Laver 1993; Warwick 1992a; Warwick 2001). In coalitions parties may be constrained to fulfil all of their election pledges and policy objectives may influence the formation of government coalitions. This string of literature concerns with how and why coalitions are formed as well as strategies of party competition before elections. The research points to the relevance of the saliency theory of party competition according to which parties 'own' certain issues which they regularly emphasise in their election programmes ( Budge and Laver 1986; Budge and Robertson 1987).

Connected to this academic literature are research contributions which measure party ideology on the basis of manifesto data (Budge 1994, 2001; Budge and Laver 1986; Budge and Robertson 1987; Budge *et al.* 2001; Carkoglu 1995; Heemin and Fording 1998; Laver and Budge 1993; Warwick 1992a). The focus in the area has been to determine the distance between parties on policy issues from their ideological positions. Contrary to recent accounts of the declining role of ideology in the party literature, the findings from party manifestos suggest that ideology remains an important determinant of party differences. Moreover, ideological differences between parties remain stable over time and ideological diversity in governments is reported to make them less likely to survive in the long run.

The aim of this chapter is to determine the positions of the main political parties in Bulgaria on European integration on the basis of their manifestos from 1990 until 2005. I

consider party manifestos in Bulgaria to be a reliable source of elite positions on integration since as the literature demonstrates mainstream parties on the whole implement their manifesto pledges following elections.

The chapter follows on from Chapter 4 which analysed public debate on integration on the basis of Eurobarometer surveys. It complements chapter 6 which derives party positions on European integration from parliamentary debates during the transition period. While party manifestos show the positions of political parties at different points in time, parliamentary debates account for changes in positions over time. The three empirical chapters aim to explore the relationship between the public and elite debates on European integration and collectively define the nature of the European debate in Bulgaria.

The next section will describe the format and contents of the manifestos of the main political parties in Bulgaria and provide context for the methodology, presentation of results and analysis of the study.

## **5.2 THE BULGARIAN PARTY SYSTEM AND PARTY MANIFESTOS IN BULGARIA**

Since the beginning of the transition period between 1990 and 2007 the Bulgarian (Communist) Socialist Party, United Democratic Forces, Movement for Rights and Freedoms and National Movement Simeon II participated in the formation and development of the Bulgarian party system and maintained their leading role in politics. Their election manifestos are contextually analysed in this chapter. The election manifesto of Coalition Union Attack from the 2005 general election is also part of the analysis as Attack is the only eurosceptic party in Bulgaria.

Chapter 2 described in detail the formation and development of the Bulgarian party system. This section provides an overview of the parties, a description of the format, length, word frequency, distribution, main themes of their manifestos and position on

European integration. It serves as an introduction to the contextual analysis and discussion of the party documents that follow.

## **5.2.1 THE BULGARIAN (COMMUNIST) SOCIALIST PARTY (COALITION FOR BULGARIA)**

### **5.2.1.1 Stages of Development during the Transition (1989-2007)**

The Bulgarian Socialist Party is the successor party of the Bulgarian Communist Party. The period between the collapse of the totalitarian system in Bulgaria and the first democratic elections (November 1989-June 1990) was marked by intra-party conflicts between the 'Marxist' and 'reformist' factions of the Communist Party and adaptation to the new democratic conditions. The Party's unity was preserved through ideological transition towards support for political pluralism, democratic elections and a new Constitution alongside strongly expressed criticism of the Stalinist system and the communist monopoly of power.

The participation of the Bulgarian Communist Party at the Roundtable Talks with United Democratic Forces secured its leading role in politics. It won the first democratic elections in June 1990 with a full majority but the government collapsed under pressure of radical protests organised by the Opposition. The culmination of the anti-communist pressure was felt in August 1990 when the Socialist Party headquarters was burnt down by protestors. New elections won by United Democratic Forces were held in November 1991.

Between 1991 and 1992 a series of government measures and laws initiated by United Democratic Forces eroded the strong positions of the Bulgarian Socialist Party. The most significant was an act regulating the confiscation of properties belonging to the party and the arrest of former Prime minister Andrey Lukanov. This period was relatively short-lived after the government of United Democratic Forces failed a confidence vote in 1992 and was replaced by a coalition government of experts.

At the 1994 parliamentary elections the Socialists won with a landslide and returned to the front benches. Initially, the government of Videnov enjoyed stability and trust that lasted until the local elections in 1995. This was followed by intra-party conflicts arising from different positions on government policy within the party structure, loss of public support due to the economic and political crisis in the country and the influence of economic groups such as ‘Multigroup’ that used the government lack of experience to establish structures.

Following an election defeat the political circle around Zhan Videnov and Krasimir Premianov lost influence while Georgi Parvanov established his authority in the party organisation. Parvanov introduced a new political line of social democracy and positive attitude towards NATO and the European Union. At the 2001 parliamentary elections the Bulgarian Socialist Party participated in a coalition with other left organisations (Coalition for Bulgaria) to maximise its chances for power. In 2005 the Bulgarian Socialists won the parliamentary elections and formed a coalition government with National Movement Simeon II and Movement for Rights and Freedoms. The coalition was symbolically called ‘Coalition 2007’ named after the target date for Bulgaria’s membership to the European Union.

#### **5.2.1.2 Format, Length, Word Frequency and Distribution of Socialist Election Platforms**

The election platforms of the Bulgarian Socialist Party for the 1990, 1991 and 1994 elections were printed as booklets in A5 size while the platforms for 2001 and 2005 were formatted in booklets of A4 (BSP 1990, 1991, 1994, 2005; CB 2001). An exception is the election platform for 1997 which is a short handout rather than a structured document (BSP 1997). As table 5.1 in Appendix C shows the 2001 and 2005 platforms were printed on glossy paper and in colour while the earlier platforms were printed on economy paper and in black ink.

The difference in presentation style of the election platforms over time makes it difficult to compare on par the length of the election documents without counting the number of

words in each manifesto. On the basis of the information from Table 5.1 comparing the first (1990) platform with the last platform (2005) the length has almost doubled from 29 A5 pages to 59 A4 pages of text. The increase in volume could be attributed to the fact that in 2001 and 2005 the Bulgarian Socialist Party participated in the elections in a coalition with other left parties while in previous years it participated on its own. Lengthy manifestos are less likely to be read by voters so in 2001 and 2005 Coalition for Bulgaria printed abbreviated versions of the (full) election programmes which were made available through the party offices and from the party website.

A conceptual contents analysis of the election programmes based on the frequency of the most common words used by the party reveal emphasis on three main concepts evident from Table 5.2: 'Bulgaria', 'nation' and 'European Union (EU)'. In the 1990 election programme the party stressed 'democracy' and 'Bulgaria'. In the next three elections between 1991 and 1997 the most frequent words in the party documents were 'nation' and 'Bulgaria' and in 2001 and 2005 the party emphasised on 'nation' and 'European Union'.

The consistent frequency of 'Bulgaria' and 'nation' in the election programmes reveals the importance that the party places on the people which is consistent with a left ideology. Another observation is that there are a similar number of references to the Soviet Union or Russia and Europe in each election year.

For instance as shown in Table 5.2 in 1991 'Europe' and the 'Soviet Union' or 'Russia' are mentioned on six occasions. The balance is the same for 1997 when there is one reference for 'Russia' and 'Europe' in the election programme. In some years such as 1994 there are more references to 'Europe' than 'Russia' and the 'Soviet Union' which indicates that the Socialists did not consider the latter as a better foreign policy alternative to Europe at any stage during the transition to democracy. However, specific references to the 'European Union' and 'Accession' appeared in the election programmes only in 1994 after the basic criteria for EU membership was agreed by the European Commission in Copenhagen.

The Bulgarian Socialist Party (Coalition for Bulgaria) relies on three distribution mediums of its platforms. All platforms without exception are printed in the party newspaper *Duma* ('Word') shortly before an election. In my interviews with party officials, Tatyana Doncheva and Atanas Shterev ranked the party newspaper as the main channel for contact with voters. In 2001 and 2005 like other parties the Socialists made their platforms available from the party website and there were plenty of copies of full and abbreviated manifestos on request from party offices in regional towns and cities. Historical manifestos dating back to the beginning of the transition period (the 1990s) can be obtained from the party headquarters and the newspaper archive of the National Library in Sofia.

### **5.2.1.3 Structure and Main Themes in the Platforms**

Each manifesto of the Bulgarian Socialist Party/Coalition for Bulgaria begins with an introduction to the main theme reflected in the title of the document. A horizontal content analysis of all transition manifestos of the party shows that they are either *reflective* or *futuristic* depending on whether the emphasis is on evaluation of past policies undertaken by the Socialists (BSP 1990, 1991, 1994, 1997), or on a programme for future governance (BSP 2005; CB 2001).

Reflective manifestos are the early ones from 1990 until 1997 while futuristic are those from the last two elections in 2001 and 2005. In reality all manifestos contain a certain number of election pledges for the next electoral term but one observation is that the election pledges of the reflective manifestos are less concrete than the latter ones.

On the basis of the main themes the Socialist manifestos can be grouped in three groups: (1) the 1990 manifesto concerns the change within the party organisation and assumes responsibility for past mistakes. A major topic in the document is the concept of 'democratic socialism'; (2) the 1991, 1994 and 1997 manifestos evaluate the past electoral term and draw 'morals' from it; (3) the 2001 and 2005 manifestos consist of detailed policy roadmaps for future governance.

In all manifestos the social policies make up at least 50 % of the manifesto text which is in tact with the socialist identity of the party. This section of the manifestos lays out the party's commitments to different social groups such as pensioners, students, teachers, and the army. Until 2001 the pledges were usually vague concerning 'the availability of all sectors of health care' (BSP 1990: 18), 'increases in pensions proportionately to prices' (BSP 1990: 19), 'reduction of military service' (BSP 1990: 21), 'socially just and regulated housing market' (BSP 1991: 12).

In 2001 and 2005 there were more references to concrete policies expressed in percentages and figures: 'to open at least 240 thousand new working positions in order to reduce unemployment by 10 %' (BSP 2005: 31), 'at least 10 % of GDP to be allocated to pensions' (BSP 2005: 30), 'reduction of income tax for parents with one child with 300 lev and with 600 and 900 lev for parents with two and three children respectively' (BSP 2005: 35).

#### **5.2.1.4 The European Union in the Socialist Platforms**

The European Union is discussed in the section on foreign policy in all platforms of the Bulgarian Socialist Party/Coalition for Bulgaria. This section is always very short between half a page and two pages and pledges normally lack a description of how they are going to be pursued.

Between 1990 and 1994 there was a broad commitment to European values and a desire to participate in the process of European integration primarily with the aim to guarantee the national security of Bulgaria and its political and economic relations with other European countries. The question of national security and its solution within a pan-European security system features in all platforms until the last election in 2005.

On balance, European integration is given equal consideration prior to 2001 with other aspects of foreign policy such as the preservation of good relations with the Soviet Union and neighbouring countries, participation in the Warsaw pact and relations with the USA.

After Bulgaria's application for EU membership in 1995, the Socialists pledged to pursue Bulgaria's accession to the European Union. Details of how this was going to be implemented were outlined in the 2001 election platform in the form of bullet points such as 'to speed up the accession negotiations', 'to satisfy the criteria for EU membership', to guarantee 'effective use of pre-accession funds' and 'support for EU activities in the region' (CB 2001: 28), that summarised the party's objectives for accession.

## **5.2.2 UNITED DEMOCRATIC FORCES**

### **5.2.2.1 Stages of Development during the Transition (1989-2007)**

United Democratic Forces was originally formed in December 1989 as an umbrella party of ten formations which were loosely related in their struggle against communism and was established as an Opposition to the Bulgarian Communist/Socialist Party. Prior to the start of the Roundtable Talks in January 1990 five new formations joined United Democratic Forces, also referred to here as the 'Democrats', making an alliance of 15 parties.

The Roundtable negotiations (January-May 1990) were important for the consolidation and legitimacy of the Movement as the party was recognised as a main negotiator in the democratic process. An important characteristic of the period was the establishment of United Democratic Forces as a mass party with roots to civil society in Bulgaria. At the parliamentary elections in 1990 United Democratic Forces emerged as the main opposition in the country.

While in opposition between June 1990 and October 1991 the Democrats gathered some experience with the legislature. Zhelu Zhelev - one of the founders of the Movement - was elected president while at the same time United Democratic Forces was given positions within the expert cabinet of Dimitur Popov. This coincided with a process of radicalisation which manifested itself in a number of high profiled public initiatives such as the student strike against the government of Lukanov, the hungry strike of 39 MPs

against the new Constitution and ultimately in the split of United Democratic Forces into four groups before the general election.

The first United Democratic Forces government of Filip Dimitrov pursued a series of measures concerning the restitution of land that proved quite controversial and led to social pressure and conflicts with Movement for Rights and Freedoms. There was emphasis on de-communisation policies that polarised the party leadership and the relationship with President Zhelev deteriorated.

The internal conflicts within the party led to loss of the 1994 parliamentary elections stemming from the radical line of politics and the organisational model of the party which allocated disproportionate influence to various formations within the party structure regardless of their electoral weight. The election of Ivan Kostov as a party leader and then a Prime minister after the 1997 general elections started off the successful transformation of United Democratic Forces from a coalitional to party structure.

The success at the 1997 parliamentary elections of the Democrats coincided with the formation of the new party structure that created conditions for corruption in the public administration. At the end of the parliamentary turn in 2001 United Democratic Forces could not recover its public image or positions and split into many fractions led by different key figures from the party leadership.

Some of those fractions such as the Democrats for Strong Bulgaria led by Ivan Kostov or Union of Democratic Forces secured parliamentary seats in 2001 and 2005 but the new parties had limited impact on the politics of the country. The electorate of United Democratic Forces gravitated to new populist and nationalist parties such as National Movement Simeon II, Coalition Union Attack and most recently Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria rather than to the myriad of parties from the right.

### **5.2.2.2 Format, Length, Frequency of Words and Distribution of Election Platforms (Programmes) of Union of Democratic Forces/United Democratic Forces**

Union of Democratic Forces published election platforms (programmes) for each election during the transition period details of which can be seen from Table 5.1. All programmes with the exception of 2005 were published in the party newspaper *Democratsia* ('Democracy') usually as appendices that could be cut and formatted into A5 or A4 booklets. After the party newspaper was discontinued in 2001, the 2001 and 2005 election platforms were printed as booklets and distributed to voters before the elections through the party headquarters and local offices.<sup>131</sup>

Over time one notices that the programmes of Union of Democratic Forces have improved in quality. At the last two elections (2001 and 2005) the materials were printed on glossy paper and in colour compared to earlier versions that were produced on economy paper and in black ink.

The election platform from 1990 stands out as very long (48 pages) compared to that of the Bulgarian Socialist Party (29 pages) and party programmes in general before 2001. The platform was published as a continuation in a few issues of the party newspaper over the period of a week. A reference to the contents of the platform shows that the length can be attributed to defining of the party's identity and in so doing an attempt to distinguish itself from other (Opposition) parties on the political scene.

With the exception of the 1990 platform the rest have increased in size after 1997. This is consistent with the changes observed in the length of the platforms of the Socialists and coincides with the restructuring of the party organisation and change of leadership.

A conceptual contents analysis of frequently used words shows that in 1990 and 1991 there were more references by the Democrats to 'democracy' and 'freedom' which were replaced by 'Bulgaria' and/or 'nation' in the election programmes thereafter. In 2001 and 2005 there was an increase in references to the 'European Union (EU)' and 'European'

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<sup>131</sup> The 2001 election programme of United of Democratic Forces was published in the party newspaper before it was discontinued as well as a separate booklet.

and one notes a tendency for the words ‘Accession’ and the ‘European Union’ to become more common after 1994 when the criteria for accession set by the European Commission.

The main method of distribution of the election platforms of the Democrats is through the party newspaper *Democratsia* (‘Democracy’). All programmes until 2005 were published in the party press shortly before elections. The 1994 and 1997 programmes of the party appeared in the newspaper in two versions – one full and the other abbreviated in different issues (UDF 1994a, 1994b, 1997a, 1997b). The 2001 and 2005 platforms were available from the party headquarters and the party’s website before the elections (UDF 2001, 2005). Earlier platforms could only be obtained through the newspaper archive in the National Library. The party headquarters of United Democratic Forces did not retain any copies of previous platforms for public reference.

### **5.2.2.3 Structure and Main Themes in the Platforms**

The election platforms of Union of Democratic Forces do not follow a rigid structure but emphasise policies or themes that resonate with the public sentiments at each election. In 1990 a considerable part of the election platform referred to negative aspects of the Communist past such as the labour camps, ethnic and social discrimination, and monopoly of power. The 1991 programme capitalised on the public sentiment for reparation by stressing the need for restitution of property and land belonging to the Socialist elite (UDF 1991). The 1994 platform made an attempt to discredit the policies introduced by the government of Lyuben Berov which was formed with the support of the Socialist Party (UDF 1994a, 1994b), while the 2001 programme laid out a framework for European integration (UDF 2001).

The layout and writing style of the programmes of Union of Democratic Forces from the beginning of the transition (1990-1994) show lack of constructive pledges accessible to voters. The election materials are not clearly labelled, there is often no introduction that outlines the main points from the election programmes and the sections in the documents are organised without a distinctive logic and are difficult to follow. The contents are often

emotionally charged with frequent accusations and criticisms to the Bulgarian Socialist Party (UDF 1990, 1991, 1994a, 1994b), which is discussed as the source of Bulgaria's economic and social difficulties.

The 2001 and 2005 election programmes overcome the drawbacks of the early platforms. They are clearly structured and labeled, easy to read and the contents present a package of policies for future governance in concrete terms and sufficient detail. There is a sense of professionalisation of the election literature of the Democrats over time. The length of the platforms as shown in Table 5.1 in Appendix C has increased between 1991 and 2001 which accounts for the additional detail. The emphasis in all programmes of the Democrats is on economic policies such as privatisation, trade, banking reform while less attention is given to social areas such as health, housing and education.

There were three main themes in the election platforms of United Democratic Forces: democracy (UDF 1990), criticism of the Socialist Party (UDF 1990, 1991, 1994a, 1994b) and European integration (UDF 2001).

Democracy was the overriding theme in the 1990 election platform through which the identity of the party was explained. In the section headings of the platform the party referred to democracy in different contexts: 'The crisis of communism and the democratic exit' (UDF 1990: 2); 'Towards a democratic agrarian reform' (UDF 1990: 18); 'For the women and children of future democratic Bulgaria' (UDF 1990: 30) and 'For new democratic understanding of culture' (UDF 1990: 33). Those references were elaborated in the text of the programmes with pledges that related to specific areas such as ecology: 'Nobody can define the boarder between ecology and democracy' (UDF 1990: 25).

In the first three elections the programmes of the Democrats contained frequent criticisms of the communist past, the Socialist Party and its current policies. This was another main theme which was designed to leave the impression that the Socialist Party (and its policies) was synonymous with the Communist Party albeit the change in the party leadership.

The Democrats presented themselves as the only political force capable of carrying out economic and social reforms vital for the successful transition to democracy. This was part and parcel of the bi-polar model of party politics in Bulgaria discussed in Chapter 2. The references below from the election platforms of the Democrats support this observation:

‘The new leadership of the communist (socialist) party followed the long road from torture to morals, to adaptation and at last to adopting the ideas of the Opposition’ (UDF: 1990: 4);

‘The truth about the trials, camps and mass graves is only resurfacing now. This truth is harsh, even unbearable’ (UDF 1990: 5).<sup>132</sup>

#### **5.2.2.4 The European Union in the Platforms of Union of Democratic Forces**

The topic of the European Union and Bulgaria’s accession to the European Union was a major theme in the 2001 election platform of the Democrats. Prior to then references to Europe in the election programmes of the party were sporadic and made only in the context of foreign policy where they received less or equal attention to other aspects in the section.

The 1990 election platform does not mention Europe at all while in 1991 and 1994 Europe is considered in the context of Balkan and pan-European security and Bulgaria’s contribution to it.

