

SOUTH STREAM: EUROPEAN NATION STATE BUILDING IN THE PUTIN AND POST-PUTIN ERA

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ABSTRACT

Bulgarian nationalism as a political force for state political reform faces formidable challenges due to the Bulgarian state's dependent development under Communism. Nationalist communism was a comparatively effective component of the legitimation strategy for the Communist regime. In neighboring Serbia, the Titoist regime suppressed ethnic nationalism. As the largest nationalist challenge to the Communist Yugoslav state, the Serb national community was partitioned. One-third of ethnic Serbs were placed outside of the Serb republic, and Kosovo and Vojvodina were officially subunits of Serbia but were Yugoslav federal constituent republics in all but name. Russian exploitation of opportunities for influence expansion in Serbia and Bulgaria exist but differ, reflecting this conflicting legacy of Communism in both states. Serb rejection of Communism included advocacy of Serb irredentism, which the post-Soviet/Russian nationalist regime under Vladimir Putin seeks to exploit. Bulgarian nationalist Communism associated itself closely with the USSR until the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev and his reforms in the USSR in the mid-1980s. Bulgarian militant nationalism lacks societal consensus on the basic principles that constitute it. NATO-Russian competition for influence implies European Union deepening and widening occurs in opposition to post-Soviet Russian state influence. Europeanization implies reducing Russian bargaining leverage within the Bulgarian polity.

JEL: F5, K4, P3, Y8

KEYWORDS: Bulgaria, European Union, Russia, Serbia, South Stream

INTRODUCTION

As described by Stern et al., South Stream is one of a number of planned multinational natural gas pipeline construction projects sourced from deposits in the successor states to the former USSR. Russia's Gazprom and Italy's ENI formally announced South Stream in 2006 to supply Europe and expanded it in 2009. Total cost was estimated in 2014 to be approximately \$40 billion with up to 63 billion cubic meters per year projected capacity. Leading partners with Gazprom in the recently halted project grew to include Germany's Wintershall and France's EDF. Bulgaria was to participate as one of the seven countries constructing onshore sections of the pipeline beyond the Black Sea underwater component, with the latter starting at a Russian port. It would circumvent Ukraine, which is now a major pipeline transit corridor as a legacy of Soviet policies. Pricing disputes between Kiev and Moscow led to disruptions in gas supplies to European consumers in January 2006 and January 2009 (2015).

Europeanization in relation to national polities is a prominent focus in the European Union literature, with a focus on top-down and bottom-up Europeanization (Borzel and Panke, 2013). Top-down Europeanization for Bulgaria means reducing Russian bargaining leverage over the Bulgarian government. It focuses on reducing the influence of Russian hard and soft power influence within the Bulgarian polity deriving from economic assets and traditional pro-Russian identity sympathies. Europeanization in Bulgaria means the strengthening of the autonomy of the Bulgarian state to alleviate its neo-colonial relationship to Russian influence. It implies the strengthening of the judicial branch of the Bulgarian government and the

professionalization of the civil service. The Europeanization of Bulgaria interacts with the creation of a European area of freedom, justice and security. It aims towards the institutionalization of the rule of law in international relations in the European regional context and into the broader world (Carrapico 2013, 461; Giumelli 2013, 396).

European international relations become progressively a matter of opposition to crime and corruption, increasingly equated with Russian influence (Blank, 2011). For the foreseeable future, it is likely to require centralization of Bulgarian public administration implementation authority at the national level. Decentralization, either to geographic administrative regions or to policy actor networks, or to some combination of both is unlikely and undesirable. The general tendency in much of the European Union is towards multilevel governance (Piattoni, 2012). Europeanization increases possibilities for greater diversity in the creation of advocacy coalitions within subnational, national and European levels of public policy making (Weible et al. 2011). Yet, such a public administration trend is likely to make Bulgaria too sensitive and vulnerable to Russian formal and informal actor influence. Nevertheless, by allying with Bulgarian nationalism as a liberal actor, the EU promotes the top-down Europeanization of Bulgaria. It stands in contrast, however, to Serb irredentist nationalism that has been frustrated by Euro-Atlantic structures (“The Balkan Crisis,” 1997; Gow, 2003: 5). Serbia, therefore, is likely to remain more amenable to Russian influence than Bulgaria.

This paper posits that Prime Minister Boiko Borisov represents a generational section of the Bulgarian public that internalized a colonial worldview (Cottam and Cottam, 2001: 111-14). This worldview assumes that Bulgaria as a client state needs a Great Power patron to thrive. This analysis first presents the current topography of the dynamic Bulgarian political landscape. It then portrays its foundations in the legacy of Bulgaria’s dependent development within the Soviet bloc. It then highlights the impact of this legacy on challenges confronting the efficacy of the Bulgarian state in terms of instituting the rule of law. The analysis moves to a focus on the development of militant Bulgarian nationalism as a motivating factor that challenges perceived threats to Bulgaria’s sovereignty. The international political context affecting this evolution is highlighted in an analysis of the impact of competing Euro-Atlantic and Russian influence in the western Balkans in the South Stream case. It concludes with a discussion of the present manifestations of this legacy in the form of the rise of Boiko Borisov as two-time prime minister. It concludes that the Bulgarian transition is not complete in that Bulgaria remains vulnerable to Russian influence.

BULGARIAN POLITICS AND SOUTH STREAM

The political maneuvering regarding the currently frozen South Stream project highlights the different attitudinal values that different constituencies of Bulgaria society display. Nevertheless, Bulgarian political parties demonstrate a commitment to integration of Bulgaria into European institutions (Anagnostou, 2005: 98).

Borisov’s flexibility as national leader is notable in relation to the strong pro-Russia lobby in Bulgaria whose influence was evident in the parliamentary debate over South Stream (Pomerantsev, 2015: 40). Bulgaria has been portrayed as Russia’s friend within EU institutions, largely but not exclusively due to its dependence on Russian gas supplies (Bechev, 2009: 220). Bulgaria has consequently been more passive and reactive in its support for EU Common Foreign and Security Policy objectives (Bechev, 2009: 221). As the leader of the “Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria,” i.e. “GERB” (i.e. “shield” in Bulgarian), Borisov’s party represents elite channeling of Bulgarian nationalist populism into what remains a pro-Western direction (Gurov and Zankina, 2014).

The Bulgarian Socialist Party is the successor to the Bulgarian Communist Party that in the 1980s oversaw the so-called regenerative process that attempted to erase culturally the Bulgarian Turks. The Communist authorities shifted from ‘national in form, socialist in content’ to imposition of ethnic nationalist

assimilation. It culminated in the “regenerative process” to forcibly assimilate the Bulgarian Turks (Anagnostou, 2005: 94). The ensuing gross and systematic human rights violations led to approximately 350,000 migrating to Turkey until the Communist one-party regime ended in 1989 (Stefanova, 2012: 772). Yet, the de facto Turkish minority party, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) has collaborated with the BSP to form governing parliamentary majorities (Nezi et al. 2009: 1005). Of course, the MRF gains benefits for its members and constituency as a consequence (Linden and İrepoğlu, 2013: 244).

The BSP added liberalism to its value ideals political orientation since 1989. Militant nationalist populist values have had parliamentary representation, most recently, by the Attack party, whose leader, Volen Siderov, regularly targeted the MRF as a political bogeyman (Ganev, 2006: 86-88). Yet, the BSP was apparently able to use its Russia-sympathetic credentials to attract support from the Attack party. The latter gave the BSP-MRF coalition one additional parliamentary vote needed to allow it to form a BSP-led government in 2013-14 under Plamen Oresharski. It was formed following inconclusive national parliamentary elections. In June 2013, the appointment of Deyan Peevski, an ethnic Turk and a Bulgarian oligarch, to head the intelligence portfolio, led to demonstrations. Peevski’s quick resignation did not quell the protests that continued for months.

In April 2014 after Russia’s annexation of Crimea, the Oresharski government passed legislation exempting the South Stream gas pipeline from EU regulations against monopoly access. Recent EU regulations prohibit EU participation in constructing fossil fuel pipeline projects that contract a monopoly supplier. The Bulgarian parliament designated Bulgaria’s section of the project an “interconnector” rather than a pipeline. The Attack party voted for the legislation, warning the government that it would withdraw its parliamentary support if the government supported stricter EU sanctions on Russia (“Country Report May 2014:” 22, 27). Under threat of withholding of EU development funds, the Oresharski government shelved the project. The justification was the European Union’s third energy package adopted in 2009 that forbid the ownership of gas infrastructure by producers supplying Europe (Baev and Overland, 2010: 1081). The Oresharski government resigned following a poor showing in May 2014 European Parliamentary elections that led a surging MRF to request new national elections (“Country Report August 2014:” 3, 24). The GERB emerged as the largest party and Boiko Borisov became Prime Minister for second time in late 2014.

Borisov first became prime minister following the 2009 national elections. He resigned in 2013 reacting to at times violent demonstrations triggered by electricity price increases amidst perceived corruption and intensifying austerity (Brunwasser and Bilefsky, 2013). Popular anger focused on privatization of Bulgarian electrical energy infrastructure to foreign, Czech buyers who raised rates (“Power Protests,” 2013). These price increases had been approved by the Bulgaria state regulatory body (“Chaos in Bulgarian Energy,” 2013). As of this writing, Bulgaria remains the only East European state in which a sitting prime minister has not succeeded in retaining office following an election since 1989 (Mirescu and Nikolova, 2014: para. 7).

Greece also expressed interest in participating in the South Stream project (Karagiannis, 2013). Subsequently, it has been shelved, while the Russian government has proposed an alternative route to supply, terminating at the Turkish-Greek border (Johnson, 2015).

STATE BUILDING IN POSTWAR BULGARIA

The Soviet authorities considered the People’s Republic of Bulgaria its closest ally (“Former friends,” 2005). Katsikas reports that Bulgaria twice under Todor Zhivkov’s rule formally requested to join the USSR as its sixteenth republic, once in the early 1960s and again in the 1970s. The USSR refused so as not to complicate its relations with the West and its allies. In return for Bulgaria’s supplication, Bulgaria received extensive economic subsidies from the USSR as well as export markets for its uncompetitive products.

Bulgarian Communist Party subservience also recognized that the BCP came to power through Soviet occupation, unlike in neighboring Yugoslavia (2012: 5-6).

Katsikas notes that Bulgaria's economic dependence on the USSR grew after the end of the 1960s. As the Bulgarian economy weakened, state Communist nationalism began to develop (2012: 30-31). Meznik and Theime note that Communist elites in Bulgaria in the late 1970s promoted a renaissance of nationalism during the socialist era to secure their positions, i.e. "national values." In Bulgaria nationalism was mobilized by targeting it against the Turkish minority. In neighboring Romania, beginning in 1964 with Ceausescu, the target was the Hungarian minority. Both state sanctioned movements despised the Roma and advocated assimilation (2012: 197-98).

Katsikas notes that Todor Zhivkov's daughter, Lyudmila Zhivkova promoted Bulgarian nationalism beginning in the 1970s. She was appointed deputy chairperson of the committee for art and culture. Her efforts intensified especially after the mid-1970s when she received far-reaching powers over television, radio and the press until her death in 1981. She aimed to promote a sense of Bulgarian separateness and to increase national self-confidence. In 1982, the USSR began reducing oil subsidies to its East European allies, which eventually ended completely under Gorbachev, causing Bulgarian panic (2012: 21).

According to Neuberger, the Bulgarian Community Party had significant difficulty in incorporating Muslim populations into rural transformation projects. This resistance was responsible primarily for the large-scale expulsion of about 140,000 Turks from Bulgaria in 1950-51. The focus of the expulsions was in the Dobrudja region in the Bulgarian northeast, the cause being the intent of the Bulgarian authorities to collectivize agriculture. A primary concern was that large-scale migration would lead to disruption of the economy, even destruction of certain sectors, namely in tobacco. Tobacco had come to be dominated by the Turkish population (2013: 226-27).