The 1997 platform talks about Bulgaria’s accession to the European Union for a first time. There is a pledge to remove Bulgaria from the ‘black list’ of countries announced by the EU whose citizens require visas in order to cross the external borders of the Union. In all cases the sections where Europe is discussed are short, between two to four sentences and there is lack of clarity as to how the pledges will be enacted.

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<sup>132</sup> More references (a, b, c, and d) are available in Table 5.3 in Appendix C.

In the 2001 election programme United Democratic Forces discusses EU membership and Bulgaria's accession to the Union in a separate chapter. The chapter is relatively short (4 pages) but it demonstrates a commitment to introduce changes in the public administration and harmonise Bulgaria's legislation in order to meet the requirements for membership. In the other chapters of the programme there are many references that show a commitment to the same objective and even the title of the programme itself ('Bulgaria – a European Country!') is indicative of the importance placed on the topic of European integration.

## **5.2.3 MOVEMENT FOR RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS**

### **5.2.3.1 Stages of Formation and Development during the Transition (1989-2007)**

Movement for Rights and Freedoms was formed in 1990 as a protest movement defending the interests of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian Turks were persecuted during the 1980s as a result of the policy of forceful assimilation that involved the abolition of their ethnic and religious identity and acted as a catalyst for the formation of the political party.

It maintained a balancing role in Bulgarian politics for the whole transition period, siding with the three main parties - United Democratic Forces, the Bulgarian Socialist Party and National Movement Simeon II - at different stages. To this day Movement for Rights and Freedoms projects an image of an ethnic minority party evident from its constant presence in parliament of around 7 %.<sup>133</sup> In 2001 it participated as a junior coalition partner in a government coalition with National Movement Simeon II and in 2005 it was a coalition partner with Coalition for Bulgaria and National Movement Simeon II.

The early relationship between Movement for Rights and Freedoms and the Bulgarian Communist / Socialist Party was strained following an attempt from the leadership of the Socialist Party to ban the registration of the Movement on the basis of a Constitutional

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<sup>133</sup> See Table 2.1 in Appendix B for election results.

requirement that no parties are formed on ethnic or religious grounds. Their demand was rejected by the High Court and Movement for Rights and Freedoms was allowed to exist.

A new phase in the relationship between the two parties began in 1999 when the Socialists considered the idea of forming a wide coalition of parties with socialist and liberal orientation and invited Movement for Rights and Freedoms to the alliance. Strategically this was the first opportunity for the Turkish party to take part in the legislature rather than influence the political process from the back benches.

The rapport between Movement for Rights and Freedoms and United Democratic Forces run in reverse to that with the Socialists. The protest element around which the Turkish party was formed shared the same anti-communist sentiment as United Democratic Forces for the first two years of the transition. The relationship was severed due to the lack of recognition by the Democrats for the support given by the Turkish party in parliament as well as the introduction of restitution policies that run against the interests of the Turkish electorate. Following the withdrawal of support for the Democrats at a confidence vote in 1992 the amicable bond between two parties never recovered.

### **5.2.3.2 Format, Length, Frequency of Words and Distribution of Election Programmes**

The election programmes of Movement for Rights and Freedoms were formatted and printed as booklets in A5 size for the 1991, 1994 and 2005 elections (MRF 1991, 1994, 2005). As with other parties the quality of the election materials of Movement for Rights and Freedoms improved over time. The 1991 and 1994 programmes were printed as appendices in the party newspaper to be cut and assembled by the readers while the 2005 programme was produced on glossy paper, in colour, professionally bound and well structured.

Table 5.1 shows that the 2005 election programme of the ethnic party was longer and more elaborate in writing style than either that of United Democratic Forces or the Bulgarian Socialist Party. The most common words used were ‘nation’, ‘Bulgaria’,

‘freedom’, ‘democracy’ and in 2005 ‘European Union’ as shown in Table 5.2 in Appendix C.

The early platforms of the party were distributed through the party newspaper ‘Rights and Freedoms’ which was issued between 1991 and 1998. In subsequent years the main distribution channel was through the party headquarters and the local party offices prior to elections. However, historical platforms were difficult to obtain and even the party headquarters did not have them for public use in its archive.

The difficulty in finding the election programmes of Movement for Rights and Freedoms prompted me to question the importance and role of the programmes in the electoral process. In order to get the most comprehensive account of the role and significance of the election programmes of the minority party I enquired about this difficulty during elite interviews with party officials from the Bulgarian Socialist Party and National Movement Simeon II who play a major role in Bulgarian party politics. I learnt that the programmes of the Movement have a ‘ceremonial’,<sup>134</sup> or ‘symbolic’,<sup>135</sup> role and the election results depend not on the contents of the party manifestos but on the mobilisation of the ethnically Turkish electorate by local party offices via (usually) material incentives.<sup>136</sup>

### **5.2.3.3 Structure, Main Themes in the Programmes and European Integration**

The 1991 and 1994 election programmes of Movement for Rights and Freedoms share the same emphasis and are similar in structure and contents. They outline the main policy areas and measures that the party proposes to undertake to protect the rights and freedoms of all Bulgarians but especially those from an ethnic background.

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<sup>134</sup> The term was referred to in interviews with Borislav Velikov and Professor Atanas Shterev from National Movement Simeon II who served as deputies at the 41<sup>st</sup> National Assembly. The question I asked was *What is the role of the election manifestos of your party in comparison to that of other main political parties in Bulgaria between 1989-2007?*.

<sup>135</sup> The symbolic role of the election programmes was highlighted repeatedly in interviews with Tatyana Doncheva from the Bulgarian Socialist Party, Stela Bankova from Ataka and Venzislav Vurbanov from the Agrarians. The question I asked was *What is the role of the election manifestos of your party in comparison to that of other main political parties in Bulgaria between 1989-2007?*.

<sup>136</sup> For an overview of the election practices of Movement for Rights and Freedoms comparatively to other parties in Bulgarian politics before the 2005 general election see Savkova (2006: 26-30).

Both programmes (and 2005) situate the Movement in the 'political centre' (MRF 1991: 7, 1994: 2, 2005: 1), while the 1991 election programme refers explicitly to the 'ghost of communism' (MRF 1991: 3) and takes an anti-communist stance similar to the position of United Democratic Forces from the same period. This position is justified in the context of the 'national question' (MRF 1991: 4-6) that stems from the policy of forceful assimilation of the Bulgarian Turks by the Communist regime in the 1980s.

All election programmes contain some references to right wing ideology and policies such as support for democracy and human rights, market economy, agrarian reform, privatisation and restitution of land and properties. However, on balance the programmes have a strong social agenda which relates to the rights of the Turkish minority.

For instance in the 1991 election programme there are pledges for equal rights of all ethnic groups and access to ethnic languages in schools (MRF 1991: 13). This is elaborated in 1994 to 'free choice of name and language, religion, access to sources of mass information' (MRF 1994: 3). Regional issues specific to the regions populated by Turkish minority are also prevalent such as improved conditions for tobacco production, rise in employment in mountain areas and the creation of a safety net by the state that guarantees the quality of life of disadvantaged social groups.

Besides the problems of minorities another reoccurring theme is European integration. The programmes from 1991 and 1994 discuss the topic briefly but consistently ranging from one to a few sentences while in 2005 one page of the election programme addresses aspects of Bulgaria's accession to the European Union.

In 1991 Europe featured as support for 'the inclusion of Bulgaria in all European political, economic and social structures' (MRF 1991: 7) and there was an aspiration to follow European standards especially in the areas of health and education. By 1994 this pledge was transformed to a more concrete goal of support for Bulgaria's accession to the European Union (MRF 1994: 4).

In 2005 European integration was discussed in the section of foreign policy alongside NATO membership (MRF 2005: 13-14). The emphasis was on timely accession of Bulgaria to the European Union from the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007, efficient use of pre-accession funds, ratification of the Accession Treaty and the creation of conditions for education and training of experts in anticipation of Bulgaria's future position as a member state.

## **5.2.4 NATIONAL MOVEMENT SIMEON II**

### **5.2.4.1. Stages of Formation and Development during the Transition (2001-2007)**

National Movement Simeon II appeared on the political scene in 2001 two months before the general election gaining 50 % of the places at the National Assembly. Following this overwhelming electoral victory the party formed a coalitional government with Movement for Rights and Freedoms. In 2005 it participated in a grand coalition with Coalition for Bulgaria and Movement for Rights and Freedoms.

Its electoral success proved short-lived as public support for National Movement Simeon II steadily decreased after 2005. Nevertheless, its contribution and commitment to Bulgaria's membership was substantial during the process of negotiations and for this reason the manifestos of National Movement Simeon II from 2001 and 2005 elections are included in the data set.

The way National Movement Simeon II was formed and the speed with which it swept to victory in 2001 distinguish it from other political parties. The biggest difference was that the party was of a 'clan' type, organised around one leader – Bulgaria's ex-monarch Simeon II. His personality and aristocratic charisma was the biggest asset of the party that contributed to its initial electoral success. The disillusionment of the public with the policies of the Bulgarian Socialist Party and United Democratic Forces prior to 2001 was another factor.

A major obstacle for National Movement Simeon II was the inability of the party to implement a series of populist pledges after the 2001 election that eroded its public

credibility. The party pledged to increase the standard of living in 800 days, to introduce a new morality in politics and political consensus and dialogue on areas of national priority.

National Movement Simeon II did not establish regional and local structures in order to retain a permanent electorate. This was complicated by constant tissues and an authoritarian style of leadership that convinced key political figures to leave the party structure.

#### **5.2.4.2 The Format, Length, Frequency of Words and Distribution Methods of Election Programmes**

The 2001 and 2005 election programmes were available from the party website, the party headquarters and regional offices in the course of the election campaigns (NMSS 2001, 2005). Besides the electronic version the 2005 platform was also printed in paper as an A5 booklet which could be obtained from regional party offices and the party headquarters. Around 2000 copies of the programme were printed before the election and given out to party activists and supporters. Table 5.2 shows the most common words used in the programme which are 'Bulgaria', 'nation', 'European' and the 'European Union'.

The 2001 election programme is three times longer than the 2005 programme as indicated in Table 5.1. Since both programmes are similar in structure and contents the extra length in the first programme is used to give more details of the party identity and the electoral pledges organised by sectors. Arguably, the first election programme was less well read by the public given the short period between the formation of the movement and the general election as well as the popularity of the party leader. In both years the programmes struck a proportionate balance between economic and social pledges. The materials were well structured, with clear headings and in 2005 the election programme was bound and printed on good quality paper.

### **5.2.4.3 Structure, Main Themes in the Election Programmes and European Integration**

The 2001 and 2005 election programmes begin with a description of the economic priorities. The programmes emphasise economic growth, tax reform, and reforms in public administration, capital markets, privatisation and structural reform, support for small and medium enterprises, infrastructure. There are also high priority sectors where more detailed pledges are listed such as in the spheres of Tourism, Agriculture, Energy and Information Technology.

The second half of the election programmes deal with social issues. The party pledged to reduce unemployment, lower taxes and social security contributions, increase pensions and maternity pay, reform the health and educational sectors. Emphasis was placed to ecology, education, culture, sport and public health.

The topic of European integration was discussed within the section of foreign policy in the 2001 election programme. It is noteworthy that NATO membership was given more space and was covered before EU membership in both programmes. While in 2001 the major objectives on the topic of European integration were the harmonisation of the Bulgarian legislation with that of the European Union, the training of experts on European fund assimilation and cooperation with the EU in order to achieve timely accession from the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007, at the following election only the latter priority was mentioned on the final page of the election document. This is consistent with the writing style of the 2005 election programme which in essence is a summary of the 2001 programme. Comparatively, National Movement Simeon II emerged as the only mainstream party which at the last parliamentary election prior to EU membership did not emphasise the issue of accession at all.

## **5.2.5 COALITION UNION ATTACK**

### **5.2.5.1 Stages of Development during the Transition and Main Themes**

Political party *Ataka* ('Attack') was formed two months before the June 2005 parliamentary election by Volen Siderov, a career journalist and until then an unfamiliar name in Bulgarian politics. The party took part in the election in a coalition with four other formations: Political circle *Zora* ('Dawn'), Union of patriotic forces *Zastita* ('Defence'), National Movement for the Salvation of the Fatherland, and Bulgarian National Patriotic Party. The coalition passed the electoral threshold and its popularity increased prior to the presidential elections in 2006 when Volen Siderov lost at the run off to the incumbent president Georgi Parvanov.

Political party 'Attack' projects an image of an anti-system party and as such rejects cooperation with all mainstream political parties in Bulgaria. Its public appeal at the 2005 election was in the nationalistic pledges such as the removal of the Bulgarian military forces from Iraq, the continuation of the functioning of the nuclear reactors in Kozloduy, the pursuit of legal punishment in cases of political corruption, the return of capital punishment. On the basis of those pledges since 2005 Attack gained reputation as a defender of national interests in Bulgaria and its position remains strong regardless of a series of scandals and the departure of high profiled politicians like Petur Beron and Stella Bankova from the coalition.

### **5.2.5.2 The Format, Length, Word Frequency, Distribution Methods of the Election Programme and European Integration**

The election programme of Attack is the shortest programme from the data set as shown in Table 5.1 in Appendix C. In only two pages it lists the key priorities of the coalition in a variety of sectors – economy, national security, health, social security, education, religion, media, domestic and foreign policy. The most frequently used words in the document are 'Bulgaria' and 'European' while 'freedom', 'democracy' and 'market economy' are not mentioned at all in the programme.

The election programme does not have a specific title but there is a repetitive pledge ('To return Bulgaria to the Bulgarians!') and was only available from the party website. The headquarters of the party and the regional offices did not have printed programmes but a summary of seven key pledges was reproduced as a poster before the election.

European integration is mentioned once in the election programme in the context of national interests: 'The accession negotiations are not more important than the standard and life of Bulgarians' (CUA 2005). In the poster there is another direct pledge that concerns Bulgaria's relationship with the European Union: 'to reverse all criminal agreements concerning the closure of the first four nuclear reactors in Kozloduy...'. Although Attack expresses concerns with some aspects of European integration there is no direct rejection of Bulgaria's membership to the EU and from the contents of its election programme the party can be defined as a 'soft' eurosceptic (Taggart and Szczerbiak 2001).

This section provided an overview of the nature of party manifestos in Bulgaria from the transition period. It mapped out the development of the main political parties and outlined the characteristics and contents of their election programmes. Some similarities across parties emerged from this comparison. The length of manifestos increased over time and the first manifesto of each party tends to be longer than subsequent ones. The documents after 2001 are better formatted, structured and presented.

Conceptual content analysis of the election programmes demonstrates that all parties refer to 'Bulgaria' and 'nation' and there is a tendency for the Socialists and United Democratic Forces to emphasise 'democracy' and 'freedom' in the early stages of the transition period. For both parties the Soviet Union and Russia are less popular foreign policy alternatives to Europe and concrete references to the European Union and Accession are made by all parties following the publication of the Copenhagen criteria. Over time the frequency of those references intensified across the political spectrum.

In the early years until 2001 parties relied on the party press as a main method of distribution but since then the election programmes of all parties were available from their websites. The theme of European integration evolved from a broad commitment to European values, concerns for national security, political and economic relations with other European countries to the speed and substance of accession negotiations, efficient use of pre-accession funds, and harmonisation of legislation with European standards in pursuit of EU membership. At the 2001 and 2005 general elections EU membership became a valence issue on which all mainstream parties competed during the election campaigns.

The following section will present the methodology of my research. It will describe the data set of election programmes, the methodology of the research, the choice of dependent and independent variables and hypotheses. This will lead on to the main findings and conclusions of the study.

## **5.3 METHODOLOGY**

### **5.3.1 THE DATA SET**

This research began with the intention to collect the election programmes of all mainstream political parties in Bulgaria that have participated in the European debate. The objective was to have available for contents analysis the election programmes of five main parties – Bulgarian Socialist Party (Coalition for Bulgaria), Union of Democratic Forces (United Democratic Forces), Movement for Rights and Freedoms, National Movement Simeon II and Coalition Union Attack. The full data set from the parliamentary elections 1990-2005 consists of 21 election programmes and 18 were obtained, all listed in Table 5.1 in Appendix C.

Some of the election programmes were gathered during a fieldwork trip to Bulgaria from the public relations offices, publication departments or research departments of the parties that were responsible for the archives of election documents. With the exception

of the Bulgarian Socialist Party which has a specialist department ‘Administrative – Economic, Financial Activity and Clerical Work’ that deals with public enquiries, the rest of the parties have no departments through which the public could access the party documents. From the headquarters of the Bulgarian Socialist Party all election platforms from 1990 until 2001 were obtained. The 2001 election programme of National Movement Simeon II was made available by their department of ‘Public Relations’.

At the end of the initial visit to Bulgaria copies had been obtained of all election platforms from the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP 1990, 1991, 1994, 1997; CB 2001), one from United Democratic Forces (UDF 2001) and one from National Movement Simeon II (NMSS 2001).

Another fieldwork trip to Bulgaria took place in June 2006 in order to check the archives of the party newspapers for all election years, which are kept at the National Library in Sofia in a ‘Chronicle of Articles and Publications’.<sup>137</sup> The chronicle is a sequence of booklets published every month which holds the key titles of publications in the national press organised by themes alongside with details of the newspapers in which they appeared. The politics section of the chronicles for five election years (1990, 1991, 1994, 1997 and 2001) in the six month period prior to every election was reviewed during the fieldwork.

For instance, for the June 1990 election the six months from January to June were searched. The same process was repeated for the rest of the election years with the caveat that parties were most likely to publish their manifestos in the one-two month period before the elections. Particular attention was given to publications under the section of politics that appeared in the party press. Twelve election programmes published in the national press were found which added seven new manifestos to the data set (BSP 1990, 1991, 1994, 1997; CB 2001; MRF 1991, 1994; UDF 1990, 1991, 1994a, 1997a, 2001).

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<sup>137</sup> I learnt during the elite interviews with politicians that the Bulgarian Socialist Party, United Democratic Forces and Movement for Rights and Freedoms publish their election programmes in the following newspapers: *Duma* (‘Word’); *Democratsia* (‘Democracy’); *Prava i Svobodi* (‘Rights and Freedoms’) respectively.

Three election programmes of Movement for Rights and Freedoms from 1990, 1997 and 2001 were not published in the chronicles. It was confirmed through the National Library that the newspaper 'Rights and Freedoms' was published regularly between 1990 and 1998. Since the first issue of the newspaper was after the 1990 election, the election programme of the party for the 1990 election could not have been released through the party press. The newspaper was discontinued after 1998 therefore excluding the 2001 platform.

The National library had all issues of 'Rights and Freedoms' apart from those between February and October 1997. In order to locate the 1997 election programme three major local libraries in towns with predominantly Turkish population (in Kurdjali, Plovdiv and Haskovo) were contacted. Neither of them had the newspaper in their holdings.

The election programmes for the 2005 election were collected either from the party headquarters of Coalition for Bulgaria, National Movement Simeon II and Movement for Rights and Freedoms or the party websites of United Democratic Forces and Coalition Union Attack. At the end of the fieldwork the data set had 18 of the total 21 election programmes for mainstream parties in Bulgaria from the post-communist period.

The election programmes were complemented by elite interviews with politicians that were conducted in December 2006. The interviews provided an opportunity to clarify any points that emerged from the election programmes and contest explanations of the findings. The interviewees were selected to represent the views of all main parties in the thesis. They are career politicians who have participated in Bulgarian politics in more than one National Assemblies during the transition period.

### **5.3.2 THE METHOD, HYPOTHESES, DEPENDANT AND INDEPENDENT VARIABLES**

Virtually all academic research that relies on party manifestos and election programmes utilises the method of content analysis in order to determine the positions of political parties. Content analysis is a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding.

The coding unit varies from words, phrases or sentences which are grouped according to a coding scheme designed to test a set of hypotheses. It often involves building and applying a concept dictionary or fixed vocabulary of terms on the basis of which words are extracted from the textual data for statistical computation.

For instance, Budge and Laver (1986) make a distinction between left and right parties by differentiating between the messages in their election programmes following a priori assumption which policies are associated with left and right ideology.<sup>138</sup> Conceptual content analysis is also used to compare election pledges against government outputs, account for changes in party identities and anticipate voting behaviour (Budge and Hofferbert 1990; Ginsberg 1976; Hofferbert and Klingemann 1990; Janda *et al.* 1995; Kalogeropoulou 1989; Petry 1991, 1995).

The main merits of the method are that it simplifies the detection of trends, removes subjectivity from the interpretation of results and most importantly makes large scale comparative research possible.

A number of studies have criticised the methodology of the Party Manifesto Group and proposed alternative ways of estimating the policy positions of political parties. For instance, Laver and Garry (2000) and Laver (2001) pointed out to a fundamental weakness in the methodology which was set to measure the relative emphasis placed on an issue by a party in a manifesto, not the party's substantive position on the issue.

Two parties may have quite different substantive positions on the same issue, but emphasise this issue precisely to the same extent. Laver and Garry (2000) proposed the use of computer coding techniques to derive reliable and valid estimates of the policy positions of political actors as a substitute to the hand-coding practices.

They compared the results derived from the application of three techniques, expert judgments, hand-coding and computer coding of manifestos, applied to British and Irish

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<sup>138</sup> For other studies that make the same distinction between left and right ideology in the methodology see Budge (1994); Budge *et al.* (1987); Carkoglu (1995); Strom and Leipart (1989).

party manifestos and reported a high degree of cross-validation between the three approaches once an explicitly positional approach was used to defining the scales with which to estimate policy positions.<sup>139</sup>

Another approach by Gabel and Huber (2000) called the ‘vanilla’ method uses manifesto data to estimate party left-right positions across time and countries. Opposite to Budge *et al.* (1987) the researchers do not make any a priori assumption about which policy categories are associated with left-right ideology. They use principal components factor analysis on the party manifesto data to extract the first factor for each country. They interpret this as being by definition the main left-right dimension in the country concerned and derive scores for each manifesto.

Overall, content analysis is not restricted to the coding of texts but as Holsti (1969) recognises refers to ‘any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages.’

According to another definition:

‘Content analysis is an indepth analysis using quantitative or qualitative techniques of messages using a scientific method (including attention to objectivity-intersubjectivity, a priori design, reliability, validity, generalizability, replicability, and hypothesis testing) and is not limited as to the types of variables that may be measured or the context in which the messages are created or presented’ (Neuendorf 2002).

This research used content analysis and structured elite interviews with politicians to identify and describe trends in the contents of election programmes in order to test hypotheses related to support for European integration. The justification for each hypothesis is explained in the next section of the chapter.

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<sup>139</sup> The method of Laver and Garry (2000) was tested against Italian manifesto data. For two alternative studies on Italy see Gianetti (1999) and Pelizzo (2003).

**Hypothesis 5.1:** Elite support for European integration increased with the formulation of the EU's strategy for accession.

**Hypothesis 5.2:** Elite support for European integration increased as support for USSR and Russia decreased.

The dependent variable in the study is 'levels of elite support for the EU membership in Bulgaria' which is measured by:

- The total number of word usage in the election programmes of each party of words relating to European integration (the words recorded in Table 5.2 are 'Europe', 'European', 'European integration', 'Accession',). The context of the electoral message on European integration in all election programmes in the data set is positive and therefore it was not necessary to distinguish between positive and negative loading of the variable.
- The length of sections on European integration.
- The contents of the election programmes.

The independent variables are:

**5.1 'EU membership',**

**5.2 'Support for the Soviet Union and Russia',**

- They are measured by the total number of word usage in the election programmes of each party of the following words 'Soviet Union', 'Russia'. The context of the electoral message in the instances where the above words were used in the data set is positive and therefore it was not necessary to distinguish between positive and negative loading of the variables.
- The main themes in the election programmes.
- The contents of the election programmes.

Hand coding of the dependent and independent variables was used as the election programmes before 2001 were not available in an electronic format to facilitate computerised content analysis.

The purpose of this section was to explain the methodology of the study of election programmes in Bulgaria in a systematic framework that begins with the purpose of the research, the collection of data set and omissions of manifestos from the analysis, the merits of the method used, choice of dependent and independent variables and hypotheses relating to European integration. The overall aim was to give a sense of how the research was conducted and prepare for the presentation of results and analysis of the findings that follow in the next section of this chapter.

## **5.4 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**

### **5.4.1 EU MEMBERSHIP AND ELITE SUPPORT FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION**

In the previous section I hypothesised that mainstream political parties in Bulgaria became more supportive of European integration following the formulation of EU's strategy for accession.

The hypothesis is based on the assumption that parties propose policies that take into account the preferences of their (core) electorate. If as in the case of Bulgaria public support for European integration is overwhelming with no distinctive disadvantaged groups as demonstrated in Chapter 4, political parties with government ambitions would maximise their potential by adopting a pro-European position on European integration.<sup>140</sup> More specifically, the proposition is that elite support for European integration would intensify as the possibility for EU membership becomes more likely.

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<sup>140</sup> Although, hypothesis 5.1 suggests a preference accommodative approach in the sense that public opinion follows voter opinion, as a whole the thesis recognizes that the direction of influence between the mass and elite classes in Bulgaria was both ways as illustrated in Figure 1.1 in Appendix A.

Why is that the case? The prospect for EU membership created for political parties in Bulgaria and the rest of Central and Eastern Europe an opportunity to raise their domestic credibility by actively participating in the accession process which involved submitting an application, taking part in the accession negotiations, revision of chapters, signing of the Accession Treaty and finally EU membership.

In other words the tangible goal of EU membership following the publication of the Copenhagen criteria in 1993 acted as a catalyst for parties to demonstrate their capability and efficiency which was evaluated by the European institutions. EU membership was turned into a yardstick of performance: when the European institutions were satisfied with the progress that Bulgaria was making towards membership, the incumbent government could claim to be trustworthy and efficient to the public. Similarly, negative evaluations and criticisms from Brussels could trigger dissatisfaction with the performance of the governments domestically.

The public trust vested in the opinions from the European Commission on the preparedness of Bulgaria for accession led to an escalating importance being placed on the membership issue closer to the planned accession date. Therefore, I expect to see a tendency for parties to refer more often to 'Europe', the 'EU' or 'European' in the election programmes from the last two elections in 2001 and 2005 compared to previous years. Most commonly the references should relate to harmonisation or implementation of European standards in different sectors or mapping specific goalposts towards EU membership.

Consistently with the theory of party competition and the reported findings from studies on Western Europe I anticipate that political parties will express their support for European integration by choosing to emphasise different benefits of integration influenced by their ideology while nevertheless maintaining the same degree of support to EU membership.<sup>141</sup> The gap should be most apparent between the parties on the left (Coalition for Bulgaria) and the parties on the right (Union/United Democratic Forces), while the centrist parties such as National Movement Simeon II and Movement for

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<sup>141</sup> For studies that explain 'saliency theory' see Budge and Farlie (1983) and Robertson (1976).

Rights and Freedoms should express mixed (left and right) benefits. For instance, Coalition for Bulgaria might be more concerned with European requirements relating to health reform, education, social security and agricultural funding while United Democratic Forces may highlight reforms in taxation, banking, insurance, civil and minority rights, ecology and the economy in general.

Moreover, the hypothesis rests on the understanding that at the 2001 election the bi-polar model of party politics in Bulgaria was replaced by a new model of government coalitions explained in Chapter 2 of this thesis which influenced the positions of political parties on European integration depending on their coalitional potential and proximity to power. Following from that I expect to find that parties with the highest anticipated chances to win at the last two elections would be most enthusiastic about European integration and parties that form coalitions should emphasise similar aspects of European integration in their election programmes.<sup>142</sup>

There are two other reasons in the light of which the hypothesis needs to be considered. Mainstream parties that endeavour to win elections and form or participate in government coalitions would find it harder to justify a eurosceptic position or ignore the issue in their election programmes since when successfully elected they would have to undertake tasks to facilitate integration. Therefore, mainstream parties are generally pro-European while those further away from the centre of the party system would be less constrained to express opinions against integration (Sitter 2001b). Translating this observation from Western Europe to the Bulgarian party system, it follows that Coalition Union Attack would be the only party free to take a eurosceptic stance at the last stage of the transition period since it neither had a chance to form a majority government nor participate in a government coalition with other parties.

However, even for Attack there was no great political reward in taking a 'hard' Eurosceptic position as the electorate was overwhelmingly supportive of European integration and there were no distinct disadvantaged groups to represent. Therefore, I

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<sup>142</sup> For studies on coalition formation see Budge and Laver (1993); De Swaan (1973); Grofman (1990).

anticipate that European integration would be mentioned only briefly in Attack's election programme as part of a wider nationalistic and pro-Bulgarian theme.

The hypothesis is confirmed through content analysis of the election programmes of the parties. A review of two basic indicators: the length of the sections on Europe and the frequency of references relating to Europe reveal that until the 2001 election European integration was not a major topic for any party. On average the sections that relate to Europe were between two sentences (UDF 1990) and half a page (BSP 1994) compared to up to four pages in the 2001 and 2005 election programmes. The longest section on Europe was five pages in the election programme of United Democratic Forces from 2001 (UDF 2001). The same observation can be made by comparing the frequency of words relating to Europe such as 'Europe', 'European integration/membership', 'European', 'EU' and 'Accession' which increased four to ten-fold after 2001. For instance, Table 5.2 in Appendix C shows that in the election programme of the Bulgarian Socialist Party from 1990 there were seven references to Europe compared to seventy eight in 2005. There were six references to Europe in the platform of Union of Democratic Forces from 1997 but 153 in 2001. There were seven references in the election programme of Movement for Rights and Freedoms in 1991 and 138 in 2005.

Content analysis of election programmes between 1990 and 1997 show that references to Europe were made by all three parties in a general context that considered one of three issues: 'European values', 'national security' or 'economic and political relations with other European nations'. There was a lack of a detailed explanation of how they would be accomplished or pursued in the course of the next electoral term. Moreover, contrary to the theory of party competition the Bulgarian Socialist Party, United Democratic Forces and Movement for Rights and Freedoms emphasised the same points regarding European integration and to the same degree as the examples below illustrate. Importantly, for neither of the parties European integration was a main theme in the election programmes during this period which may explain the lack of differentiation on the issue. Some representative quotes that support those points from each party are given here in the main text, the rest (quotes e-n) can be found in Table 5.3, Appendix C.

‘The building up of democratic socialism at home requires opening Bulgaria widely to Europe. Bulgaria needs to participate in the creation of a common European home. This means a way towards an integrated Europe, where our country will not be isolated, but will take and modestly contribute to a pan-European culture; will integrate in a modern economy; will integrate to a policy of human rights, disarmament, cooperation and peace’ (BSP 1990: 27);

‘We are in favour of the integration of Bulgaria to the European Union and cooperation with the European countries; the integration in the establishment in the forming of pan European systems of security’ (BSP 1997: 5);

‘MRF is in favour of a speedy integration of Bulgaria in all European political, economic and financial structures’ (MRF 1991: 7);

‘The Bulgarian people have a historic chance to enter alongside other countries from the former ‘Socialist camp’ the common European home’ (UDF 1990: 2);

‘We will integrate Bulgaria in the world, European and regional systems of order, security and cooperation. ...Following our national goals Bulgaria will build foreign policy towards integration with the EU, NATO and the international democratic political and economic organisations... We will take the required steps in order to take our country out of the negative list for visa regime of the European Union (UDF 1997a: 3).

In 2001 the political attitude of the parties towards European integration changed in a direction of growing importance that transformed European integration into a valence issue for political competition. In line with expectations based on the theory of party competition political parties began to differentiate the benefits they stressed in their election programmes arising from integration while nevertheless all remaining supportive of the cause.

There were two overall themes related to European integration that were present in the election programmes of all parties, apart from Coalition Union Attack, harmonisation and adaptation to European standards in various sectors of the economy and the

presentation of goals associated with the completion of the accession process and negotiations for EU membership. The differentiation was most apparent in the first group of election pledges, while all parties supported the accession process and the objective of timely membership. Mitev's finding for greater clarity of the objectives regarding European integration over time (i.e. 'regionalisation' of the pledges) was also confirmed for 2001 and 2005 (Mitev 1997).

Broadly speaking Coalition for Bulgaria emphasised benefits in social sectors while United Democratic Forces stressed benefits to the economy. The centrist parties National Movement Simeon II and Movement for Rights and Freedoms supported a mixture of left and right benefits. The extracts from the election programmes below support this point.

For instance, Coalition for Bulgaria stressed the following benefits associated with European integration that have a social bias:

'Reconstruction and modernisation of the transport network, which is comparable with that of the EU' (CB 2001: 8);

'Harmonisation of the educational system in view of the Bulgarian traditions and requirements of the European Union' (CB 2001: 13).<sup>143</sup>

United Democratic Forces had a more market oriented set of benefits such as:

'The gradual transformation of the European market in an integrated part of the Common internal market of the European Union' (UDF 2001: 19);

'The harmonization of a system of custom defense to levels acceptable in the EU' (UDF 2001: 20).<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> For more quotes from the election programme of Coalition for Bulgaria refer to Appendix C, Table 5.3, quotes (o-q).

<sup>144</sup> For more quotes from the election programme of United Democratic Forces refer to Appendix C, Table 5.3, quotes (r-s).

The centrist parties Movement for Rights and Freedoms and National Movement Simeon II supported a balanced set of right and left pledges concerning European integration:

‘Timely reconstruction of the Bulgarian economy so that it becomes more competitive at the time of our membership in 2007’ (MRF 2005: 4);

‘Maximum and effective assimilation of the EU pre-accession funds through the programmes of the EU’ (MRF 2005: 4);<sup>145</sup>

‘We would work to improve the access to finance of small and medium enterprises, assistance in the introduction of European standards and the assimilation of funds from the EU’ (NMSS 2005: 3);

‘A key priority in the next four years is the transformation of the Bulgarian education into an effective system, an integral part of the pan-European educational space’ (NMSS 2005: 10).<sup>146</sup>

The results are less clear in regards to the propositions that parties with the highest anticipated chances to win an election would be most supportive of integration as well as that coalitional partners would support similar aspects of integration. Table 5.2 shows that the winner of the 2001 election National Movement Simeon II referred to European integration less often (46 times) than United Democratic Forces (153 times). Cross referencing this with the contents of the two election programmes there was more stress on European issues in the election programme of the Democrats while National Movement Simeon II dedicated a large part of their (first) programme to define their identity. Since United Democratic Forces was expected to win the elections until two months before the election date when National Movement Simeon II registered as a party there is tentative evidence in support of the proposition. In 2005 the expected and actual winner at the polls Coalition for Bulgaria had comparatively the highest number of election pledges on European integration especially concerning the harmonisation in

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<sup>145</sup> For more quotes from the election programme of Movement for Rights and Freedoms see Appendix C, Table 5.3, quotes (t-u).

<sup>146</sup> For more quotes from the election programme of National Movement Simeon II see Appendix C, Table 5.3, quote (v).

social spheres as shown in this section as well as a detailed roadmap to complete the accession process for Bulgaria.

The proposition that coalitional partners would perceive integration in the same way is not supported. It seems that coalitional partners may only agree on the general objective of European integration but they may nevertheless stress different aspects of it in their election programmes. For instance in 2005 Movement for Rights and Freedoms referred to the rights of minorities in an integrated Europe and regional development supported through European funding which did not feature in the election programmes of neither Coalition for Bulgaria or National Movement Simeon II, both coalition partners. On the whole it remains likely that political parties in Bulgaria will form coalitions if they have similar if not identical views on European integration. Comparing the election programmes of the three coalition partners from 2005 one can see that some issues are always present such as education, health and agriculture.

Coalition Union Attack was the only party that raised concerns with European integration as it was neither expected to win the 2005 election nor could participate in a government coalition due its anti-system ideology. Nevertheless, as a party with government ambitions Attack was on the whole supportive of the European project.<sup>147</sup> A content analysis of its election programme shows support for some European measures in a tone similar to that of the other parties. For instance Attack refers to: ‘A guaranteed minimum wage, adequate to the European’; ‘The introduction of minimum pension equal to the European’; ‘The return to the traditional Bulgarian and European educational system’ (CUA: 2005).

The party expressed two concerns with European integration which referred to the ‘closure of the nuclear reactors in Kozloduy’ and the ‘standard of life of Bulgarians should not be sacrificed for the negotiations with the European Union’. Those references were made is a wider pro-Bulgarian theme that included among other issues the ‘return of

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<sup>147</sup> The evidence from the Election Programme of Attack does not fully support the claim as the program is very short and only vaguely touches upon the subject of European integration. The softly Eurosceptic position was confirmed in interviews with Stella Bankova and Mincho Hristov, who referred to concerns regarding national identity, immigration from Turkey and the closure of the nuclear reactors in Kozloduy. For an overview of Attack’s performance at the 2005 parliamentary election see Savkova (2006).

the Bulgarian military contingent from Iraq'; 'the restriction on the sale of land to foreigners'; 'the confiscation of the unlawful properties belonging to the family of Saxcoburggotsky'. At best the party can classify as a 'soft' eurosceptic according to the established definition by Taggart and Szczerbiak (2001).

This section confirmed the hypothesis that mainstream political parties in Bulgaria became more supportive of European integration following the formulation of the EU's strategy for accession. The hypothesis rests on the assumption that in a country like Bulgaria where public opinion is overwhelmingly in favour of European integration political parties will support the European issue as the concrete goal of EU membership and the evaluation aspect of the accession process acted as a yardstick for performance domestically. Governments that were positively evaluated by the European institutions could enhance their popularity at home and vice versa since the public trust in the opinions from the EU was high.

The section demonstrated through content analysis of election programmes that there were more references to the topic of European integration after 2001 when the accession process moved closer to the date of accession. In the period 1990-2001 political parties discussed the European issue in vague and brief terms as a side issue that concerned either an aspiration to European values, national security or economic or political relations with other European countries. Since 2001 European integration was transformed into a valence issue on the basis of which mainstream parties competed. However, while all parties shared a consensus regarding the merits of EU membership they nevertheless chose to emphasise different benefits arising from integration depending on their ideology, position in the party system or coalitional potential. Even Coalition Union Attack which was the only outsider party in the party system represented in parliament at the last (2005) parliamentary election was broadly supportive of European integration and only expressed concerns with some aspects of integration as part of a broader nationalistic, pro-Bulgarian theme.

## 5.4.2 USSR AND RUSSIA AND SUPPORT FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

I hypothesised that elite support for European integration will increase as support for USSR and Russia decreases during the transition period. The hypothesis is based on the assumption that mainstream political parties adopt a rational approach when formulating the foreign policy proposed in their election programmes as well as that at any point in time they will rely on one foreign policy partner to guarantee national security. As a small nation Bulgaria has a long history of being a protectorate of the Ottoman Empire and since its liberation in 1878 by the Russians and the overthrow of Nazism it fostered close relations with Russia and the USSR throughout the Communist period.<sup>148</sup>

Taking into account the collapse of the Communist system followed by the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw pact I anticipate that from the early stages of transition mainstream political parties that dominated the Bulgarian party system (Bulgarian Socialist Party and United Democratic Forces) would seek alternative ways to guarantee the national security of Bulgaria and may refer in their election programmes to a pan-European security system, NATO and EU memberships.

Following the publication of the Copenhagen criteria for EU membership in 1993 and the submission of Bulgaria's application in December 1995 there should be fewer references to Russia and more references to European integration in the election programmes of both parties. When Russia is mentioned in the election programmes the context should be general i.e. pledges that relate to the continuation of economic and political relations, cultural exchanges and cooperation in trade. Comparatively, the Bulgarian Socialist Party should be more inclined to gravitate towards USSR and Russia (especially between 1990 and 1994) than United Democratic Forces given the historical relations between the two countries while the Bulgarian Communist Party was in power.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> For literature on the history between Bulgaria and the Soviet Union see Brown (1970); Crampton (1983, 1989).