Vuzroditelniia Protses (Regenerative Process) is a cognate of the Bulgarian term *Vuzrazhdane* (rebirth) process. The latter is conferred on the Bulgarians' national awakening in the nineteenth century, which led to the creation of the modern Bulgarian state. According to Bulgarian propagandists, the Turks were Turkified Bulgarians since the Ottoman conquest, so too now the Bulgarian Turks would be reborn and renamed as Bulgarians. Zhivkov and his entourage conceived this policy regarding the 1,000,000 Turks in Bulgaria. The USSR would have to protect Bulgaria while the Soviet authorities were unwilling to intervene in Bulgaria's domestic affairs with Chernenko being incapacitated (Katsikas 2012: 32).

Katsikas notes Gorbachev criticized Zhivkov in October 1987 for Bulgarian policy on Turks. Gorbachev snubbed Zhivkov earlier in July 1985, criticizing Bulgaria for insufficient glasnost with too much perestroika. Zhivkov reciprocated the snub by not mentioning Gorbachev in his speech to the 13th BCP congress in April 1986. Zhivkov argued that glasnost's purpose was to show the need for perestroika, but perestroika had already been introduced in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian authorities used nationalism and consumerism to compensate the crackdown on internal expression following 1968 Czechoslovak invasion (2012: 30-31).

Katsikas continues that the escalating domestic conflict led to the end of the Zhivkov regime. The Turkish minority was in revolt and bombs exploded on 30 August 1989 at the Plovdiv railway station and at the Varna airport. More bomb threats emerged, with violent conflicts between Bulgarian security services and Bulgarian Turks. These conflicts produced the biggest Bulgarian military operations since World War II. They resulted in hundreds of arrests and the emergence of an illegal opposition group, "The Turkish National Liberation Movement in Bulgaria" under (Turkish name) Ahmed Dogan (Bulgarian name Medi Doganov). Zhivkov opened the borders in effort to curb turmoil. At least 300,000 Bulgarian citizens left to go to Turkey (2012: 34). Turkey closed the border, with the conflict escalating between Turkey and Bulgaria (Vaksberg and Andreev, 2014). The Kremlin offered its support to a planned palace coup (Katsikas 2012: 34).

Dogan formed the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) in the midst of the disintegration of the Communist regime. It has maintained its hegemony as the party representing the approximately 10% of the Bulgarian population that is Turkish. It has been the only Turkish ethnic minority party to surpass the 4% national electoral vote threshold for entry into the National Assembly, which it does consistently (Celik, 2009: 13-14; “Movement for Rights and Freedoms”).

Bulgaria: The Legacy of Colonialism

The Bulgarian state is a comparatively weak administrative state today as evidenced by its relatively high levels of corruption (Miller, 2008). This corruption is significantly a product of a Bulgarian societal habitual attitudinal tendency inculcated during generations of dependent development. It derives from clientelistic, feudalized patterns of post-Communist authority relations that have been ascendant after the restraining force of authoritarian top-down one party control was erased (Karstedt, 2003). Personal interaction with public authority slowly transitions to internalization of the assumption that authority derives ultimately from the autonomous self-determination of the national community (Danchev, 2005). “South Stream” is a case study on the attitudes of the elite of Bulgarian society. It focuses on the top of the “hourglass society,” in which mediating institutions with the mass public are markedly distrusted and therefore lacking, especially in Bulgaria (Rose et al., 1997: esp. 107).

Manifestations today include a comparative absence of strong formal state institutions and their underlying foundational social and legal norms. They are necessary for protecting property rights as well as regulating market transactions (Tzvetkova, 2008: 348). This history has habituated societal attitudes towards the state in the form of its government apparatus to view it as insulated from the national public. Prevailing individual attitudinal predispositions deemphasize expectations of, in effect, social-contractual relations with the state as a consequence of generations of imperial domination (Sklansky, 2005: 1816-17). The post-1989 accession of a liberal, participatory political constitution in Bulgaria contributes to the decay of this dependent development legacy. This liberal constitution provides a more propitious environment for collective political participation including social movement challenges to the Bulgarian elite. Social movement targets include the Communist era elite who reconstituted themselves in various forms, including as the Bulgarian Socialist Party. Bulgarian societal behavior corresponds generally more closely with the “self-sufficient” assumption regarding state authority described by the social movement theorist, Gene Sharp (1973: 73-75; Ackerman and Kruegler, 1994: 8-9). Corruption is a label for the consequences of behavioral patterns that associate with the assumption that the Bulgarian state and its apparatus are self-sufficient, i.e. independent from societal support.

The totalitarian, political economic component of Soviet imperialism was the latest stage in a long period of imperial domination including centuries of Ottoman Muslim rule. The Soviet legacy also interacted with the earlier collective memory of Slavic Orthodox Russia’s critical role in Slavic Orthodox Bulgarian national liberation in 1877-78 (“Alexander Nevsky;” “Monument”).

Bulgarian Militant Nationalism and European Liberal Democracy

Arzheimer notes that the common denominator for all extreme right European parties is nativism: the belief that members of the native group should be the exclusive inhabitants of the state (2012: 36). Class is a notoriously complex concept, but it appears to be closely related to formal education. Voting for extreme right and educational attainment level has a remarkably strong correlation. Young people are more likely to vote for extreme right parties than older (2012: 45-47).

The National Front (FN) of France has been the center of gravity of populist radical right parties in Europe since the late 1970s, together with the Austrian FPÖ and the Flemish Bloc (VB). Ivaldi notes that the FN is considered the most typical of these parties and it has played a leading role in attempting to unify these

parties across Europe. Ivaldi concludes that euro skepticism and anti-federalism are their only common denominators (2012: 18).

Daniel Smilov of Sofia's Centre for Liberal Strategies affirmed that the highest profile militant populist party in Bulgaria has been Ataka (Attack). At its height, neither it nor any party sought to claim itself as the home of Bulgarian euro skepticism (Troev and Hope, 2006). The rise of right-wing extremist parties in Bulgaria was belated, peaking in 2006 and since declining. Ataka leader Volin Siderov received 24 percent to Georgi Parvanov of the Bulgarian Socialist Party receiving 76 percent in the 2006 second round national presidential election (Troev and Hope, 2006). Meznik and Theime note that Ataka supported Boiko Borisov's 'centre-right' coalition to form the first Borisov government in 2009 (2012: 195, 201). No convincing research exists to explain why militant nationalism has arisen as a powerful force in some states following system transformation and not in others (195-96). Both the Bulgarian and Romanian revolutions were top down affairs with second rank apparatchiks deriving legitimacy from removing Zhivkov and executing Ceausescu (197).

Meznik and Theime highlight that Ataka started as an alliance of right and left wing extremists. It underpinned a fierce debate continuing in terms of the kinds of nationalism that Siderov and others represent since Ataka originally started as a coalition. Ataka's essential platform points focused on resentment towards the Turkish minority and its political representation. Ataka advocated an end to Turkish language news programs on state TV and a ban on the MRF that it views as unconstitutional. Enemies of the nation are the US, NATO, international financial institutions as well as the Roma population. The latter are supposedly terrorizing the population and its high birth rate are a threat to the majority (2012: 205). Ataka had been relatively successful in elections and it has been willing to compromise with the "corrupt" elite to form electoral coalitions in which it supported GERB government. Siderov regularly associates himself with Vasil Levski, a nineteenth century heroic national icon and Ataka has good regional party structures (2012: 206). Indeed, Ataka was known as being more effective in maintaining relatively strong grass roots constituency relations. Siderov "travels a lot and meets ordinary citizens, giving them a feeling that he listens to their problems" (Popkostadinova, 2006: 3).

Kelbetcheva highlights that the rise of the MRF has generated a nationalist, xenophobic backlash among some segments of the Bulgarian public. Communist historiography maintains a strong influence over prevailing public views of Bulgarian history and the MRF today (2012: 242). Predominant Bulgarian views today continue to view the Ottoman occupation as a time of national enslavement. The Communist regime receives some sympathy for its efforts to attempt cultural genocide against the living remnants of the "Ottoman yoke" (239).

As an aspiring counter elite seeking greater influence, the Ataka leadership sought to attempt to assuage public concerns that it is irresponsible in its orientation and demands. It submitted to the Bulgarian parliament a resolution declaring the killings of Armenians in the disintegrating Ottoman Empire in 1915 as a case of genocide in January 2008. The United Democratic Forces (UDF), another party in opposition, joined Ataka in support. The former claimed direct succession from the political counterelite that emerged to confront the ruling Communist and post-Communist/Socialist parties with the end of the Cold War (Kostadinov, 2008).

The post-Communist, Bulgarian Socialist Party was the main party in the ruling 2005-2009 coalition government. It allied with the ex-monarch's National Movement for Stability and Progress (NDSV) and the de facto Turkish minority party, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF). The BSP rejected the draft parliamentary resolution on the Armenian killings after being placed in an awkward public political position. European Union authorities are under political pressure to require recognition by Istanbul of the 1915 killings as a case of genocide as a prerequisite for Turkish accession to the EU (Hakobyan, 2004: 1-3). Other local government bodies within Bulgaria passed resolutions declaring the killings as a case of

genocide (Kostadinov, 2008b). Ataka exploited what appears to be widespread Bulgarian nationalist discontent over the almost continuous role of the MRF in ruling parliamentary coalitions. From summer 2001 until summer 2009, the MRF had been awarded cabinet positions, specifically, the tobacco-focused agricultural ministry (Kostadinov, 2009). As such, Bulgarian public suspicion was stoked that Dogan, the MRF and the Bulgarian Turks exercised excessive influence over government policy of the Republic of Bulgaria (Kostadinova, 2008a). The secular MRF is perceived as having been successful in converting its political effectiveness with its basis in minority in-group solidarity into economic benefits for its constituency (Bivol, 2008).

In 2013, mass public demonstrations occurred over Bulgarian kleptocracy being seen as a source of the far-reaching economic austerity policies adopted by the government. These policies include most recently privatization and outsourcing of the electricity distribution system to private, foreign-affiliated firms. These power distributors increased significantly electricity prices to consumers. A result was the outbreak of widespread public demonstrations. They forced the resignation of the first “Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria” government of Boiko Borisov. It led to the formation of a caretaker government and the calling of new elections in May 2013. The outcome of these elections saw the GERB receive a plurality of votes by a small margin, but it was unable to form a parliamentary majority coalition. The second place Bulgarian Socialist Party then proceeded to form a parliamentary minority government. It did so in formal alliance with the MRF. The far-right “Attack” party provided parliamentary support to keep the BSP-led Oresharski government in power, just as it informally allied with GERB during 2009-13. In June 2013, the BSP, led by former Prime Minister Stanislav Stanishev, then rushed through the nomination and confirmation of a controversial cabinet member. It chose a MRF figure, Delyan Peevski, to head the powerful “State Agency for National Security” (DANS).

Regularly tagged in Western media reports as a media mogul, Peevski had been charged with corruption in an earlier governmental role but cleared. His mother formally owns his large Bulgarian media holdings. A physically large young man with close-cropped hair and beard, Peevski’s rushed nomination and confirmation touched off renewed large-scale societal protests (Brunwasser, 2013). One Bulgarian anthropologist reportedly explained that Peevski’s beefy physique contributed to the hostile public response by evoking an old, Communist era stereotype, “the evil capitalist” (Brunwasser, 2013). Peevski quickly resigned, but the demonstrations calling for the resignation of the Oresharski government and new elections continued daily for months. Charges were leveled at Peevski’s media operations for swaying the May 2013 elections. Media reports highlighted claims of 350,000 allegedly “illegal” ballot papers discovered immediately before the May 2013 elections, implying GERB malfeasance. Additional claims were highlighted in the media in early 2013 of GERB government illegal wiretapping as well. One may infer that to many in Bulgarian society, the nomination and confirmation of Peevski appeared to be political compensation by the BSP to the MRF. The Oresharski government resigned and called national elections in autumn 2014 following disappointing European Parliament elections. As of 2015, BSP leader Sergei Stanishev is chairman of the Party of European Socialists. It largely composes the center-left faction of deputies in the European Parliament (“European Socialist Network,” 2014).