<sup>149</sup> This opinion was expressed by Tatyana Doncheva, a long term MP and member of the Bulgarian Socialist Party in an elite interview on the 18<sup>th</sup> December 2006. She also referred to the fact that key political leaders of the Bulgarian Socialist Party such as Petur Mladenov, Aleksander Lilov, Dobri Dzurov and Andrey Lukanov obtained their higher education (often in the form of party training) in the USSR so their preference in favour of the USSR / Russia (if any) were not completely unbiased. For a text that

National Movement Simeon II and Coalition Union Attack entered the party system at a later stage in 2001 and 2005 respectively when the prospect for EU membership was already set therefore their position on European integration was premeditated. Movement for Rights and Freedoms on the other hand played a balancing role in Bulgarian party politics until 2001 as Chapter 2 explained in detail and did not influence foreign policy relations (besides those with Turkey).

Evidence from the election programmes of the parties demonstrates that the hypothesis is supported by the data in Table 5.2 and the contents of the election programmes. The results in Table 5.2 point to two main observations. References to the USSR and Russia in the election programmes of the Bulgarian Socialist Party and United Democratic Forces decreased over time while references to Europe increased. For instance the Socialists referred to the Soviet Union/Russia on six occasions in 1991 but only once in 2005 compared to 15 references to Europe in 1991 and 78 in 2005. Similarly, United Democratic Forces referred to the Soviet Union twice in their 1990 programme and not at all in 2005. In the same years there were 21 references to Europe in 1990 which increased to 49 in 2005.

The second observation is that based on the number of total references to the Soviet Union / Russia and Europe made over the whole transition period (1990-2005) in the election programmes of the Bulgarian Socialists Party and United Democratic Forces the Socialists were twice as supportive of the Soviet Union/Russia as United Democratic Forces while on the other hand the Democrats were twice as supportive of European integration. There were 15 references to the Soviet Union/Russia in the election programmes of the Socialists and eight in the election materials of United Democratic Forces compared to 169 and 250 occurrences of Europe respectively.

Behind the numbers content analysis of the manifesto texts shows that all references to the Soviet Union/ Russia are shorter than those to European integration and more general, especially in the later stages of the transition. While European integration is given at least

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describes the role of the USSR in the formation and development of the Bulgarian Communist Party see Bell (1986).

half a page in the election programmes of the Bulgarian Socialist Party and United Democratic Forces the Soviet Union and Russia are discussed in one to five sentences or not at all.

Interestingly, the question of national security is mentioned only once in the election programme of United Democratic Forces in the context of the ability of both countries to determine national security independently of each other. By contrast as the previous section illustrated there are numerous references to national security in relation to a pan-European security system, EU and NATO memberships in the election programmes of both parties. National security and Russia are discussed as follows:

‘We will maintain the traditional relations with Russia, Ukraine and the former Soviet Republics...

...We will aim to utilise the existing potential for positive development of the mutual relations with the Russian federation with an ambition for their acceleration and expansion on the basis of mutual respect and sovereignty for each country to choose how to guarantee its national security independently...’ (UDF 2001: 81-82).

The Soviet Union and Russia are most commonly discussed in the framework of good relations between both countries and regional cooperation. The Bulgarian Socialist Party highlights this point more strongly than the Democrats or Movement for Rights and Freedoms as the examples illustrate. Often the parties do not even determine the kind of cooperation they are referring to in the election materials which makes the references extremely vague and on the whole the Socialists have more to say about the USSR and Russia than the other parties.

‘The traditional relations with Russia and the USSR are a huge national, cultural and economic capital, a guarantee for our national survival. The Bulgarian Socialist Party is in favour of the preservation and development of the political, trade and spiritual relations with the Soviet Union’ (BSP 1990: 26-27);

‘BSP is for the preservation of everything valuable in the traditional Bulgarian - Soviet and Bulgarian – Russian relations, for cooperation between Bulgaria and

USSR and its republics on the basis of solidarity and established upon the principles of equality, mutual respect and value. The national interests of our country require a renewal of a new agreement for cooperation to be signed between Bulgaria and USSR' (BSP 1991: 28).

Coalition for Bulgaria supports:

'Actualisation of the regional cooperation in the relations with USA, Russia and the Soviet Republics...' (CB: 2001: 27);

'The development of the relations with Russia to be based on equality and realised economic and political interests of both countries, free of ideological dependencies' (CB: 2001: 29).

The same point is made again in 2005. Coalition for Bulgaria stands for the

'Actualisation of the regional cooperation of the relations with the USA and Russia, the former Soviet republics traditional and national partners of Bulgaria in the Middle East, Asia, Africa and Latin America' (CB: 2005).

The other parties are less explicit:

'We will secure and expand the relationships between the Balkan countries and Russia' (UDF 1997);

'UDF will maintain all efforts to protect the Bulgarian investments on the territory of USSR' (UDF 1991: 4);

'The relations with Russia have deep traditions and wide prospects' (MRF 2005: 17);

'We believe through a constructive dialogue and mutual recognition of interests and leading political priorities, the relationships with Russia could improve' (NMSS 2005: 17).

A major factor that explains those findings is the lack of a large Russian minority in Bulgaria which to motivate the political elite to maintain close relations with Russia when other alternatives such as European integration became available. This observation came up repetitively during elite interviews with Bulgarian MPs from all parties. Professor Atanas Shterev and Borislav Velikov from National Movement Simeon II expressed the point clearly:

‘Bulgaria is not Ukraine or Belarus where half of the population is of Russian ethnicity, a fact that mainstream politicians from that part of the world can not afford the luxury to forget. By contrast Bulgaria’s relations with the Soviet Union and Russia have been for a long time based on the axis of mutual interests. They are pragmatic. During communism Bulgaria could trade with other friendly countries within the umbrella of the Warsaw pact, it had access to cheap raw materials from the Soviet Union which also guaranteed our national security. For Bulgaria the flip side of receiving those benefits was a tacit agreement to command complete political loyalty to the Soviet Union at elite level. When the international situation changed it was time to evaluate the options in a pragmatic cost-benefit way considering the bigger picture and without being constrained by ethnic, religious (you know the Church is very weak in Bulgaria) or linguistic implications that a significant Russian minority would have brought in. In Bulgaria the task of politicians was more straightforward. There was never a dilemma to choose between Russia and the European Union: it was rather the Soviet Union being replaced by the European Union in time’ (Professor Atanas Shterev, National Movement Simeon II, 20th December 2006);

‘Although the relations between Bulgaria and the Soviet Union were strong they were also conditional: we gave loyalty in return for protection of national security and economic advantages. The lack of a Russian minority in Bulgaria like in the Ukraine for example is a major factor that explains why it was so easy to switch from the Soviet Union to the EU and why this strategy was adopted by all parties. Compare that with our relations with Turkey which will be maintained regardless of changes to the international situation because the ethnically Turkish electorate is considerable and well organised by Movement for Rights and Freedoms’ (Borislav Velikov, 23rd December 2006).

Most interviewees referred to the economic and security impact from the disintegration of the USSR as reasons that justify the political support for European integration alongside the diminishing support for Russia during the transition period. For instance Venzislav Vurbanov who served as a Minister of Agriculture in the cabinet of Ivan Kostov reflects on these causes as follows:

‘From an economic perspective the emerging Russia was no longer attractive to Bulgaria. I participated in two delegations to Russia, one with the former President Petur Stoyanov and one with the former Prime Minister Ivan Kostov (UDF) and on both occasions there was plenty of goodwill on our side to keep up the economic relations but in practice nothing materialised. The truth is there was plenty of going on inside the Russian economy in regards to privatisation of state assets during the 1990s. This affected some traditional sectors in Bulgaria relying on raw materials from Russia as the level of subsidised exports was restricted in order to safeguard the domestic economy. Some medium businesses in Bulgaria were also affected as the Russian investors spotted better economic opportunities in countries like Ukraine once the free market was introduced into the region. Hand in hand with the economic developments Russia did not have the capacity to fulfil a security role in Central and Eastern Europe after the Soviet Union disintegrated which placed a very pressing issue concerning national security at the top of the agendas for the mainstream parties in Bulgaria’ (Venzislav Vurbanov, 20th December 2006).

The same opinion from the left was expressed by Tatyana Doncheva:

‘The Bulgarian Socialist Party always valued highly the relations with the Soviet Union but it came to a point when the relationship was exhausted in the early 1990s. From the start the agreement between Bulgaria and the Soviet Union was a give-and-take deal. When the Soviet Union had nothing to offer, i.e. guarantee our national security it was time to consider other alternatives. The EU was one option and then there was NATO’ (Tatyana Doncheva, 21st December 2006).

Another reason for the political preference for Europe instead of the USSR and Russia was raised by MPs from Coalition Union Attack. Stella Bankova and Mincho Hristov discussed the possibility of a link between support for European integration and the

ability to justify unpopular political decisions such as the closure of the nuclear reactors in Kozloduy with the objective of EU membership in front of the electorate. In their opinions this possibility was particularly relevant for the later stages of the transition period when there was a clear path for integration. It is interesting to note that this opinion was not shared by MPs from the governing parties but only from the nationalistic and anti-system opposition party Coalition Union Attack:

‘EU membership was a convenient excuse to introduce reforms that otherwise might have proved unpopular. That is why politicians in Bulgaria prefer Europe to Russia because on the pretence of EU membership they could convince the public to support measures that are harmful to Bulgaria’s national interests. I will illustrate my point with examples: just in the last two years the governing coalition (Coalition for Bulgaria – National Movement Simeon II – Movement for Rights and Freedoms) decided to support the closure of the power plant in Kozloduy, to allow the sale of Bulgarian land to foreigners and the positioning of foreign military bases in Bulgaria which are measures against the national interests of Bulgaria that Attack opposes. Those measures are accepted by the general public who is made to believe that the road to Europe is covered in gold dust and those are token gestures that we need to swallow before the EU money begins to rain’ (Stella Bankova, 21st December 2006);

‘The mainstream parties are conning the Bulgarian public that everything that Brussels dictates is necessarily a good thing for our country. In fairness, the EU has treated Bulgaria appallingly and discriminately with their strategy of the carrot and the stick so much so that Bulgaria is now in the position of a soldier and Brussels is counting the number of sets up that we are required to make. Meanwhile our politicians are happy to succumb to all requirements because it is easy to introduce unpopular measures, to raise taxes for example in order to fulfil a pile of unnecessary requirements from the EU, to close nuclear reactors and I can go on and on. You get the picture. This is the so called harmonisation... without a real debate the public can not judge what is good and bad, it is like a flock and it follows its misguided masters’ (Associate Professor Mincho Hristov, 23 December 2006)

This section addressed the question of whether the increased support for European integration was linked to any changes in the attitude of political parties in Bulgaria to the

USSR and Russia during the transition period. Historically Bulgaria shares a common cultural and religious heritage with Russia and the USSR which suggests a possibility for gravitation in preferences to Russia. I hypothesised that elite support for European integration will increase as support for Russia decreases over time due to the economic and security implications brought by the breakdown of the Soviet Union. The hypothesis was confirmed through content analysis of the election programmes of the parties. Moreover, the analysis demonstrated that the Bulgarian Socialist Party (Coalition for Bulgaria) was more supportive of Russia than United Democratic Forces although references to Russia were shorter and broader in context for both parties. The findings from the section were supported by elite interviews with politicians from the main parties which pointed out to the lack of a Russian minority in Bulgaria, the implications from the collapse of the Soviet Union and the ability to introduce unpopular reforms as requirements for EU membership as factors that affected elite support for European integration and Russia in Bulgaria.

## **5.5 CONCLUSIONS**

The European debate in Bulgaria at elite level was shaped by the pace of the integration process and the ideology of the political parties in the party system. This chapter demonstrated through content analysis of the election programmes of the main parties and structured interviews with politicians in Bulgaria that support for European integration increased as Bulgaria moved closer to the date of accession. At the early stages of the transition period (1990-2001) the parties discussed European integration in vague and brief terms and references were made either to an aspiration to European values, national security or economic and political relations with other EU countries.

Since 2001 European integration was turned into a valence issue for political competition between the mainstream parties. The election programmes show that virtually all parties were concerned with harmonisation and adaptation of legislation to European standards as well as the benefits associated with EU membership. The latter issue was discussed

differently in the election programmes depending on the ideology of the parties, their proximity to power and coalitional potential.

Consistent with findings from past research the Bulgarian Socialist Party emphasised benefits associated with social gains while United Democratic Forces stressed economic gains to the electorates. The other major parties (Movement for Rights and Freedoms and National Movement Simeon II) which occupied the centre of the party system discussed benefits associated with both left and right ideology. Coalitional potential and proximity to power were also found to be important for European integration although the findings were preliminary and further research needs to be conducted to confirm this finding with certainty.

The chapter determined that support for European integration increased over time while support for the USSR and Russia decreased due to the economic and security implications brought by the breakdown of the Soviet Union. Historically Bulgaria had a common cultural and religious bond with Russia and the USSR which was weakened during the transition period at the expense of greater influence and importance attributed to the European Union. From a comparative perspective the analysis demonstrated that the Bulgarian Socialist Party (Coalition for Bulgaria) was more supportive of Russia than United Democratic Forces although references to Russia were shorter and broader in context for both parties.

The conclusions from the chapter lead to an observation that the European debate in Bulgaria at the level of political elite was influenced by external and internal factors: on one hand the structured process of European integration after the European Council in Copenhagen in 1993 provided a framework for integration which was reflected in the election programmes of the main political parties. On the other hand, the formation and development of the party system influenced the dynamic of integration and the extent to which the topic of EU membership was contested during elections and included in the party manifestos.

The contribution of this chapter to the thesis is in the evidence it provides regarding the positions of the main parties in Bulgaria on European integration at different points in time which is directly comparable across parties. Chapter 5 is the first of two empirical chapters that discuss elite positions on European integration and are complementary within the framework of the thesis. The next chapter follows on from this research to analyse the discourse on European integration through the study of parliamentary debates.

## **CHAPTER 6**

# **ELITE SUPPORT FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION IN BULGARIA BEFORE ACCESSION TO THE EUROPEAN UNION – EVIDENCE FROM PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

Parliamentary debates have been used in discourse analysis in order to research a diverse range of topics such as immigration, xenophobia, racism, EU membership, embryo and stem cell research, euthanasia, abortion (Broughton and Palmieri 1999; Carbo 1992; Caulfield and Bubela 2007; Jackobs 1998; Kirejczyk 1999; Mulkey 1993, 1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c, 1997; Tekin 2008; Van Der Valk 2000, 2002, 2003a, 2003b; Van Dijk 1997b, Van Dijk 2000a, 2000b). Because of the different nature of the debates that have been analysed since the 1990s the body of literature that has been accumulated in this area does not allow comparability of the findings across studies and similarities can be detected primarily in the methodology of political discourse analysis which has been applied to other sources of data such as speeches, elite interviews, election programmes and party archives.<sup>150</sup> The emphasis of this chapter is on parliamentary debates that have been defined by Carbo (1992) as highly structured institutional and political speech events whose main objective is to produce legal and policy instruments for the benefit of the nation.

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<sup>150</sup> For key texts on political discourse analysis see Chilton 1990, 2003; Chilton and Schaffner 2002; Fairclough 1989, 1995; Wilson 1990.

A review of the literature on parliamentary debates reveals that in the areas of immigration and embryo research academic contributions have developed into systematic debates by cross referencing with a number of disciplines such as political science, anthropology, sociology and natural science in a comparative or individual country context (Mulkey 1993, 1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c, 1997; Van der Valk 2000, 2002, 2003a, 2003b; Van Dijk 1997b, 2000a, 2000b). The rest of the research findings are sporadic and insufficient to form informative debates but a good starting point for further research into new areas (Broughton and Palmieri 1999; Carbo 1992).

The focus on immigration in parliamentary debates has been to understand how the issue of immigration was constructed in the political discourse between right and left parties in countries where past colonial changes led to mass waves of immigration such as France, the Netherlands and Italy (Jackobs 1998; Montali *et al.*; Riva *et al.*; Tekin 2008; Van der Valk 2003a, 2003b; Van Dijk 1997b, 2000a). In this cluster of academic literature political discourse is primarily defined and studied contextually in terms of participating actors, their social role and the political institutions and cognition involved (Van der Valk 2003a, 2003b; Van Dijk 1997b, 2000a). Most studies emphasise the importance of parliamentary discourse on the level of communication, where it strongly influences the public at large (Montali *et al.*; Riva *et al.*; Van Dijk 1997b, 2000). The findings point to the relevance of negative over-representation of foreigners who are systematically derogated and criminalised in parliamentary debates by right wing parties but supported by politicians from the left who favoured more tolerant laws and social integration.

An extensive body of literature exists since the 1990s on different aspects of the legitimacy of scientific research on human embryos in Britain that has been developed by Mulkey over a decade.<sup>151</sup> Mulkey (1994b) studied how women contributed to and were represented in the parliamentary debate on human embryos, how those debates translated to the public sphere as well as difference in the rhetorical resources employed by supporters and opponents of embryo research (Mulkey 1993, 1994e). Other angles covered were how both sides of the debate drew upon the same ideal of family life

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<sup>151</sup> For a detailed review of Mulkey's work on embryo research see Mulkey (1997).

(Mulkey 1994c), how the balance of parliamentary opinion concerning embryo research changed over time (Mulkey 1994e), differences in positions of the British Conservative and Labour parties on embryo research (Mulkey 1995a), how the topic was depicted in the press (Mulkey 1994d) and similarities between religious and scientific accounts in parliament (Mulkey 1995c). Recent analyses by other researchers have built upon Mulkey's work to consider the difference of parliamentary cultures regarding embryo research in Britain and the Netherlands as well as the relevance of the embryo debate for stem cell research and political attitudes to new techniques of assisted reproduction (Caulfield and Bubela 2007; Kirejczyk 1999; Perry 2003).

The literature on parliamentary debates feeds into a wider research stream on the role of parliaments in consolidated democracies where the debates take place. The academic literature on parliaments broadly relates to institutional theory as defined in legislative studies which determines how parliamentary procedures influence political outcomes. Extensive comparative work in this area was accomplished by Doring who studied and compared the institutional structures and procedural rules in 18 countries from Western Europe (Doring 1995, 2001; Doring and Hallerberg 2004).<sup>152</sup> Other scholars looked into more specific aspects of the functioning of parliaments such as the relevance of the veto players' model (Bawn 1999; Tsebelis 1995, 1999, 2002; Tsebelis and Chang 2004), the agency relationship between cabinets and ministers (Andeweg 2000; Saalfeld 2000; Martin and Vanberg 2004), models of government survival and parliamentary dissolution (Strom and Swindle 2002; Warwick 1992b, 1994), the structure and functioning of the European parliament and its relationship with the national parliaments of the EU member states (Hix 2002, 2005; Hix and Goetz 2000; Hix *et al.* 2007; Kreppel 2000, 2002; Mamadouh and Raunio 2003; Raunio and Hix 2000).

This chapter analyses the political discourse on European integration in Bulgaria during the transition period relying on data from parliamentary debates on European issues and foreign policy that took place between 1990 and 2007. The data set consists of 13 parliamentary debates, 11 of which relate directly to broadly European issues.

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<sup>152</sup> For a similar line of comparative analysis see Norton (1999). Also, note there is one account of parliament and law-making in Poland which follows the same debate: Goetz and Zubek (2007).

Referring to the stages of development in the relationship between Bulgaria and the EU described in Chapter 3 of the thesis the frequency of the debates increased over time with the opportunity for accession. In the first period between 1990 and 1993, when the EU played a crucial role in the transformation of Central and Eastern Europe there was one EU-related debate in Bulgaria on the European Cultural Convention in 1991. During the second stage between 1993 and 1997 when the pre-accession strategy was presented three parliamentary debates took place on the application and criteria for EU membership and the inclusion of Bulgaria in the list of countries that required visas to enter the European Union. The majority of parliamentary debates occurred at the third stage of accession negotiations when the conditions of EU membership were negotiated in preparation for accession.

Applying the same methodological tools of content and discourse analysis as in Chapter 5 the current chapter follows on from the research and findings of the elite debate on European integration based on the election programmes of the mainstream political parties. The two chapters are complementary in the structure of the thesis as they evaluate levels of support for the EU in Bulgaria at elite level at different points in time (Chapter 5) as well as over time (Chapter 6), compare the findings from the two approaches and relate them to public support for European integration in Chapter 7.

The next section will describe the methodology of the research by presenting the data set of parliamentary debates, the methods of discursive discourse analysis and a set of hypotheses. This will be followed by a description of the characteristics of the parliamentary debates and main themes on European integration. In the final part the chapter will relate the hypotheses to the research findings of the study.

## **6.2 METHODOLOGY**

### **6.2.1 THE DATA SET**

The data set consists of the transcripts of 13 parliamentary debates from Bulgaria: 11 debates on topics connected to European integration, one debate on foreign relations with the USSR and one debate on national security. The debates, listed in Table 6.1 in Appendix D, took place in the period 1991-2005.

The parliamentary debates were collected from the Parliamentary Library in Sofia in June 2006. The contents of all available parliamentary debates for sittings that took place between May 1991 and June 2006 were reviewed and those connected to topics on European integration, foreign policy and USSR/Russian relations were selected. There were missing debates in 1993 and 1994 where the transcripts were either lost or in the process of repair. Some of the early debates in January-April 1991 and in November-December 1992 were hand written and difficult to read. The debates after January 2006 were not available for public use at the time of fieldwork.

### **6.2.2 THE METHOD AND HYPOTHESES**

The chapter relies on the method of discursive discourse analysis which has been used in studies that utilise parliamentary debates in the areas of humanities and social sciences (Tekin 2008; Van der Valk 2000, 2002, 2003a, 2003b; Van Dijk 1997b, 2000a, 2000b). The method originates from the works of Foucault (1970) who defined discourse as a sequence of signs that carry a distinctive meaning and in a discursive context produce patterns of regularities.

Political discourse is the informal exchange of reasoned views as to which several alternative courses of action could be taken to solve a societal problem.<sup>153</sup> Therefore it is predominantly argumentative and oriented towards persuasion where politics and

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<sup>153</sup> For texts that explain political discourse analysis see Chilton and Schaffner (1997). For relevant works on political discourse that have informed this research see Chilton (1990); Connolly (1983); Fairclough (1989, 1995); Geis (1987); Van Dijk (1995); Wilson (1990); Wodak (1989).

language are closely intertwined. Van Dijk (1997a) discusses political discourse in three main perspectives – contextual, structural and functional. He stresses the usefulness of the contextual dimension in terms of participating actors, their social functions, goals and the political institutions and cognition involved. At a structural level political discourse analysis concerns variations in procedures which are less relevant for parliamentary debates. Ultimately, political discourse represents a form of political action and as such can serve a direct functional role in the accomplishment of specific political objectives.

In the academic literature the method of political discourse analysis has been applied by either computer aided content analysis which decodes the internal structure of text through a series of statistical tools, by thematic analysis or both. The methodology of this chapter is based on a combination of structural, contextual and thematic discourse analysis of the European debate at elite level in Bulgaria.

In the next section I describe the structural characteristics of the European debate in Bulgaria at the level of political parties. In this context I discuss the length and number of debates and intensity of participation by party. I then look at the contextual and thematic features of the debates – the main actors who participated in the debates, their goals and importance in Bulgarian politics, the cognition involved and the main themes and visions on European integration that unfolded during the transition period in a comparative perspective.

My method is similar to that of Van Dijk (1995), Mulkey (1995b, 1995c), Montali *et al.* and Tekin (2008) although I do not employ content analysis to distinguish between structures of text due to the large volume of data that can not be hand-coded. The advantage of the approach is that it allows observations to be made about the European debate in Bulgaria based on data accumulated over time.

I arrive at the findings adopting a deductive approach. The starting points of the research are four hypotheses that test the nature and evolution of the European debate in Bulgaria, foreign policy alternatives as well as the positions of parties in the party system. In the

final part of the chapter I revisit those hypotheses to verify them against the findings from the discourse analysis of the parliamentary debates described in the next section.

**Hypothesis 6.1** states that *Elite support for European integration increased with the formulation of the EU's strategy for Accession.*

The hypothesis is based on the assumption that political parties are more likely to support European integration if there is a clear framework for EU membership. The data set of parliamentary debates shows that the majority of debates took place after the publication of the Copenhagen criteria and during the time of Accession negotiations (1995-2002).<sup>154</sup> Against a certain criteria political parties could raise their domestic credibility by highlighting their contribution towards meeting the criteria such as in the debates on the removal of Bulgaria from the EU visa list or the closure of the nuclear reactors in Kozloduy. For opposition parties the structure of the accession process provided opportunities to criticise the work of the government. At a general level, by taking part in the parliamentary debates political parties gained legitimacy since they appeared to represent the interests of the pro-European public in Bulgaria.

**Hypothesis 6.2** states that *Elite support for European integration increased as support for USSR and Russia decreased.*

The hypothesis is based on the assumption that following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact Bulgaria had to change its foreign policy preference for the USSR and Russia in favour of EU membership. European integration became a foreign policy choice for Bulgaria after the Copenhagen criteria for EU membership was announced in 1993 and Bulgaria submitted its application for membership in 1995. The reorientation of the other countries in Central and Eastern Europe in the same direction towards EU membership strengthened the pro-European elite consensus in Bulgaria. The election programmes of the parties discussed in Chapter 5 showed that the Bulgarian Socialist Party was more pro-Russian than United Democratic Forces at the beginning of the transition although still supportive of European

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<sup>154</sup> For parliamentary debates see Table 6.1 in Appendix D.

integration. This finding will be tested against the evidence from the parliamentary debates.

**Hypothesis 6.3** states that: *Elite support for European integration increased as elite support for NATO increased.*

The hypothesis arises from the assumption that the political consensus on NATO membership which was formed in 2000 led to an increased support for European integration since the political parties began to consolidate their visions of the EU and the benefits that it could offer to Bulgaria. Chapter 5 provided evidence from the election programmes of the Bulgarian Socialist Party and United Democratic Forces which showed that until the NATO consensus was achieved there was speculation of a pan-European security system in which Bulgaria to participate. Therefore, the security dilemma until this point was still unresolved. The manifestos also indicated ( but did not elaborate) that United Democratic Forces considered NATO and the EU as interlocking projects and one could not be part of one but not the other, while the Bulgarian Socialist Party retained its pro-Russian orientation at the beginning of the transition period. Both propositions will be tested against the data from the parliamentary debates.

**Hypothesis 6.4** states that: *Parties in government are more supportive of European integration than parties in opposition.*

The hypothesis rests on the assumption that government parties are directly involved in the accession process of facilitating integration by undertaking tasks such as submitting an application for EU membership, taking part in the accession negotiations, revision of chapters, signing of Accession Treaty which makes them better informed of the dynamics of integration as well as more positive about membership. Moreover, parties in government often operate in coalitions with other parties so they will support strategic topics such as EU membership in order to stay in the political mainstream. Given the high level of public support for European integration in Bulgaria and assuming that parties in government represent the views of the public majority they are likely to be more supportive of the EU than other parties in the party system.

This section outlined the methodology of the chapter. It began with a description of the data set of parliamentary debates and then progressed to explain the advantages and use of the method of political discourse analysis as well as its application in the context of parliamentary debates on European integration from Bulgaria. In the final part the section outlined a set of four hypotheses on foreign policy alternatives and the positions of parties in the party system that is the starting point of analysis. The next section will describe the findings from the discourse analysis on parliamentary debates before comparing those findings against the hypotheses in the conclusion of the chapter.

## **6.3 RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **6.3.1 STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EUROPEAN DEBATE IN BULGARIA**

The degree to which the topic of European integration was salient in the political discourse in Bulgaria during the period of transition can be determined through discursive discourse analysis of parliamentary debates on European integration and topics related to foreign policy and national security which are closely linked to the integration debate. With this objective in mind the current section begins with a description of the structural characteristics of the political debate on European integration which is intended to give the reader an insight into the nature of the data sources before outlining the main findings of the research which relate to the contextual and thematic features of the European debate in Bulgaria at elite level.

Past contributions that rely on parliamentary debates on the whole include a descriptive section of the structural features of the debates as this provides context to the findings. For instance, Van Der Valk (2003a, 2003b) referred to the length of parliamentary debates on immigration in France and the Netherlands as well as the relevant parties that contributed to the political discourse. Mulkey (1995b, 1995c) explained the accumulation of events, structured meetings and bills passed through parliament that led to a series of parliamentary debates on embryo research as well as the intensity of the debates over

time and identified the key political figures that expressed opinions on the matter on a regular basis, for instance making a distinction between scientific and religious viewpoints of the participants.

As the current research belongs to the fields of political science and European studies I have concentrated on the pace with which the issue of European integration was discussed in the National Assembly in Bulgaria, the length of the discussions as well as which parties and main actors contributed to the political discourse. This sets the scene for analysis of the main themes and visions of European integration in Bulgaria and the cognition involved outlined in the latter part of the section.

During the transition period there were 13 parliamentary debates on European integration, foreign policy and security in Bulgaria, listed in Table 6.1 in Appendix D. From the table one can see that the highest number of debates took place during the period of accession negotiations between 1995 and 2000 after the submission of Bulgaria's application for EU membership. As the frequency of the debates increased so did their length. On average before 1995 debates were 16 pages long while after 1995 they were 26 pages. This is an increase in length of 62 %. The shortest debate was on the European Cultural Convention in 1991 and it was 7.5 pages. The longest debate was 48 pages in 1999 on the topic of the European requirements for closure of the nuclear reactors in Kozloduy.

Table 6.1 demonstrates that the increased length and frequency of the parliamentary debates over time does not correspond to a higher number of participants taking part in the discussions. The length represents longer opinions from the same MPs over time which shows that the elite debate on European integration remained limited and abstract for the majority of parliamentarians.

Who was interested in taking part in the European debate? There is a tendency for the main actors to come from the government parties and be heavy weight politicians such as the former Prime ministers Zhan Videnov (BSP), Ivan Kostov (UDF) and Sergei Stanishev (BSP), former ministers Nadezda Mihailova (UDF) and Aleksander Yordanov

(UDF) and leaders of small parties – Ahmed Dogan (MRF), George Ganchev (BBB), Anastasia Mozer (BAU), Volen Siderov (CUA). Consequently, on the whole the European debate in Bulgaria was led by the highest echelon of the political class at any point in time.

Table 6.2 in Appendix D represents the percentage that each party has contributed to the European debate in Bulgaria. There are an equal number of contributions (30-32 %) from the Bulgarian Socialist Party/ Coalition for Bulgaria and United Democratic Forces as the majority of the debates took place during the bi-polar period of party politics when the two parties dominated the party system.<sup>155</sup> It is also significant that 25 % of the contributions were made by small parties – mainly the Bulgarian Business Bloc, the Bulgarian Euro Left and the Agrarians, that were active in the debates in the first part of the transition period until 2001.

### **6.3.2 CONTEXTUAL AND THEMATIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EUROPEAN DEBATE IN BULGARIA**

#### **6.3.2.1 From General to Technical Debate on European Integration**

Each parliamentary debate discusses a particular aspect of European integration and relations with Europe. The early debates consider topics that are broadly European such as the European Cultural Convention, the inclusion and exclusion of Bulgaria from the ‘black list’ of countries for visa purposes, national security. Over time the debates are more focused on European integration as the accession process is set in place by the European Commission and Bulgaria begins to make concrete steps in order to satisfy the criteria for EU membership. For instance as Table 6.1 in Appendix D shows, there are debates on the official application of Bulgaria for EU membership, the start of the accession negotiations, sensitive chapters such as foreign policy and security and nuclear safety, the evaluation of the Commissions’ progress reports which took place in the late 1990s.

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<sup>155</sup> The formation and development of the Bulgarian party system is explained in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

Content analysis of the transcripts confirms that the early views of the parties on Europe were very broad and identical with those found in the election programmes from the same period where Europe was synonymous with the concepts of democracy and human rights, national security and political and economic relations with other European countries. There was no differentiation of the visions of Europe between the major parties (Bulgarian Socialist Party and United Democratic Forces) and small parties (Bulgarian Business Bloc, Bulgarian Euro-Left and Bulgarian Agrarian People's Union) as the extracts from the debates illustrate.<sup>156</sup>

‘...Personally, the biggest advantage [from EU membership] is the irreversibility of our value choice, namely the choice of the human rights and freedoms, of the democracy, of the social market economy, of the defence, of the rights of minorities. This is an irreversible value choice which makes Bulgaria a European country...’  
**(Former Prime-Minister Ivan Kostov, 1997-2001, United Democratic Forces)**  
**(Debate 7, 14.12.1999: 8)**

‘...For centuries Bulgaria has been inseparable part of the European space, of the European territory. The Bulgarian citizens have always felt European – historically and culturally, in spirit and disposition...’  
**(President of Bulgaria Georgi Parvanov, 2001- , Bulgarian Socialist Party)**  
**(Debate 7, 14.12.1999: 11)**

‘... The fact that Bulgaria is included in the new borders of Europe is a gesture of recognition to our people, for its historical struggles, for its resilience to preserve its Christian, European cultural identity during five century York, for its consensual reasoning to be part of the family of European countries where we belong...’  
**(Aleksander Tomov, Bulgarian Euro-Left)**  
**(Debate 7, 14.12.1999: 14)**

‘Our parliamentary action [support for the European Cultural Convention] is in agreement with the International Pact for economic, social and cultural rights and it is a considerable contribution to the need for integration of our country in the social, economic, political and cultural structures of the European continent.’

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<sup>156</sup> For more representative quotes consult Appendix D, Table 6.3, quotes (a-c).

**(Metodi Nedyalkov, Bulgarian Agrarian Peoples' Union)**

**(Debate 1, 14.08.1991: 236)**

The last three debates on European integration differ from previous debates in two ways. In terms of content the debates demonstrate a certain degree of professionalisation of the issue by discussing concrete measures that could facilitate Bulgaria's accession such as the harmonisation of legislation with EU standards, cooperation with the European institutions, training of experts in public administration, acceleration in the speed of reforms, national strategies against corruption. This theme carries on from the election programmes of the main parties from 2001 and 2005 when the process for EU accession was set in place. The debates show that the elite consensus on European integration was consolidated towards meeting common goals and objectives to attain EU membership and expressed by linking the topic of a debate with the larger goal of EU membership.<sup>157</sup>

Moreover, the number of political parties that expressed opinions in the debates increased (although the frequency of debates decreased) which shows a growing interest in the EU from across the political spectrum that can be associated with the certainty of EU membership at the last stage of accession negotiations as well as a coalitional model of governance. While in previous debates the topic was constructed from the opinions of two political players, the Bulgarian Socialist Party and United Democratic Forces, in the years prior to accession the political consensus on European integration became more inclusive as well as more consolidated.

From a linguistic perspective all debates leave an impression that European integration was initiated and led by the European institutions as the majority of debates were held in response to a particular initiative/measure of the European Union, i.e. the submission of membership application, visa regime, Common and Foreign Security policy, accession negotiations, the publication of a Road Map and evaluation reports announced by the European Commission. The parties often referred to passive verbs such as 'evaluate', 'assess', 'criticise', 'exclude', 'prevent' to express the actions which the European

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<sup>157</sup> An exception to the national consensus on EU membership was that support in the case of Coalition Union Attack was conditional on the EU dropping its insistence on the closure of certain power plants in Kozloduy which is supported by evidence from the election programme of Attack from 2005 and the party contribution to the 2005 parliamentary debate from this data set.

institutions could undertake if certain criteria was not met by Bulgaria as an applicant state.

‘The problems can not be separated! One can not separate the problem and the debate on Bulgarian energy from the debate on our membership to the European Union...’

**(Dimitur Abadjiev, United Democratic Forces)**

**(Debate 6, 04.11.1999: 33)**

‘The Bulgarian Socialists, the Bulgarian Left have been categorically and consistently in favour of Bulgaria’s accession to the European Union, we have always lobbied for that and for a solution to the visa problem.’

**(President Georgi Parvanov, 2001 - , Bulgarian Socialist Party)**

**(Debate 9, 25.07.2000: 89)**<sup>158</sup>

### **6.3.2.2 Europe as a Valence Issue in Bulgarian Party Politics**

The overriding theme in all parliamentary debates was elite consensus on EU membership between the parties and coalitions participating in the debates. The consensus was also evident in the election programmes of the main parties from 2001 and 2005 but the debates illustrate that European integration was in fact overwhelmingly supported throughout the transition period and not only after Bulgaria’s accession was perceived as a certainty at the last stage of accession negotiations. For instance, as the examples in this section illustrate the main political parties and players in the European debate referred to the theme of ‘national consensus, ‘political consensus’ and ‘undisputable agreement’ on the question of EU membership from as early as 1995 when Bulgaria submitted its application for EU membership. The points regarding the national consensus were made by mainstream politicians in Bulgarian politics who at the time of the debates or at a later date during the transition period were at the highest positions of power such as Prime Minister Zhan Videnov and President Georgi Parvanov. The extracts also confirm the finding from Table 6.2 in Appendix D that the European debate was dominated by the main political parties – the Bulgarian Socialist Party and United Democratic Forces.

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<sup>158</sup> For more representative quotes that support this point see Appendix D, Table 6.3, quotes (d-e).

‘...One thing is satisfactory, that **all political parties** in the parliament are of the same opinion, that the road which is waiting for us to follow is a road towards Europe...’

**(Kemal Epu, Movement for Rights and Freedoms)**

**(Debate 3, 05.10.1995: 69)**

‘...In the contemporary Bulgarian history I doubt there is another topic on which such an **undisputable agreement** between the political forces exists as it does on the topic of the European integration of Bulgaria...This **consensus** was formed in the 90s and in this respect I would like to underline the contribution of the Grand National Assembly from the 22nd December 1990 when for a first time the ambition of Bulgaria to become a full-fledged member of the European Union was declared. In the following declarations and acts of all Bulgarian public institutions the desire of Bulgaria to develop relations with the European Community and its integration with EC has often been confirmed...’

**(Former Prime Minister Zhan Videnov, 1994-1997, Bulgarian Socialist Party)**

**(Debate 4, 01.12.1995: 110)**

‘...this declaration is the result of an exceptional effort made by all parliamentary groups in this parliament to achieve such a degree of **national consensus** that will make any future attempt to undermine it untenable...’

**(Asen Agov, United Democratic Forces)**

**(Debate 5, 23.07.1997: 7)<sup>159</sup>**

It is also interesting to note that the small parties, the Agrarians, the Bulgarian Business Bloc and Coalition Union Attack did not refer to the consensus issue but instead used the EU membership in order to buttress their own priorities. As the Bulgarian Business Bloc was most instrumental in using the membership issue as a platform for furthering its own objectives the examples below were selected from the speeches of its leader, George Ganchev, in order to illustrate this tendency of the minor players. In the case of the Bulgarian Business Bloc the emphasis felt on national interests, strong economy, family

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<sup>159</sup> For more representative quotes see Appendix D, Table 6.3, quotes (f-i).

business and Christian values. Elsewhere, Coalition Union Attack also referred to national interests, while the Agrarians emphasised Christian values, peace and solidarity.

‘ In order to be allowed into the European Union we must be allowed not like beggars carrying coins but like people that produce, that have low crime rate, employment positions, not 600 000 unemployed and as people that are capable of retaining its young generation at home and not leaving them to wash dishes in Canada. Most importantly – as people, defenders of the Bulgarian culture, the national memory and above all the Bulgarian nation.’

**(George Ganchev, Bulgarian Business Bloc)**

**(Debate 5, 23.07.1997: 10)**

‘...Consider national interests first and foremost and then Europe, USA, Russia and anyone else.... We will enter Europe with a strong economy, trade and Christian values...’

**(George Ganchev, Independent [formally from Bulgarian Business Bloc])**

**(Debate 8, 26.05.2000: 31)**

### **6.3.2.3 European Integration and Foreign Policy Alternatives**

Although there was an overall political consensus on the topic of European integration the parliamentary debates in Bulgaria distinguished between different visions that the main parties had on the EU and foreign policy alternatives expressed as part of a general confrontational theme of ideological bi-polarity.

Confrontational exchanges between two main parties or coalitions that dominate the political space and alternate their positions of power are one of the characteristics of a bi-polar party system as defined by Sartori (1990) and explained in Chapter 2 of the thesis. The confrontational theme was noted in the election programmes of United Democratic Forces from 1990, 1991 and 1994 but in later manifestos the theme was discontinued. In the debates the bi-polarity was present consistently until 2001 when the bi-polar model of party politics was permanently replaced with the formation of a coalitional government between National Movement Simeon II, Coalition for Bulgaria and Movement for Rights and Freedoms.