Militant Bulgarian nationalism remains an ambiguously defined phenomenon because it lacks a consensus on what it entails in terms of policy advocacy and rejection. The association of militant nationalism with the Communist regime has substantially delegitimized Bulgarian ideological nationalism. Nevertheless, the nationalist-populist “Attack” party has continued to hark back to the national ideals in its media broadcasts. The SKAT television channel in Bulgaria controlled by the Attack party at least until 2009 continually featured a map of Greater Bulgaria on the wall behind the host of one of its regular broadcasts. This poster is apparently standard fare throughout Bulgaria, portraying Bulgaria to include Macedonia and other territories. The same poster hangs on the wall in the entrance hall of the local orphanage in Blagoevgrad, the home of the American University in Bulgaria. [This writer was on the political science faculty there from 1994-2009 (Reeves-Ellington, 1998)]. The Attack Party is publicly pro-Russian (DW, 2014). It

exploits the traditional, romantic Bulgarian nationalist stereotype of Russia as the 19th century liberator of Bulgaria from the Ottoman Empire in the 1877-78 War (Wenshaung, 2014). Consequently, Attack party leader Volin Siderov formally launched the party's 2014 European Parliament Bulgarian election campaign in Moscow (Political Party Ataka, 2014). It lost the two seats that it had occupied (Todorov, 2014). The Attack party continued its decline in electoral support but it did surpass the 4% parliamentary barrier for seating in the Bulgarian National Assembly in October 2014 national elections (Kostadinova and Popova, 2014).

According to Ataka, the alleged cabal of corrupt national majority and ethnic minority elites supposedly use political power to steal Bulgarian national assets through privatization (Siderov, 2005). Meanwhile, the rest of society becomes comparatively ever poorer as the previously all-encompassing, familiar Communist-era welfare state disintegrates (Ghodsee, 2008: 37). The relevant social justice norms appear to be the perceived ideals articulated as justification for the old Communist regime. Without specification, these norms generally refer to enforcement of relative socio-economic equality across all classes and sectors (Smilov, 2008: 18).

As Abraham Maslow formalized, the focus of individual and community constituency needs evolves, including security, stability, dignity, and even self-actualization (Sklansky, 2005: 1761). Political participation in a developed society typically assumes satisfaction of safety and security needs. To satisfy dignity and self-actualization needs, the competent individual citizen needs opportunities for effective political participation in a democratic political system (Pausch, 2011: 21). Ideally, the community's system of authority norms develops in a collective dialog with the authorities. Theories of deliberative democracy highlight the importance of participation as necessary (if not sufficient) for the emergence of a societal consensus on norms of right and wrong (Sklansky, 2005: 1723-24, 36, 58-65, 85, 92, 1808). It may thereby facilitate the emergence of the necessary conditions for greater societal trust and consequent belief in the rule of law (Sklansky, 2005: 1785). A national society subject to imperial domination is a society bereft of self-determination. In such a national society, self-determination of its individual members will also be perceived as inhibited. Over generations, behavioral attitudes deriving from the imperial experience will characterize the individual's attitudes towards civil societal as well as public political participation. Transforming these attitudes both at an individual and societal level requires iterative political participation to generate individual internal and societal institutional consensus on norms (Zak and Kugler, 2011: 136, 39, 44, 45). As internalized individual behavioral attitudes change, so will they aggregate to affect the functioning of the state in a liberal democratic political system. Zak and Kugler note that the emergence of societal trust within a society is one of the strongest predictors for the growth of living standards across societies (2011, 141).

SOUTH STREAM, NATIONALISM AND CONFLICT IN THE BALKANS

Cottam and Cottam note that the US and its allies had been following a relatively low cost (for NATO) stabilization strategy with regard to the states of the former Yugoslavia. It focused on stabilizing these new independent states within their existing, Tito-era republic boundaries (2001: 264). Conveniently, European Union integration would arguably be a plausible high-level tactical component for such a stabilization strategy. The international community lacked the intensity of commitment necessary to confront the difficult task of addressing and reconciling conflict nationalist claims in the former Yugoslavia. The overlapping and conflicting national self-determination demands of the Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats and ethnic Albanians were the ultimate source of the outbreak of warfare. As the escalating mass violence itself generates broader international political crises, then the international community has accommodated these demands. It initially did so on the basis of various factors. Among them was public opinion sympathy deriving from historical factors that contributed to German and Italian support for recognizing Slovene and Croat secession vis-a-vis Belgrade (Woodward, 2013: 1174). As NATO turned against Milosevic's Serbia, Kosovar nationalism gained the consequent political benefits of being another, eventually NATO-allied

adversary of Milosevic. Hence, subsequent developments have led to the present situation in which Kosovo with the support of much of the international community has gained sovereignty. Meanwhile, Serb irredentist demands for unification with Serbs outside of the boundaries of the Republic of Serbia, which are a legacy of the Titoist regime, remain anathema (Thomas, 1997; Silber and Little, 1997: 28-34). This impasse for Serb nationalism will continue at least until Serbia succeeds in generating more influence among the most influential ex-Contact Group members (Russia, US, UK, Germany, France, Italy).

Russian President Vladimir Putin warned in assertive statements against the 2008 formal secession of Kosovo from Serbia. He argued that it would set a precedent for international resolution of other secessionist disputes, such as in Cyprus and in Georgia (“Putin’s annual news conference,” 2006). Yet, Russia in 2003 withdrew all of its forces from the Balkans with the exception of Moldova (*Financial Times*, 2004). In fact, Russia (and China) has at times indicated that it will acquiesce to the separation of Kosovo from Serbia, albeit it expected an appropriate trade-off for accepting this outcome (Dinmore and Dombey, 2006). The authorities in Republika Srpska, one of the two entities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, hoped to link to South Stream at the contested city of Brcko (International Crisis Group, 2011: 4).