The theme differentiated between two visions of Europe that represented two sides of the political consensus on EU membership. The Bulgarian Socialist Party was pro-European and pro-Russian but rejected NATO membership until the year 2000 when it changed its position on the issue. By contrast United Democratic Forces perceived EU membership and NATO integration as interlocking projects which were inconsistent with a pro-Russian orientation in foreign policy. Both parties showed limited understanding of the processes of integration to NATO and the EU until 2002. The Bulgarian Socialists were in favour of close relations with Russia but reviewed their position when NATO membership became a likely prospect following the permission given by the UDF government of Kostov for NATO planes to cross the Bulgarian airspace to accomplish the airstrikes on Kosovo in 2000. United Democratic Forces on the other hand showed a very simplistic understanding of what both memberships required assuming that one can not take place without the other, a notion arising from the democratic principles and values on which both organisations were established. This difference in visions of European integration and what it entails for Bulgaria in the area of foreign policy and security was reconciled in the last three debates when as shown in the first part of this section the discussions shifted to more technical matters associated with the conditions for EU membership.

The extracts from the parliamentary debates illustrate the confrontational tone of the debates as well as the different visions of Europe that contributed to the elite consensus on European integration.

‘..This negative list is effectively an evaluation of the European Union of the negative processes that take place in our country, particularly after the **Socialist government** took power....Which other countries are in the same list? Precisely those with which efforts have been made to develop close relations: first and foremost Russia, Serbia, China, Iraq and so on. Obviously, our inclusion in the list as a result of **the policies of the Socialist government** is exactly what the Socialist government always aimed for – for us to be in this list, these countries from this list to be our friends, to have contacts with them, to develop relationships, to trade and to work politically and economically. Secondly, when and how can we be taken out of this list?... For this to

happen it is necessary that the reason for which we are on the list in the first place to be eliminated. Simple and clear! In other words to clarify my point to the Bulgarian public **the current government** has to be no longer a government of Bulgaria...’;

‘Following the electoral success of **BSP** the negative processes in our country that began with the government of Lyuben Berov, then supported by **BSP** and the 36<sup>th</sup> National Assembly have obviously reached such a high point that those countries, normal, European countries are saying: ‘Stop! No more!’ Stop tricking us of **being with Russia** and at the same time lie that you are with **Europe. Either with Europe or with Russia!** There is no other way! And this needs to be understood. The concrete expression of all this is – either in **NATO or in the negative list!**’;

‘...how and when our removal from this list will be possible?.....when Bulgaria is included, is **accepted in the North Atlantic Treaty – NATO**. If this happens be assured automatically you will be taken out of the negative list of countries with visa free regime.

Many live with the illusion that it is possible to have a mini Marshall Plan in which Bulgaria will be included at the end of the conflict in Yugoslavia and we will participate where the big money is. The big money is in the heads of many people from BSP. But these are empty illusions. There will be a mini-Marshall for Bulgaria only when it becomes a **NATO member**. And this has to be understood by the Bulgarian people. There is no way that modern Western democracies will support the policies of a country which seeks political and economic relations with **Russia** but also wants to spend the money on the Parisian chanters and to receive visas undisturbed.’

**(Aleksader Yordanov, Former Chief Whip, United Democratic Forces)**

**(Debate 3, 05.10.1995: 62-63)**

‘If there is any guarantee that Bulgaria will not find itself in **NATO** it is opinions like that of Mr. Yordanov [UDF-above]. In a study about the expansion of **NATO** that was distributed to parliament...there is a whole chapter on the importance that **NATO** places **on Russia**. Mr. Yordanov if after we become a NATO member you continue with the same rhetoric we will be thrown out for destabilizing the **European stability and security...**’

**(Filip Bokov, Democratic Left (Bulgarian Socialist Party))**

**(Debate 3, 05.10.1995: 64)<sup>160</sup>**

This section presented an overview of the main characteristics of parliamentary debates on European integration in Bulgaria between 1990 and 2005. It was noted that the debates became longer over time as well as that the highest number of debates took place during the time of accession negotiations between 1995 and 2000. The main participants in the discourse were the Bulgarian Socialist Party and United Democratic Forces, each contributing to about a third of all opinions on European integration. The overriding theme in the discussions was elite consensus on European integration although the parties differed in their visions of EU membership. The small parties in particular were instrumental with the issue of EU membership which they used to buttress their own political objectives. On the other hand, the Democrats perceived EU membership as a joint project with NATO membership and distanced themselves in foreign policy terms from Russia. The Bulgarian Socialist Party rejected NATO membership until 2000 but supported pro-Russian relations alongside with European integration. The last three debates on European integration between 2002 and 2005 showed that the political consensus on EU membership was consolidated around concrete efforts towards accession to the European Union such as harmonisation of legislation, cooperation with the EU, and training of administrative personnel.

## **6.4 CONCLUSIONS**

This chapter used the method of discursive discourse analysis which was applied to parliamentary debates on EU related topics from Bulgaria in order to verify some of the findings made from the election programmes of the main political parties in Chapter 5 regarding the parties' positions on EU membership. The starting point of the analysis was a set of four hypotheses on foreign policy alternatives and the position of the parties in the party system. The hypotheses were largely supported by the findings which fulfilled an important purpose of providing a general direction of the research.

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<sup>160</sup> For more representative quoted refer to Appendix D, Table 6.3, quotes (j-k).

Hypothesis 6.1 anticipated that elite support for European integration would increase with the formulation of the EU's strategy for accession. The evidence from Tables 6.1 and 6.2 showed that the hypothesis is supported. The length of the parliamentary debates and the number of participants over time increased. Moreover, the main players in the debates on EU related topics were heavy weight politicians who shared a consensus on European integration. The small parties too played a part in the debates on Europe but unlike the Bulgarian Socialist Party and United Democratic Forces they used the issue to buttress their own political objectives. The last three debates on European integration that took place between 2002 and 2005 differed from previous debates in two important ways. On one hand, there were more technical and concerned specific measures that could speed up the accession process for Bulgaria. On the other hand the debates were more inclusive with higher number of participants and parties, resulting from the coalitional model of governance that was established in Bulgaria after 2001.

Hypotheses 6.2 and 6.3 related to foreign policy alternatives and European integration. Hypothesis 6.2 anticipated that elite support for European integration would increase as support for Russia decreased. Hypothesis 6.3 proposed that support for European integration would increase as elite support for NATO increased. The evidence from the parliamentary debates showed that during the period of the bi-polar model of party politics which persisted in Bulgaria until 2001, the Bulgarian Socialist Party and United Democratic Forces had different visions of European integration which they used in confrontational exchanges during the debates. The Bulgarian Socialist Party perceived European integration as consistent with a pro-Russian orientation in foreign policy and a rejection of NATO. This position was altered in 2000 following the likelihood of NATO membership after Bulgaria allowed its air space to be used by NATO planes for airstrikes on Kosovo. United Democratic Forces held an opposite view: it perceived European integration as a continuation following from NATO membership arising from the democratic principles and values of both institutions.

Finally, hypothesis 6.4 could not be proved or disproved by the research findings. The hypothesis assumed that parties in government would be more supportive of European

integration than parties in opposition which relates mainly to the integration tasks that government parties are expected to perform as part of the preparation for EU membership. The evidence from the parliamentary debates and table 6.2 in Appendix D point out that at a general level the hypothesis can be rejected as both government and opposition parties contributed an equal amount to the European debate but with Bulgarian party politics being so volatile during the period of transition it is difficult to confirm this finding without computer aided content analysis which matches opinions with the exact position of parties at the time when those opinion were expressed. It is possible that an explanation lies with the fact that the accession process continued for so long in Bulgaria that all mainstream parties contributed in some way to the integration process while in government and so could claim ownership of European integration.

This chapter was the last of three empirical chapters in the structure of the thesis which studied the public and elite levels of support on European integration in Bulgaria during the period of transition. The next final chapter 7 will summarise the main conclusions from the research project and outline and discuss the outlook and scope for future research.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION

#### 7.1 AN OVERVIEW OF THE THESIS AND BROAD CONCLUSIONS

What were the levels of support for the EU in Bulgaria before accession? This question was the starting point of research and the locus from where this project originated. The thesis looked for an answer by structuring the work so that consideration was given to the domestic and external factors which shaped attitudes to European integration at public and elite levels. The project was located within a comparative framework combining qualitative and quantitative methods of research while the same methodology can be extended in the future to other candidate states.

An in-depth case study on Bulgaria was justified as it is one of the least researched countries from the new EU member states. Moreover the peculiarities of Bulgaria's transition and the emergence of an unstable party system during post-communism slowed down Bulgaria's integration compared to the region. Nevertheless, this delay in the accession process did not affect the levels of public support and political commitment to European integration which remained one of the highest in Central and Eastern Europe before EU membership.

Chapter 1 introduced the research framework of the thesis in the context of existing literatures to which this study makes a contribution. It located the primary research question, *what was the level of support for the EU at mass and elite levels in Bulgaria during the accession process and what was the relationship between them*, to the fields

on transitions, democratisation and party system development in Central and Eastern Europe (Chapter 2), Eastern enlargements (Chapter 3), public opinion on European integration (Chapter 4), party manifestos (Chapter 5), the role of parliaments and parliamentary debates (Chapter 6). It proceeded to highlight the merits of comparative research and outline the qualitative and quantitative sources utilised in the thesis. Against this background three sets of secondary research questions, the dependent variable (*levels of public and elite support in Bulgaria*) and hypotheses were presented. In the final part the chapter acknowledged the constraints and limitations of the study and provided a summary of the chapters that followed.

Chapters 2 and 3 analysed the domestic and external factors that influenced the European debate in Bulgaria. Their role within the thesis was to provide context and background to the empirical chapters. Chapter 2 reviewed the formation and development of the Bulgarian party system by differentiating between three stages of development. The first stage of consensus building between the Bulgarian Socialist Party and United Democratic Forces covered the period from the break down of the communist system in November 1989 until the first free elections in June 1990. In this time frame a basic legal and institutional framework was agreed at the Roundtable Talks between the two main political parties which allowed the functioning of democracy. This relatively short period was followed by a second stage of ideological confrontation between the Bulgarian Socialists and United Democratic Forces that resulted in the formation of a bi-polar model of party politics. This new political set up persisted until 2001. The third stage of party system development was marked by a return to a multi-party system and the formation of coalition governments in 2001 and 2005.

The external factors that influenced the European debate in Bulgaria related to a series of decisions at European level to provide a framework for the Eastern enlargements and the ability of Bulgaria's political elites to follow this framework towards accession. Chapter 3 presented a historical overview of the Eastern enlargements by dividing the accession into three periods and relating them to the Bulgarian experience. The first period covered the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the communist regimes in Europe between 1989 and 1993. Within this time interval the European Union played a constructive role

in assisting the economic and political transformation of the Central and Eastern European states and guaranteeing the security on the continent. This was followed by a second period of preparation for negotiations that began when a political decision for enlargement was taken by the European Union member states at the European Council in Copenhagen in 1993. In 1997 at the European Council in Luxemburg a differentiation approach to enlargement was adopted. As a result only some of the candidates were invited to begin accession negotiations. The Luxemburg decision put an end to the second stage of the enlargement process and a third period of accession negotiations then began. For Bulgaria this period ended in January 2007 with its accession to the European Union.

The thesis then proceeded to the empirical chapters 4, 5 and 6 which analysed the public and elite sides of the European debate in Bulgaria and marked interactions between the two spheres where possible. Chapter 4 addressed the question of public support for European integration by relying on Eurobarometer surveys from 1997 and 2002. The surveys were used to construct cross-tabulations between the dependent variable and a number of independent variables in order to test four theories (utilitarian model of Gabel, cognitive mobilisation and value models of Inglehart, political proxy model of Anderson and the strength of European identity) of public support for European integration from Western Europe. In that way the chapter added to a growing body of literature which tests established theories of European integration and public support in the environments of new candidate states.

The main research objectives of the chapter were to explain: what determined public support for EU membership, how public support in Bulgaria compared to that in other Central and Eastern European countries and the nature of the relationship between elite and public support for European integration. The chapter reached two broad conclusions: that public support for EU membership before accession was higher than that in other post-communist countries which could be explained by a prolonged transition. Besides that, Bulgaria conformed to the experience of Central and Eastern Europe as shown in the academic literature where there was significant support for the utilitarian and proxy models.

Chapters 5 and 6 analysed elite support for European integration based on the election programmes of the main political parties in Bulgaria and their contributions in parliamentary debates on topics of European integration and foreign policy. The chapters combined content and discourse analysis in order to explain the high level of political support and low level of euroscepticism in Bulgarian party politics. They were one of very few studies that analysed the interrelationship between European integration and the party system in Bulgaria while at the same time adding to the bodies of knowledge of election programmes, the role of parliaments and parliamentary debates.

The chapters made a dual contribution: on one hand they presented the external characteristics of the European debate at elite level, i.e. the format and length of election programmes and parliamentary debates, main channels of distribution of party manifestos, key participants in the European debates, intensity of participation, reoccurring themes, perspectives and visions on Europe. On the other hand by analysing the content, i.e. the internal characteristics of the European debate, they discussed the foreign policy options of Russia and NATO, the party ideology and the position of the parties in the party system and how they related to support for European integration.

The broad conclusions based on observations from the chapters were that parties became more concerned with European integration after the formulation of specific criteria for integration at the Copenhagen Council in 1993 and the publication of an Accession Strategy. As those mechanisms were put in place there was a gradual shift in the European debate from abstract terminology such as political and economic cooperation with other European countries, closer ties in trade, national security and allegiance to European values to emphasis on concrete and technical measures like the approximation of legislation to EU standards, fulfilment of accession criteria and multilateral dialogue with other candidate and EU member states.

Foreign policy options such as NATO membership and Russia mattered too in constructing the parties' positions on European integration. In general pro-NATO parties (United Democratic Forces and National Movement Simeon II) were slightly more pro-

European while parties with an early pro-Russian orientation (Bulgarian Socialist Party) in foreign policy were slightly less pro-European.

Besides orientation in foreign policy, party ideology, the positions of parties in the party system and proximity to power were also determinants in relation to the positions parties took on European integration. As one can see from the data set of election programmes utilised in Chapter 5 both left and right parties in Bulgaria fully supported EU membership but the benefits that the parties highlighted arising from European integration differed. The Bulgarian Socialist Party was more concerned with social benefits while United Democratic Forces emphasised economic benefits to the electorate. Coalitional potential and proximity to power were also found to be important for European integration as those parties that were likely to win elections or participate in coalitional governments were on the whole more pro-European. However, the grounds of these findings derived from Table 5.2 in Appendix C, were preliminary and further research needs to be conducted to confirm them with certainty.

This section summarised the structure of the research elaborating on the role of the individual chapters in the thesis and outlining the broad conclusions reached on the main research question: mass and elite levels of support for the EU in Bulgaria before accession and the relationship between them. The next section will review the hypotheses in light of the empirical chapters before concluding the thesis with wider implications and comments on outlook and scope for future research.

## **7.2 THE HYPOTHESES IN LIGHT OF THE EMPIRICAL CHAPTERS**

### **7.2.1 PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION**

As explained in the previous section hypotheses 4.1 - 4.10 tested various aspects of public opinion models of support for European integration that originated from Western Europe to survey data from Bulgaria. Some of those models were previously applied to the countries from Central and Eastern Europe although the results were mixed. In

general the utilitarian model of Gabel provided the strongest determinants of support in the post-communist region and hypotheses 4.1 – 4.5 were constructed around the basic principles of that model.

According to Gabel (1998b) public support for European integration increased with expectations of economic gains which varied with the socio-economic profile of respondents. Gabel (1998b) found higher levels of education and transferable skills (i.e. the ‘human capital’) to be particularly important for higher support for European integration while other studies from Western Europe pointed out to new characteristics such as occupation, age, class, religion and level of income. In Central and Eastern Europe the model was generally supported in comparative research by Cichowski (2000a, 2000b), Tverdova and Anderson (2004) and White *et al.* (2002).

The findings from hypotheses 4.1- 4.5 in Chapter 4 relate to utilitarian indicators. They showed that Bulgaria conformed to the general pattern of experiences from the candidate states of Central and Eastern Europe. Hypotheses 4.2 and 4.1 confirmed that Bulgarians who expected to benefit personally or at the level of the state from European integration were more supportive of European integration. This was previously demonstrated by Tverdova and Anderson (2004) for six candidate states including Bulgaria. The cross-tabulations from 1997 and 2002 in Tables 4.2 and 4.3 reached the same findings as Tverdova and Anderson (2004). Moreover, they demonstrated that in Bulgaria support was much higher and opposition towards European integration much lower than the average levels for Central and Eastern Europe.

Hypothesis 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 tested how support for EU membership varied depending on the occupation, age and education of respondents. Tables 4.5 and 4.6 showed that support for European integration increased with higher levels of education but decreased with advancement in age while respondents in occupations that were more likely to yield higher returns from EU membership were more supportive of it. These findings were in line with what was already known from research conducted by Cichowski (2000a) and White *et al.* (2002) regarding these three indicators. Interestingly, in Bulgaria respondents in occupations that were traditionally seen to benefit less from EU membership such as

pensioners or the unemployed displayed relatively high levels of support. From a comparative perspective Bulgarians in all occupations, age groups and educational categories were more pro-European than their regional counterparts.

The next group of hypotheses 4.6 and 4.7 examined the relationship between party affiliation and support for European integration in Bulgaria. According to Anderson (1998) and Anderson and Kaltenthaler (1996) citizens use political parties as proxies in forming their positions on the EU since knowledge about European integration is difficult to comprehend by the uninformed public. In practice this means that supporters of pro-European parties are more likely to be pro-integration than supporters of Eurosceptic parties. The debate about the role that political parties play in shaping public positions on European integration was covered in detail in Chapter 4. The chapter referred to the rational versus the ideology approaches of how parties arrive at their views on European integration that are then absorbed by public opinion in major studies by Aspinwall (2002, 2006) and Hooghe (Hooghe 2003, 2007; Hooghe and Marks 1999, 2004, 2005; Hooghe *et al.* 2002) from the academic literature on parties.

In Central and Eastern Europe the proxy model was tested by Tverdova and Anderson (2004) and Cichowski (2000a) who reported conflicting findings. Cichowski (2000a) found party cues useful in anticipating public positions on European integration while Tverdova and Anderson (2004) reported the opposite. They explained their lack of support with limited debate on European integration, low public awareness regarding the positions parties hold on the EU and the overwhelming political consensus in favour of European integration at elite level that made it hard to identify Eurosceptic parties.

In the context of Bulgaria hypothesis 4.6 proposed that supporters of mainstream parties were more supportive of EU membership than those without party affiliation while hypothesis 4.7 proposed that opposition to EU membership was greater among citizens who did not support mainstream political parties. Both hypotheses were formed on the knowledge that in Bulgaria there was a permanent, overwhelming consensus on European integration between the mainstream political parties. If all parties supported integration,

opposition to EU membership would be higher among non-voters. The findings from Table 4.7 supported hypothesis 4.6 but rejected hypothesis 4.7.

Political parties are one proxy of support for European integration. Other proxies used in the academic literature are national institutions, the state, national identity. Sanchez-Cuenca (2000) argued that in Western Europe support for European integration was ultimately a function of national and supranational politics. The worse the citizens' opinion of national institutions was and the better their opinion of supranational ones the stronger their support for European integration. The overall performance of the state could also be used as a proxy of levels of support. Kritzinger (2003) argued that as citizens lack knowledge about the EU but are familiar with their state they may arrive at their views on European integration on the basis of how well or badly the state functions on the whole. A third proxy of support for integration could be national identity. A strong sense of national identity is expected to foster negative attitudes towards European integration although Christin and Trechsel (2001) disapproved this relationship on public opinion data from Switzerland.

Based on those findings from past research hypothesis 4.8 tested whether Bulgarians possessing positive evaluations of the aims and activities of the European Union were more likely to support EU membership and vice versa. This hypothesis was confirmed by the data sets in tables 4.8 and 4.9. One explanation for the relationship between European identity measured by the respondents' evaluations of the EU and support for integration is that prior to accession Bulgarians used the EU as a proxy for the performance of the political elite. As the ruling class in Bulgaria systematically failed to resolve pressing social and economic concerns due to a fractured and unstable party system, support for the European Union in Bulgaria increased.

Therefore, the results from my research supported previous findings by Sanchez-Cuenca (2000) and Kritzinger (2003). The logic of their arguments which applied to Bulgaria was that when trust at national level is low support for the EU would rise as a result of collective expectations that the domestic problems would be addressed at a European level.

Finally, hypotheses 4.9 and 4.10 related to all cross-tabulations from the data set and were supported by the data. They tested the public support in Bulgaria comparatively to the region as well as over time. Hypothesis 4.9 suggested that EU membership was higher in Bulgaria than the average for Central and Eastern Europe while opposition to EU membership was lower. Hypothesis 4.10 tested whether public support for EU membership had increased over time, while levels of opposition had decreased.

The higher support in Bulgaria could be accounted by a number of factors such as entering the transition from a lower economic base, experiences of unstable political environments or periods of social unrest. Another factor was the EU's enlargement strategy to the region of Central and Eastern Europe which transformed EU membership into a national cause. A third explanation could be attributed to the political consensus on integration between the main political parties: the Bulgarian Socialist Party, United Democratic Forces and Movement for Rights and Freedoms as seen from the election programmes of the parties, parliamentary debates and elite interviews as well as the lack of distinctive disadvantaged groups that could form a tangible opposition to integration.

Not only Bulgarians were more supportive of EU membership than other countries in Central and Eastern Europe but public support for EU membership increased with the nearing of accession. This was explained in the thesis with better awareness and familiarity with the EU over time due to the intensification of the accession process, the general consensus among the political parties that EU membership was a good thing, the delay in the emergence of Eurosceptic parties and the orientation of the rest of Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans towards European integration.

This section provided a summary of the main findings regarding public support for European integration in Bulgaria from the thesis. The overall conclusions were that Bulgaria falls within the general pattern of experiences from Central and Eastern Europe where support for European integration is motivated by material expectations at individual level depending on the socio-economic characteristics of respondents. In the case of Bulgaria occupation, age and education were strong indicators of public support

for EU membership. The thesis also argued that political parties and European identity played a role in shaping public attitudes to the EU which gave credibility to the proxy models of support. On the whole, support for European integration in Bulgaria was higher than in the rest of Central and Eastern Europe, while opposition levels were very low. Finally, support for European integration increased over time with the formulation of an accession strategy by the European Union and the countdown to accession.

### **7.2.2 ELITE SUPPORT FOR EUROPEAN INTEGRATION**

Chapters 5 and 6 analysed the positions of mainstream political parties on European integration relying on the election programmes of the parties (Chapter 5) and their participation in parliamentary debates on European issues and foreign policy (Chapter 6). The hypotheses were constructed to investigate three dimensions of the elite debate on the EU: how the European debate developed over time, the parties' positions on European integration in comparison to other foreign policy options such as Russia and NATO and changes in the parties' positions regarding EU membership depending on their places in the party system. The chapters drew indirectly on a wide variety of party literatures such as election programmes and party manifestos, expert surveys, the role of parliaments and parliamentary debates and past research on the role of ideology and party identity in shifting positions on European integration.

Hypotheses 5.1 and 6.1 were identical and tested whether elite support for European integration had increased with the formulation of the European Union's strategy for accession based on two different data sources: the election programmes of main parties and transcripts of parliamentary debates. The hypothesis emerged following the findings on public opinion described in Chapter 4 that public support for European integration was overwhelming and increased with the certainty of accession. This being the case the hypothesis anticipated that mainstream political parties with ambitions for governance would take into account the preferences of their electorates when deciding their positions on European integration. This meant that public support for European integration was not only led by but could also lead the direction of elite support for EU membership. Moreover, by assuming an active part in the accession process political parties could raise

their popularity by taking part in accession negotiations, revision of chapters, signing of the Accession Treaty and so enhance their credibility in front of the electorate by gaining support at European level.

The hypothesis was tested through content and discourse analysis of election programmes and parliamentary debates. The findings showed that in the period between 1990 and 1997 the political parties (Bulgarian Socialist Party and United Democratic Forces) referred to European integration in their election programmes in general and vague terms such as aspiration to European values, national security and economic and political relations with other EU countries.

Content analysis of the debates confirmed that in the 1990s the parties had a broad idea of European integration which became more specific as the framework for EU membership was put in place by the European Commission. The references found in the debates were similar to those from the election programmes. United Democratic Forces referred to the theme of human rights, democracy and freedom which was synonymous with the concept of Europe while the parties from the left – the Bulgarian Socialist Party and the Bulgarian Euro-Left - perceived European integration through the notion of *return to Europe* also noted in research on other countries from the post-communist region.

Since 2001 European integration was turned into a valence issue between the mainstream political parties. In their election programmes the parties were concerned with harmonisation and adaptation of legislation to European standards as well as the benefits associated with EU membership. The latter issue was discussed differently in the election programmes depending on the ideology of the parties, their proximity to power and coalitional potential.

Consistent with findings from past research the Bulgarian Socialist Party emphasised benefits associated with social gains while United Democratic Forces stressed economic gains to the electorate. The other major parties (Movement for Rights and Freedoms and National Movement Simeon II) which occupied the centre of the party system discussed benefits associated with both left and right ideology. Coalitional potential and proximity

to power were also found to be important for European integration. This research indicated that parties which expected to enter government as coalitional partners of main parties (such as Coalition Union Attack) would moderate their positions on European integration as would those parties that were certain to win elections and in the future carry out tasks related to European integration.

Analysis of the parliamentary debates after 2001 led to similar observations that the debates had become more technical closer to the date of accession. For instance, the parties discussed concrete measures that could facilitate Bulgaria's accession such as the harmonisation of legislation with EU standards, cooperation with the European institutions, training of experts in public administration, acceleration in the speed of reforms, national strategies against corruption and the elite consensus on European integration was consolidated towards meeting common goals and objectives to attain EU membership.

The theme of Europe as a valence issue was also present in the parliamentary debates where the shared consensus on European integration was translated into an issue of competence and the two major parties competed to show they were more capable of satisfying this objective than their opponent.

Another consistent observation between the election programmes and the parliamentary debates was that although the political consensus on European integration was undisputed the parties had different versions of European membership. This was particularly evident in the parliamentary debates from the positions of the small parties – the Bulgarian Euro-Left, the Bulgarian Business Bloc and the Agrarians. Those parties were instrumental with the issue of European integration which they used to legitimise their own priorities such as the importance of family business, strong economy, Christian values and land restitution.

The main parties, the Bulgarian Socialist Party and United Democratic Forces, in a similar way to the small parties, differed in their visions of Europe which represented the two sides of the political consensus on EU membership. The Bulgarian Socialist Party

was pro-European and pro-Russian but rejected NATO membership until the year 2000 when it reversed its position on NATO. By contrast United Democratic Forces perceived EU membership and NATO as interlocking projects which were inconsistent with a pro-Russian orientation in foreign policy.

The last finding is a linking point in the analysis between the first and the second group of hypotheses on European integration and elite positions. Hypothesis 5.2, 6.2 and 6.3 investigated the parties' positions on European integration in relation their positions on the USSR, Russia and NATO. Hypotheses 5.2 and 6.2 were identical and tested the same relationship against two data sets of election programmes and parliamentary debates. The hypothesis proposed that elite support for European integration increased as support for the USSR and Russia decreased. Hypothesis 6.3 anticipated that elite support for European integration increased as elite support for NATO increased.

The justification for the second group of elite hypotheses was as follows: hypotheses 5.2 and 6.2 were based on the assumption that after the collapse of the USSR and the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact Bulgaria had to switch its foreign policy preference from Russia to the EU. This tendency was established especially after the Copenhagen criteria for EU membership in 1993 was made available. The reorientation of the other countries in Central and Eastern Europe in the same direction towards EU membership strengthened the pro-European elite consensus in Bulgaria at political level.

Hypothesis 6.3 assumed that elite support for NATO increased with the prospect for EU membership since the European Union did not provide an alternative in terms of national security. With the clarification of the potential benefits at national level associated with European integration NATO membership was perceived as an extension to the new democratic order in the country. Prior to this point at around the year 2000 NATO membership was one of the foreign policy alternatives discussed at political level alongside participation in a pan-European security system and close ties with Russia.

Both hypotheses were supported by the findings from Chapters 5 and 6. The election programmes of the main parties showed that over time references to USSR and Russia

decreased and became shorter. Where such references were made the context was broad and referred to good relations between both countries and regional cooperation. Contents analysis of the programmes also showed that the Bulgarian Socialist Party referred to Russia twice more often than Union of Democratic Forces. However, contrary to expectations there was only one reference to Russia as a foreign policy alternative while the question of national security was debated in the framework of a pan-European security system or NATO.

The final hypothesis 6.4 aimed to link support for European integration to the positions of parties in the party system. It assumed that parties in government would be more supportive of European integration than parties in opposition. The logic for the hypothesis was that parties in government would be directly involved in the accession process of facilitating integration by undertaking tasks such as submitting an application for EU membership, taking part in the accession negotiations, revision of chapters, signing of the Treaty which would make them better informed of the dynamics of integration as well as more positive about EU membership. Moreover, parties in government often operate in coalitions with other parties so they would support strategic topics such as EU membership in order to guarantee their place in the political mainstream. Karen Henderson argued that in the case of Slovakia the mainstream political parties were pro-European because they could all claim ownership of EU accession due to their contribution to the process at one stage. (Henderson 2008a, 2008b) A similar analogy can be made with Bulgaria where the main parties contributed to the integration process which turned the accession issue into a valence issue of political competition.

The evidence from the election programmes and the parliamentary debates was not sufficient to either prove or disprove the hypothesis. Some preliminary observations led us to believe that coalitional potential and proximity to power (measured by the likelihood to win the next election) were important as shown in Chapter 5 although the parliamentary debates showed that whether parties were in government or in opposition they were equally likely to express an opinion on the topic of European integration.

This section discussed the elite hypotheses in light of the empirical chapters of the thesis by relating support for European integration to the positions of political parties determined from their election programmes and parliamentary debates. The overall findings were that support for European integration increased with the likelihood of EU membership which altered the contents of the European debate by making it more specific and technical over time. On the topic of foreign policy NATO replaced Russia as a foreign policy option which in the latter part of the transition period was perceived to go hand in hand with EU membership. The thesis also showed that ideology was important in how parties expressed support for European integration.

### **7.3 RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS BEYOND THE CASE OF BULGARIA**

Further to the specific case study of Bulgaria this research points to wider implications that are in principle applicable to any future studies that concern candidate states and support for European integration. The research confirms that political elites play a decisive role in generating support for European integration. They fulfil this role by undertaking reforms, participating in the accession negotiations, signing of the Accession Treaty and further cooperation with the European institutions and EU member states. Moreover, political elites, having better channels of information about the EU and knowledge derived through the structure of the accession process are in a position to influence public opinion in favour or against European integration. In the case of Bulgaria the pro-European political consensus was indirectly linked to higher public support for EU membership before accession.

Following from that implication the thesis also demonstrates that European integration is a reoccurring theme at national elections in countries where the domestic political elite is committed to the goal of EU membership. At the early stages of the integration process the notion of EU membership may be vague and expressed through broad terminology linked to notions of democracy, market economy, human rights, European values or return to Europe. As the countries move closer to the end of the accession process, the debate about European integration revolves around the costs and benefits arising from

accession as well as becomes goal oriented and technical in nature. Moreover, it is precisely at the final stage of integration that eurosceptic parties are likely to emerge or gain prominence at national level.

Furthermore, this project highlights the importance of EU leverage for the undertaking and speed of domestic reforms in transitional states. The leverage might be more relevant to countries without recent experiences of democratic traditions and particularly to those that emerge on the path to EU membership from authoritarian or totalitarian regimes. It is important in this context to consider the progress made and lessons learnt by the EU from the Eastern European enlargements in relation to giving a clear commitment to EU membership and a roadmap for accession which may shorten the pre-accession period for new candidate states.

Finally, in countries like Bulgaria where the goal of EU membership is linked to expectations for a better standard of living and political and economic stability, material incentives at micro and macro levels determine the degree of public support for European integration. The poorer and more politically volatile new candidate states are, the higher their expectations from the EU and vis-à-vis degree of support for European integration is likely to be. Utilitarian characteristics of respondents such as age, occupation, education, level of income and location could be tested beyond Central and Eastern Europe but the changes that take place in preparation for European integration in those states are likely to divide the societies into winners and losers from European integration.

This section mapped out the wider implications arising from the specific case study on the nature of the European debate in Bulgaria. It referred to the decisive role of political elites in generating support for European integration, the prominence of EU membership in national election campaigns as well as the importance of EU leverage for reforms change in candidate states and the applicability of material incentives and utilitarian characteristics in generating support for European integration. The next section will discuss the scope for further research that can build upon the findings from this thesis.

## **7.4 OUTLOOK AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

This research began with the objective to determine mass and elite levels of support for the EU and the relationship between them in Bulgaria. In order to achieve this aim I located the research referring to the processes of democratisation and accession that influenced the public and elite discourses on EU membership.

Comparatively, Bulgaria was a typical case from Central and Eastern Europe where public support in favour of European integration was determined by utilitarian factors as well as political and identity proxies of support. At elite level European integration was perceived positively and debated in broad terms until the Copenhagen criteria for accession was formulated. In the latter part of the transition EU membership was established as a valence issue in Bulgarian party politics and support for integration was undisputed throughout the period of transition.

The public and elite debates on EU membership in Bulgaria reinforced each other although as elsewhere in Europe political parties were better informed than the public regarding the benefits and costs of integration. As the European debate matured with the certainty of EU membership the political consensus on the EU was challenged by the emergence of the 'soft' eurosceptic party, Coalition Union Attack.

Firstly, one way to build on the findings of my research would be to extend the analysis to new candidate states beyond post-communist Central and Eastern Europe. It might be beneficial to compare the Bulgarian case to countries that share some historical heritage with Bulgaria and constitute the next wave of enlargement such as Croatia and Macedonia in order to determine differences and similarities between waves of accession. Another avenue for research would be to study the European debates in countries from the former Soviet sphere of influence like Ukraine and Georgia to which Bulgaria belonged and where political elites have shown similar commitment and desire for European integration. Alternatively, a comparative project between Bulgaria and states that prefer to stay outside of the EU like Belarus could shed light on the political

economy of the EU enlargement and the objectivity of the decision making process at European level.

Secondly, the thesis confirmed the findings of past analysis by Cichowski (2000a), Ehin (2001), Tverdova and Anderson (2004) and White *et al.* (2002) on public support for European integration where utilitarian factors are shown as the best determinants for public support. Chapter 4 showed that in Bulgaria occupation, education and age were relevant variables that distinguished supporters from opponents to EU membership. The analysis can be extended by testing new variables of support such as residency, religion and gender. This will add to a growing body of literature by Nelsen and Guth (2000; 2003), Nelsen *et al.* (2001) and Guerra (2008) who referred to some of these variables in recent contributions. In the cases of Bulgaria, Macedonia, Ukraine and Georgia the role of the Orthodox Church can be compared to the role of the Catholic Church in Poland, Spain, Ireland and Croatia. Location is also important and comparative analysis of countries situated on the boarder line of Europe can distinguish between winners and losers from European integration.

Thirdly, there is scope to expand the data set of election programmes and parliamentary debates for Bulgaria to other candidate and EU member states from Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans in order to map out through contents analysis the positions of parties on European integration before and after accession. Budge and Laver (1986) and Budge *et al.* (2001) have already produced substantial body of comparative research following the same methodology for Western Europe and major developed countries which can be extended to compare results from the new EU member states. Spatial analysis can be used to test the role of ideology, party identity and coalitional potential as independent variables that influence the positions parties assume on European integration.

Fourthly, content analysis of election programmes from the former communist states in Eastern Europe could be developed to mirror existing research from Western Europe that measures whether parties fulfil their electoral pledges on issues concerning European integration prior and after EU membership. This avenue of research would add to our

understanding of the role that parties play in democratic societies and the forming of electoral linkages in post-transitional states. Moreover, election programmes and parliamentary debates can help us understand the success of populist parties in the run up to accession, their characteristics and the emergence and nature of accession populism in the context of future EU member states.

This thesis began as a comparative approach case study of mass and elite levels of support for the EU in Bulgaria while the final section considered future avenues for research building on the reported findings. The thesis proved that utilitarian factors and proxy models of support were reliable variables that explain public attitudes in favour of integration. At elite level EU membership emerged as a valence issue among the political elites which however differed in their visions of Europe. Future research can build upon those findings by expanding the comparative framework from before to after accession as well as reaching to new candidate states and even countries that at present choose not to follow the route to EU membership.

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Stella Bankova – Ataka / Independent, 21 December 2006.

Tatyana Doncheva – Bulgarian Socialist Party, 21 December 2006.