The EU plays an important role in post-Milosevic efforts to engage in state building in Southeast Europe in that weak states generate corruption, strife, poverty and terrorism (Solana, 2003: 6). It thereby serves to reinforce the stabilization strategy of the international community to the national peoples of the former Yugoslavia. The prospect of the relative individual and group opportunities for utilitarian gain from European integration are an influential factor. They induce cooperation among actors in Bosnia-Herzegovina, who would rather not cooperate, to do so (Judah, 2005; International Crisis Group, 2006). Belgrade and Zagreb are currently unwilling actively to encourage their Bosnian ethno-sectarian compatriots to aspire towards unification with their respective patron states. It is a critical factor supporting this cooperation (Dombey and McDonald, 2006). In the event of the collapse of this cooperation, then an upsurge in the nationalist components of Muslim Bosniak identity should be more likely, i.e. an increase in pan-Islamic appeals (BBC Monitoring, 2008). Parallels here might be found in the intensely violent conflict in Chechnya, with Chechen nationalism having acquired an Islamist element. It is partly as a consequence of a Chechen search for support to counteract the Russian comparative power advantage (Buckley 2006; “Rebel Chechen minister,” 2006). In this context, despite its Cold War history, Bulgaria remains a model of peaceful Balkan political development.

The romantic appeal of the social justice ideals of Communism in Bulgaria have become greater along with the passage of time away from the actual reality that ended in 1989 (Genov, 2010: 41). One social mobility incentive that Russian interests competitively offer is the \$500 million that Moscow claims would come to Bulgaria from South Stream pipeline annual transit fees (Roth, 2014). Bulgaria is clearly the poorest EU member state (“GDP per capita,” 2014). According to one *Financial Times* report,

In Bulgaria Gazprom, Russia’s state-backed energy group, was recently exposed dictating new laws to energy officials in Sofia ahead of a proposal being made to parliament. Questions, raised by the EU, local Bulgarian politicians and the US, swirl around corruption in the South Stream energy pipeline over the awarding of huge construction contracts to certain corporate entities.

The Bulgarian government is the most corrupt in Europe, a European Commission report this year said. Separately European intelligence agencies including Germany’s BND fear the entire Bulgarian political system is compromised by criminal organisations linked to the Russian state and by Moscow’s intelligence agencies (Jones, 2014).

The US government views the South Stream project as about increasing Russian influence in Europe more than making money (“Vladimir Putin’s Visit to Serbia,” 2014; Nichol, 2014: 37, 46, 66). U.S. media reports Russian financial support behind “anti-fracking” protests expressing environmental protection concerns in

Bulgaria and throughout Eastern Europe (Higgins, 2014). These reports reflect a concern in Germany about general Russian efforts to increase its influence in Eastern Europe (Wagstyl, 2014). Some observers have noted a particular focus on the Western Balkans, i.e. Russia's traditional regional ally, Serbian nationalism (Spasovska, 2014). Despite announcement of cancellation of the project, particular Bulgarian and Russian decision makers continue to discuss how to continue with the project ("Russia Asks Bulgaria," 2014).

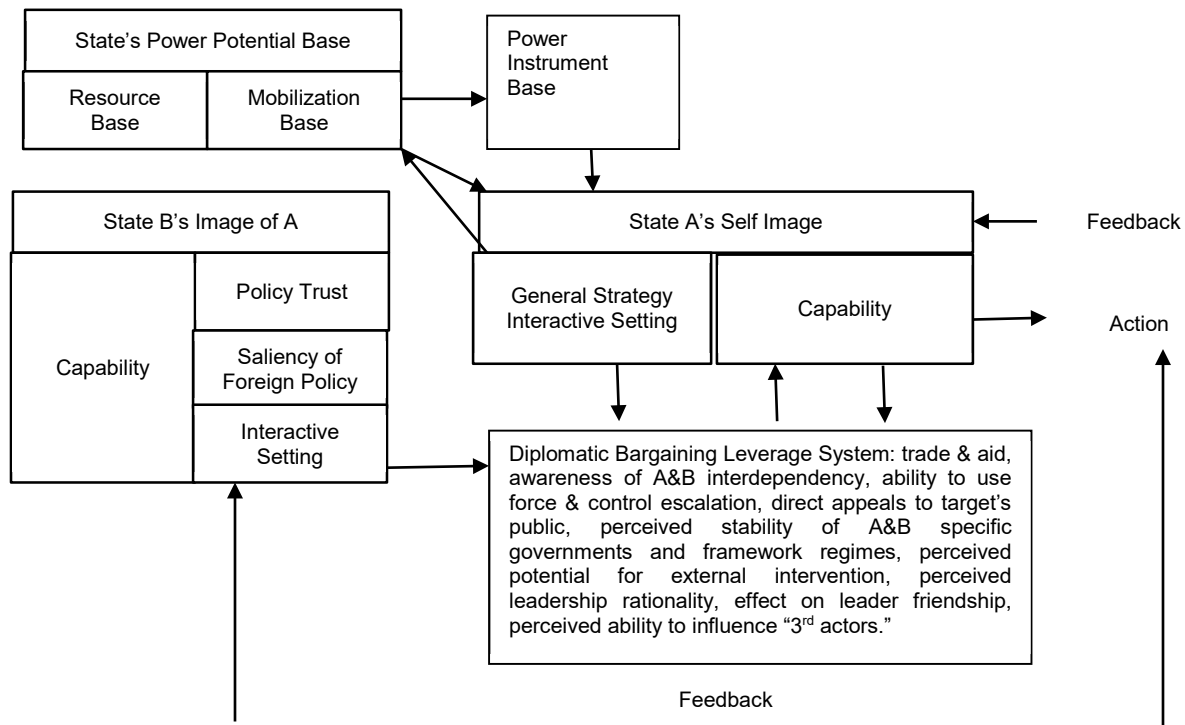
Alliance with Russia is necessary to rectify power imbalances that currently prevent Serb acquisition of self-perceived national rights ("Putin guest of honour," 2014). Such an alliance with Russia increases Serb bargaining leverage towards Brussels regarding Serb claims on Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina. A primary source of Brussels' bargaining leverage lies in the economic field. Ensuring the cancellation of the South Stream gas pipeline project reduces Serb economic options and strengthens Brussels' bargaining leverage towards Belgrade. Russian economic leverage towards Serbia and Bulgaria has heavily emphasized the economic benefits oil and gas pipeline cooperation ("Results," 2014). Following the cancellation of South Stream in December 2014, the Russian government proposed Turkish Stream as an alternative (Stern et al. 2015: 5-13).

A CASE OF POLITICAL CHARISMA IN POST-COLONIAL BULGARIA

Militant nationalist non-violent actors in Bulgaria have developed to the level to make demands and gain benefits through negotiations and compromise. It comes at the cost of transforming the movement into a party or interest group. Competitors thereby understand and tolerate each other and at the end both sides have achieved their aims, although organizational self-reproduction aims may become paramount. One result is the old Communist elite reforming themselves along with the opposition while continuing to reproduce their authority (Schipani-Aduriz, 2007: 92-93).

The populist drift boosted at the end of 2006 with the establishment of the party "Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria" (GERB). The party is created around a former police lieutenant-general, Boiko Borisov (b. 1959), currently Prime Minister of Bulgaria (July 27, 2009-March 13, 2013; November 7, 2014 --]. He started his post-1989 official political career as secretary general of the Ministry of Interior in the 2001-5 coalition government led by Prime Minister, and former king, Simeon Saxcoburgotski. As a private citizen in the 1990s, the former Communist-era interior ministry policeman Boiko Borisov had been bodyguard to Communist ex-dictator Todor Zhivkov and to ex-king Simeon Saxcoburgotski. Borisov ran in the 2005 parliamentary elections as a candidate of Simeon's NDSV (i.e. "National Movement of Simeon II") and was elected MP from two constituencies, but refused the seat and left the party. In autumn 2005, he ran in the mayoral elections in Sofia as an independent candidate and won the office, typically viewed as a training position for the Prime Minister post. As expected, his "Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria" won 116 out of 240 Bulgarian national parliamentary seats in July 2009 and he subsequently became prime minister (Minchev, 2009). His charisma stemmed partly from the perception that he, as a former police official, knows and understands the world of corruption and has both the will and the skill to fight it (Stoyadinova, 2009). Borisov has been relatively successful at least in impressing the US government in terms of his willingness to cooperate with US law enforcement and intelligence services (US embassy Sofia, 2006: para. 9). On the other hand, the US embassy noted in 2006 that his police still had not arrested any major organized crime figures despite 123 gangland assassinations, notwithstanding public portrayals of him as "Sheriff of the Nation" (US embassy Sofia, 2006: para. 11). Intensely self-promoting and ambitious, Borisov reputedly paid for positive media coverage and threatened those who report negatively about him (US embassy Sofia, 2006: para. 11).

Figure 1: Schematic Representation of Actor Power/Capability Base and Diplomatic Influence



The power potential base (including resource base and mobilization base), the power instrument base (the governmental and military programs for generating influence abroad), and the bargaining base (the target government's perception of the capabilities of the agent government, which the agent government may or may not be using) collectively comprise the capability base of a state. The capability base translates into the bargaining leverage system: the level of diplomatic interaction. Collective as well as individual decision maker perceptions/misperceptions of power capabilities and strategic intentions of confronting states reflect a community's historical experiences (Cottam and Galluci, 1978: 9).

Borisov's political charisma illustrates the features and contradictions of post-colonial Bulgaria. As noted, he was a member of the security apparatus in Communist Bulgaria. Yet he apparently was prohibited from entering the most elite training academies because his grandfather had been executed in a Communist-era show trial (US embassy Sofia, 2006: para. 9). Media reports noted his brooding personality and restless energy along with his penchant for black clothes. He had a public tendency to appear suddenly at crime scenes. It contributed to his nickname borrowed from a globally familiar cinematic American Hollywood crime fighting superhero, "Batman" (US embassy Sofia, 2006: para. 9).

US media reports note that a number of these unsolved mafia assassinations appear to have been modeled on American Hollywood films. Top gangsters acquired archetypical mafia-type nicknames in media coverage, e.g. "the Beak," "Little Mitko," "the Gorilla," "the Doctor" (Brunwasser, 2005). Borisov's manful, intellectual and cloak-and-dagger qualities include being coach of the national karate team before achieving a senior position in the Sofia police force. He obtained a doctoral degree in "Psychological and Physical Training of Operatives" (US embassy Sofia, 2006: para. 9). Pervasive smuggling organized crime networks and trading business cliques that already had their roots in the Communist era emerged out of these old security organs (Hope and Troev, 2008). Borisov was apparently heavily involved (Bivol, 2011: sec. 16). He established one of the numerous private security companies that still characterize the Bulgarian post-1989 domestic clientelistic political economic landscape (US embassy Sofia, 2006: para. 10).

Borisov in effect reflects the Bulgarian national internalization of the colonial/client self-image stereotype (Cottam and Cottam, 2001: 112-13). According to a leaked report from the US embassy in Sofia, "Borisov is street smart but often appears politically naive, as when told us he expects direct American support for

his political career as a sign of our appreciation for his cooperation” [*sic*] (US embassy Sofia, 2006: para. 12). According to Cottam and Cottam, actors internalizing the inferior culture and capability components of the colonial/client self-image are more prone to stereotype a great power increasing its influence in the region. They are likely to view it as the hidden, ultimate arbiter of political outcomes in the internal politics of the colonial/client community. In the concomitant “imperial” stereotype of great powers, the great power has ultimate control through their almost omniscient and omnipotent network of covert assets: the hidden hand. Far-reaching community internalization of this “imperial-colonial” image relationship can produce self-fulfilling behavior that confirms these stereotypical assumptions. They may remain until the prevalence of the stereotype decays in the on-going process of democratic political national self-expression and development (2001: 112-13).