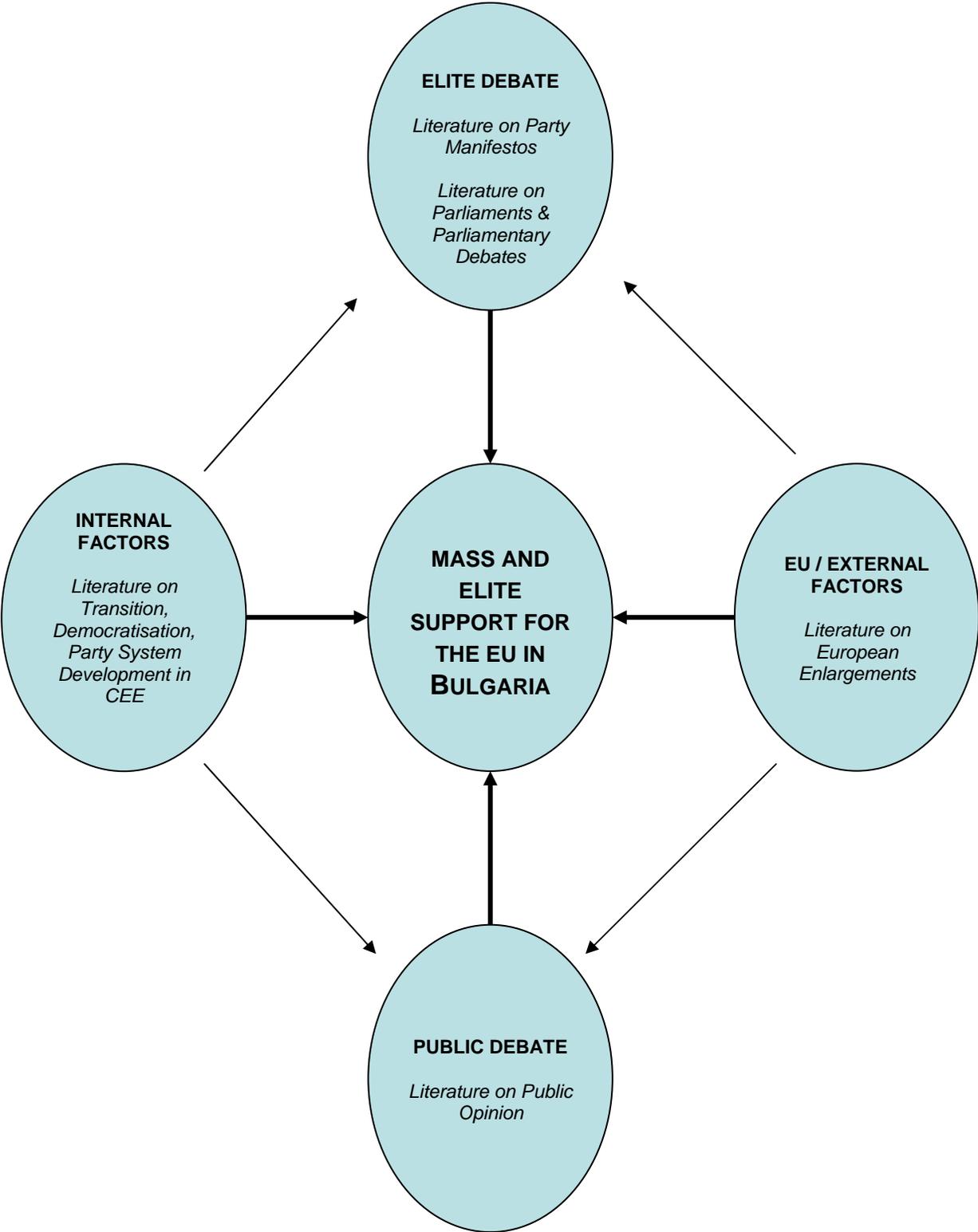
Venzislav Vurbanov – MP from the Bulgarian National Agrarian Party, 20 December 2006.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### THESIS STRUCTURE

**Figure 1.1: Literature Outline**



## APPENDIX B

# FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE BULGARIAN PARTY SYSTEM

**Table 2.1: Bulgarian Parliamentary Election Results 1990-2005**

	2005		2001		1997		1994		1991		1990	
<b>Party</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Seats</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Seats</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Seats</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Seats</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Seats</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Seats</b>
NDSV	21.83	53	42.7	120	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SDS	8.44	20	18.2	39	52.3	123	24.2	69	34.4	110	36.2	144
NS				12		14	6.5	18	3.9	-	8	16
CSD +Others	5.7	13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
BSP/CB	33.98	82	17.1	48	22	58	43.5	125	33.1	106	47.2	211
DPS	14.07	34	7.5	21	7.6	19	5.4	15	7.6	24	6	23
BE	-	-	1.0	-	5.5	14	-	-	-	-	-	-
(BSPD)	-	-	(BSPD/KB + BSPD/ODS)		(BSPD/ODS)		DAR (3.8)	(-)	SDS- C (3.2)	(-)	(SDS)	
(BKP)	-	-	(BKP/KB)		(1.3)	(-)	(1.5)	(-)	(0.7)	(-)	(-)	(-)
BBB	-	-	-	-	4.9	12	4.7	13	1.3	-	-	-
DSB	7.07	17	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
COA	8.93	21	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Others		-	13.5	-	7.7	-	15.7	-	19.7	-	2.6	6
Total	-	240	-	240	-	240	-	240	-	240	-	400

\* Legend:

BBB: Bulgarian Business Bloc

BE: Bulgarian Euro-Left

BSPD: Bulgarian Social Democratic Party

BSP: Bulgarian Socialist Party

CB: Coalition for Bulgaria

COA: Coalition Union Attack

CSD: Coalition of Free Democrats

DPS: Movement for Rights and Freedom

DSB: Democrats for Strong Bulgaria

NDSV: National Movement Simeon II

NS: People's Union (1994-2001: BZNS-NS and DP; 1990-1991: BZNS)

ODS: United Democratic Forces

SDS: Union of Democratic Forces

SDS-C: Union of Democratic Forces – Centre

\* Sources: *Centralna Izbiratelna Komisija; Election Database Eastern Europe*

(<http://www.parties-and-elections.de/bulgaria2.html>)

(<http://www.2005izbori.org/results/index.html>)

**Table 2.2: Bulgarian Prime Ministers (10<sup>th</sup> November 1989 – 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007)**

<i><b>Bulgarian Prime Ministers Since 10<sup>th</sup> November 1989</b></i>	<i><b>Time of term</b></i>	<i><b>Party affiliation</b></i>
Andrei Lukanov	1989-1990	Bulgarian Socialist Party
Dimitur Popov	1991	Independent
Filip Dimitrov	1991-1992	United Democratic Forces
Lyuben Berov	1992-1994	Bulgarian Socialist Party
Reneta Indzova	1994	Independent
Zhan Videnov	1994-1997	Bulgarian Socialist Party
Stefan Sofiyanski	1997	Independent
Ivan Kostov	1997-2001	United Democratic Forces
Simeon Saxcoburggotsky	2001-2005	National Movement Simeon II
Sergei Stanishev	2005 - 2009	Coalition for Bulgaria

*\* Source: Parliamentary Library, Official Record Office.*

**Table 2.3: Result of the May 2007 European Parliament Election in Bulgaria**

<i>Party</i>	<i>Vote Share %</i>	<i>No. of MEPs</i>	<i>Estimated No. of MEPs*</i>
Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria	24	5	5-7
Platform of European Socialists	23	5	4-5
Movement for Rights and Freedoms	17	4	3-4
Coalition Union Attack	12	3	2-3
National Movement Simeon II	7	1	1-2
United Democratic Forces	5	-	0-1
Democrats for a Strong Bulgaria	4	-	0-1
Coalition 'Bulgarian Social Democrats'	3	-	-
Others	5	-	-

\* *Source: Centralna Izbiratelna Komisija (Central Electoral Commission)*

## APPENDIX C

### BULGARIAN ELECTION PROGRAMMES

**Table 5.1: Characteristics of Party Manifestos/Election Programmes in Bulgaria  
(1990-2005)**

Party	Election Year	Number of Pages	Format	Presentation	Distribution Methods
BSP	1990	29	A5	Booklet (black/white)	Party Newspaper / Party Headquarters
BSP	1991	31	A5	Booklet (black/white)	Party Newspaper / Party Headquarters
BSP	1994	23	A5	Booklet (colour)	Party Newspaper / Party Headquarters
BSP	1997	5	A4	Handout (black/white)	Party Newspaper / Party Headquarters
CB	2001	32	A4*	Booklet (colour)	Party Newspaper / Party Headquarters / Website
BSP	2005	59	A4*	Booklet (colour)	Party Headquarters / Website
UDF	1990	48	A5	Booklet (black/white)	Party Newspaper
UDF	1991	7	A4	Booklet (black/white)	Party Newspaper
UDF	1994	8	A4**	Booklet (black/white)	Party Newspaper
UDF	1997	4	A4**	Booklet (black/white)	Party Newspaper
UDF	2001	58/94	A4/A5	Booklet (colour)	Party Newspaper / Party Headquarters / Website
UDF	2005	24	A5	Booklet (colour)	Party Headquarters / Website
MRF	1991	17	A5	Booklet (black/white)	Party Newspaper
MRF	1994	8	A5	Booklet (black/white)	Party Newspaper
MRF	2005	80	A5	Booklet (colour)	Party Headquarters / Website
NMSS	2001	30	A4	-	Website
NMSS	2005	11/16	A4/A5	Booklet (colour)	Party Headquarters / Website
CUA	2005	2	A4***	-	Website

\* An abbreviated version of the manifestos was available from the party website and party headquarters before the elections.

\*\* An abbreviated version of the programmes was printed in the party newspaper after the print of the full programmes.

\*\*\* An abbreviated version was available as a poster prior to the 2005 general election.

**Table 5.2: Frequency of Word Usage in Election Programmes of Main Parties (1990-2005)**

<i>Word Usage</i>	<i>Election Programme</i>								
	BSP 1990	BSP 1991	BSP 1994	BSP 1997	CB 2001	BSP 2005	UDF 1990	UDF 1991	UDF 1994
Europe	3	6	2	1	2	4	8	6	1
European	4	9	7	7	13	32	13	5	4
European Integration	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0
European Union (EU)	0	0	2	1	28	37	0	0	4
Accession	0	0	0	1	2	5	0	0	1
Soviet Union (USSR)	3	5	0	0	0	0	2	1	0
Russia / Russian Federation	1	1	0	1	3	1	0	0	0
Bulgaria	25	30	20	17	21	14	37	31	24
Nation / National	18	40	19	16	32	57	37	23	9
Democratic/Democracy/ Democratisation	29	18	8	7	1	1	79	22	4
Market Economy	5	10	1	1	1	0	13	3	1
Free / Freedom(s)	16	10	0	0	0	4	76	22	5

<i>Election Programme</i>									
<i>Word Usage</i>	UDF 1997	UDF 2001	UDF 2005	MRF 1991	MRF 1994	MRF 2005	NMSS 2001	NMSS 2005	ATAKA 2005
Europe	1	7	4	2	1	10	2	3	0
European	1	55	21	5	7	40	15	15	5
European Integration	0	3	1	0	0	2	0	1	0
European Union (EU)	4	71	22	0	1	73	25	7	3
Accession	0	17	1	0	0	13	4	2	0
Soviet Union (USSR)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Russia / Russian Federation	1	4	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
Bulgaria	24	108	23	8	16	80	47	11	8
Nation / National	21	36	10	15	13	42	25	9	4
Democratic / Democracy / Democratisation	4	8	3	14	7	13	5	3	0
Market Economy	2	2	0	8	3	7	2	1	0
Free / Freedom(s)	5	11	3	9	12	12	4	2	0

**Table 5.3: Selected Quotes from Election Programmes and Party Manifestos**

(a) 'The dilemma between shock therapy and gradual transition to a market economy is a false dilemma! It is supported by BSP in order to discredit the only possible radical transition to market economy' (UDF 1990: 23).

(b) 'UDF is the only political force, which is capable of managing the huge foreign debt of the country which is left as a criminal heritage of the communist leadership' (UDF 1991: 4).

(c) 'During socialism one had to work from morning until night and then queue up for bus and bread... But to work just for the bread is not worth it' (UDF 1991: 5).

(d) 'Dear countrymen, You are disappointed that the Communist Party is trying to return to power again, that the promised reforms are failing and your life is getting harder and less secure. Sometimes it looks as though all politicians are conmen because part of the political elite behaves like those who for fifty years were stealing from you and living on your backs. Many parliamentary deputies made the choice to look after themselves instead of look after you first' (UDF 1994a: 3).

(e) 'The Bulgarian economy needs to be integrated with the European and world economy' (BSP 1991: 19).

(f) 'The national interests of Bulgaria dictate that the country should aim to be integrated with European structures – the European Council, the European Union, the European Parliament and the European market. The security of Bulgaria can only be guaranteed permanently in a system of a pan-European security' (BSP 1991: 27-28).

(g) 'The facilitation of the access of our goods to the Western European markets will be object of intensive negotiations with the European Union. The future of Bulgaria is in the Common European market. We will continue the preparation of our country for the future association and integration with the European Union' (BSP 1994: 10).

(h) 'We will guarantee the national security by obtaining international support through close relations and association of the country [BG] in the European, euroatlantic and world security structures' (BSP 1994: 21).

(i) 'A key foreign policy task for us is the accelerated integration of Bulgaria in the European and Euroatlantic structures – political, economic, military. The unity of the continent requires the establishment of a European system of security, the removal of all obstacles against pan-European cooperation and guarantee for no new divisions in the future' (BSP 1994: 21-22).

(j) 'We are in favour of foreign policy, oriented towards the full integration with European structures – trade, financial, political, etc.' (UDF 1990: 12).

(k) 'Our country must actively participate in the development of systems and mechanisms of pan European security as a main guarantee of our territorial unity, peace and stability in the Balkans and in Europe' (UDF 1990: 13).

(l) 'We need to act persistently and decisively for our integration towards the world and especially European economic, trade and political organisations' (UDF 1990: 13).

(m) 'We assume responsibility to deepen the processes of integration with the European Union and the friendly relations with neighbouring countries. To activate our participation in the Council of Europe and security and cooperation in Europe... We guarantee to introduce a new military doctrine that serves the national interests and the principles of self defence in accordance with the European orientation of Bulgaria' (UDF 1994a: 7).

(n) 'UDF envisages the guarantee for security and the prosperity of Bulgaria in the full membership of EU and NATO and work towards the speedy fulfilment of those goals' (UDF 1997a: 1).

(o) 'Stabilization and development of the Bulgarian health sector following the example of the European Union' (CB 2001:16).

(p) 'The development of a government policy towards the financing of the agrarian sector and the rural regions in accordance with the model of the common agrarian policy of EC' (CB 2001: 24).

(q) 'An actualization of the national strategy of the full harmonisation of the EU requirements [in the sector of ecology]' (CB 2001: 31).

(r) 'Deepening of trade integration with that of the European Union' (UDF 2001: 20).

(s) 'To improve the tax system to a system that concerns the cooperative and capital incomes and harmonize the tax burden with the requirements of the European Union' (UDF 2001: 30).

(t) 'To continue the work on the adaptation of the fiscal sphere towards the standards of the European fiscal sphere...' (MRF 2005: 27).

(u) 'One of the priorities that MRF would like to make is to preserve the culture of the various ethnoses in Bulgaria given their national and European cultural and historic heritage' (MRF 2005: 63).

(v) 'To provide political and economic assistance for the development of European programmes for mobility of young people, for professional education and requalification of cadres according to the standards of the European Union' (NMSS 2001).

## APPENDIX D

# BULGARIAN PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES ON EUROPEAN INTEGRATION, FOREIGN POLICY AND SECURITY

**Table 6.1: Parliamentary Debates on European Integration, Foreign Relations and National Security**

<b>Title of Debate (Source)</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>No. of Pages</b>	<b>No. of BSP/CB Participants</b>	<b>No. of UDF Participants</b>	<b>No. of MRF Participants</b>	<b>No. of NMSS Participants</b>	<b>No. of Attack Participants</b>	<b>No. of other party Participants</b>	<b>Total No. of Participants</b>
Debate 1 (PT 1992a)	14.08.91	7.5	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Debate 2 (PT 1992b)	30.05.91	11	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Debate 3 (PT 1997a)	05.10.95	12	6	5	2	N/A	N/A	3	16
Debate 4 (PT 1997b)	01.12.95	29	6	6	3	N/A	N/A	4	19
Debate 5 (PT 1998)	23.07.97	9	1	1	0	N/A	N/A	6	8
Debate 6 (PT 1999)	04.11.99	48	12	10	0	N/A	N/A	8	30
Debate 7 (PT 2000a)	14.12.99	12	1	2	0	N/A	N/A	4	7
Debate 8 (PT 2000b)	26.05.00	22.5	8	7	0	N/A	N/A	7	22
Debate 9 (PT 2000c)	25.07.00	46	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Debate 10 (PT 2001)	10.11.00	44	5	10	0	N/A	N/A	12	27
Debate 11 (PT 2002a)	08.03.02	37	5	5	3	5	N/A	-	18
Debate 12 (PT 2002b)	14.12.02	28	6	6	2	3	N/A	-	17
Debate 13 (PT 2002c)	04.11.05	11	5	4*	1	2	1	1	14

\* Includes the total number of participants for United Democratic Forces and Democrats for Strong Bulgaria, formally part of Union of Democratic Forces.

**Table 6.2: Percentage of Party Contribution to the European Debate**

<b>Political Party</b>	<b>Percentage of Party Contribution to the European Debates</b> <i>(Number of MP participants by party/Total Number of Participants) (%)</i>
BSP/Coalition for Bulgaria	30.89
United/Union of Democratic Forces	31.46
Movement for Rights and Freedoms	6.80
National Movement Simeon II	5.62
Coalition Union Attack	0.56
Other	25.28

**Table 6.3: Selected Quotes from Parliamentary Debates**

(a) ‘The ultimate legitimacy of Bulgaria in the most authoritative European institution [The Council of Europe] which is a reliable indicator for the democratic process and state of the basic rights and freedoms, makes the perspective for integration within other European structures more realistic’.

**(Ivan Genov)\***

**(Debate 1, 14.08.1991: 234)**

(b) ‘The ratification of this convention is consistent with the decision of the Grand National Assembly for the accession of the Republic of Bulgaria to the European political and economic structures made on the 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1990...’.

**(Filip Ishpekov)\***

**(Debate 1, 14.08.1991: 232)**

(c) ‘...Would the European Union and its leaders have supported the beginning of negotiations with a country that has shown solidarity with policies that disregard human rights and support an authoritarian regime? [refers to the regime of Milosevic] The support for the international efforts was the litmus test for the place of each country of the political map of Europe...’

**(Former Foreign Minister Nadezda Mihailova, 1997-2001, United Democratic Forces)**

**(Debate 8, 25.05.2000: 62)**

(d) 'The project declaration of the government is trying to balance on one hand our major aim to receive an offer for the start of accession negotiations in Helsinki which is more likely to happen if today we reach an agreement on the conditions that the European Union imposes to close the reactors. Alternatively we might be the only European country that is left out from the prospect of EU membership'.

**(Aleksander Bozkov, United Democratic Forces)**

**(Debate 6, 04.11.1999:56)**

(e) 'Kosovo was this clear sign [in terms of foreign policy] which Bulgaria sent to the world and our own society that it is ready to share the human values of Europe. Kosovo was the key that opened the door of Europe for Bulgaria'.

**(Asen Agov, United Democratic Forces)**

**(Debate 8, 26.05.2000: 59-60)**

(f) 'A few days before the beginning of the new millennium Bulgaria is facing a historical moment. The European Commission has shown its willingness to begin accession negotiations. The moment is indeed historical as the only real perspective in front of Bulgaria is to become a part of the European Community of free movement of people, goods and capital. **This consensus** has been shared by all political forces, by the whole Bulgarian society in the last ten years...'

**(Dimitur Abadjiev, United Democratic Forces)**

**(Debate 6, 04.11.1999: 32)**

(g) '...The invitation for accession negotiations is a result of the efforts of all Bulgarian governments and parliaments since 1990 ...The invitation is a result of the permanently established **political and national consensus** in Bulgarian on the question of European integration. Many politicians, bureaucrats and diplomats lobbied for the fulfilment of this goal. **This consensus** stretches from the methods [of achieving EU membership] to the more critical questions that exist between Bulgaria and the European Union such as the visa regime....

**This consensus** was clearly visible during the debate and on the passing of many laws necessary to harmonize the Bulgarian legislation with that of the European Union...

The fulfilment of such an important national goal requires the mobilisation of the whole potential of the nation...'

**(President Georgi Parvanov, 2001 - , Bulgarian Socialist Party)**

**(Debate 7, 14.12.1999: 11)**

(h) ‘...Since 1990 all National Assemblies on different occasions have demonstrated **their consensus** on EU membership for Bulgaria...’.

**(Ekaterina Mihailova, United Democratic Forces)**

**(Debate 7, 14.12.1999: 10)**

(i) ‘...On the question of European integration we all agree that there is a **consensus** between the political parties...’.

**(Nikolay Mladenov, Union of Democratic Forces)**

**(Debate 11, 08.03.2002: 8)**

(j) ‘...The EU is not only about rights, subsidies and self-assurances that we are European. The membership presupposes too a belonging to the common foreign and security policy of the European Union, with clear commitments towards the Western European Union as a pillar, a European pillar of the organisation of the Euro Atlantic Treaty. It is the Euro Atlantic Treaty that guarantees for Europe success, freedom of the individual and democratic development...’.

**(Asen Agov, United Democratic Forces)**

**(Debate 4, 01.12.1995: 119)**

(k) ‘Our goal is the accession of Bulgaria to Europe. Europe is building its own home –slowly, painfully, but still building it. The place of Bulgaria is in this European home. And that’s why our position is crystal clear – **membership of Bulgaria in the EU and NATO. In our view these two processes are inseparable...**’ and

‘With this act which you committed not long ago of suspending these debates on Bulgaria’s membership in NATO you showed your attitude to this European home....You rejected the idea which became popular and acceptable in all countries, an idea about collective security in Europe. In this way, ladies and gentlemen from the Left you will remain outside of Europe. You showed very well today that you do not like Europe. You still do not resemble a Socialist Party. You are below the level comparatively speaking of the former Communist Party of East Germany, PSD. And we do not pity you that you will not be allowed in Europe. We feel sorry however that around you, under your management you will pull Bulgaria away from Europe and you will be an obstacle to its acceptance in the common European home. Gentlemen, where will you take Bulgaria? For those of you that are looking to the East, I will say: UDF wishes to maintain very good relations with Russia in every possible area. However we are very clear that Russia can not be the political example that we follow, nor can it guarantee us the much desired investments, economic prosperity and the least it can

guarantee our national security...’.

**(Valentin Vasilev, United Democratic Forces)**

**(Debate 4, 01.12.1995: 114)**

\* In the early parliamentary debates the party orientation of the participants was no indicated in the transcripts.