In the mean time, the ambitious Borisov expects that to be nationally successful politically, he should have the United States as a patron while the traditional imperial power, Russia, is in eclipse. He allegedly promised to the US embassy that he would cause the collapse of the post-Communist, Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) 2005-9 government under Stanislav Stanishev. He would purportedly do so after the completion of a basing agreement for US forces in Bulgaria (Bivol, 2011: sec. 16). He portrayed himself to US representatives as fiercely anti-Communist (US embassy Sofia, 2006: para. 12). On the other hand, the US embassy reports that Borisov had built his career until that point while relying on close cooperation with Valentin Zlatev, Russian LUKoil’s CEO in Bulgaria. The latter’s operations the US embassy suspected of having a close association with Russian criminal and intelligence elements (Bivol, 2011: sec. 14). During his first national political campaign, Borisov criticized the BSP government’s willingness to accede to US requests to send additional Bulgarian military units to Iraq. He also criticized it for failing to obtain more benefits in return for allowing US military forces to be based in Bulgaria (Bivol, 2011: sec. 16). When US representatives responded and warned Borisov, he immediately stopped his anti-US policy rhetoric (Bivol, 2011: sec. 16). Then, apparently to prove his loyalty to the Americans, Borisov, the informal leader of GERB, promised to destroy the militant nationalist Attack party (Bivol, 2011: sec. 16).

Borisov had suggested that one of the first legislative acts of GERB-led government would be to make evidence collected by Olaf, the EU’s anti-fraud office, admissible in Bulgarian courts (Sevova, 2010). Borisov claimed that such a move that would quickly increase the number of convictions for abuse of EU funds, which have been rare (Hope and Troev, 2009). After becoming Prime Minister in his first term, Borisov appointed a former prosecutor favored by the EU as Justice Minister (“Growing Pains,” 2009). He sought to ensure that provisionally allocated but frozen EU development funds are not permanently lost due to EU concerns regarding pervasive corruption. Borisov also moved to dismiss hundreds of employees of the Bulgarian border customs office. He restarted previously frozen cooperation with the UK’s Crown Agents, a customs and excise service (Hope, 2009).

The social psychological meaning of being a Bulgarian citizen continues to evolve relatively quickly in comparison with west European nation states. A consensus on the emotional substance of being a Bulgarian in terms of rights and obligations of individuals and groups remains comparatively fluid. The Bulgaria nation-state’s transition to become an institutionalized liberal democratic European nation state remains dynamic. Borisov’s charisma interacts competitively with other political forces on the Bulgarian populist right and with Bulgarian pro-EU government policy behavior to contribute to this process (Koepeke et al. 2011).

The Borisov government’s willingness to reorient Bulgarian energy policy away from Russia towards compliance with EU demands generated a negative response from Vladimir Putin. Russia’s president described the successful European Union pressure on Bulgaria to cancel its participation and hence the entire South Stream project as a violation of Bulgarian sovereignty: “If Bulgaria is deprived of the possibility of behaving like a sovereign state, let them demand the money for the lost profit from the European Commission” (Walker, 2015).

CONCLUSION: THE ON-GOING BALKAN TRANSITION

The implications of this study are that overcoming the challenge of corruption in Bulgaria will emerge painstakingly over years, even generations. The European Union integration process provides a roadmap for harnessing the mass public mobilization capabilities of Bulgarian nationalism. It aims to do so while maintaining the association of Bulgarian nationalism with liberal political and economic ideological values. The prevailing behavioral political attitudes of Bulgarian nationalism in its post-colonial context lack behavioral consensus beyond joining Europe. European integration provides a framework for development in a consensual direction. This coherence may include relative societal agreement on what are the legitimate demands of society upon the state and on how may interest groups and individuals pursue these demands.

Bulgarian social movements against corruption are more likely to emerge along with an emerging consensus within Bulgarian society upon the political cultural meaning of Bulgarian citizenship. They would be expressed in social justice demands articulating obligations and rights, including equality of treatment under the law. These demands will reconcile with differential status achievement as a fundamental principle of modernity in a society. Representing this system of norms are the authorities within the organizational and governmental apparatuses. Their accession to predominance should appear more or less legitimate in the eyes of the overwhelming majority of the citizenry. Bulgarian militant nationalism has to be harnessed to reform what exists through creation of broad societal, economic and political fronts demanding these changes, i.e. social movements. Creation of these networks of meaning would support the emergence of ethical, law-bound candidate state civil servants and politicians. They would also support the civil society allies they need as political allies to be effective.

This paper has shown that the South Stream case highlights the conjunction of collective economic interest and identity transitions underway in a traditionally pro-Russian community, Bulgaria. Acquiescence to the European Union's directives is likely to continue in Bulgaria, a community whose state generally encompasses the Bulgarian nation. The issue of Macedonian identity is beyond the scope of this paper, but the comparison with Serb nationalist irredentism is noteworthy. Serbia is a nation whose current borders were created by the Communist regime under Tito. These borders, internal to the new, postwar Socialist Yugoslavia, partitioned the Serb and other nations, but Serbia was by far the largest, and therefore most threatening, nationalist challenge. Yugoslavia's disintegration set the stage for the emergence of nationalist irredentist demands. These demands have been rejected and opposed by the international community with devastating sanctions and threat and use of deadly force. The subsequent recovery of post-Soviet Russia has created perceived opportunities for Serb nationalism to seek support from its reinvigorated Russian patron. South Stream can be seen in these terms: an attempt at reconstituting Russian bargaining leverage in Southeast Europe among national peoples still seeking patrons. As such, it will generate significant political implications for the internal and foreign policies of Southeast European states when world fossil fuel prices recover from their temporary depression.

The limitations of this analysis reflect the theoretical framework's assumption of collective perceptual patterns of self and other underpinning community, polity and governmental apparatus decision-making. The importance of boundaries and simplifications in information processing in decision making have been acknowledged, e.g. "bounded rationality" (e.g. Simon, 2000). Determining the political conditions under which these collective perceptual tendencies emerge requires further research. In a nation state such as Bulgaria or Russia, these perceptual stereotypical tendencies are more prone to arise, but the conditions that produce this greater relative tendency require further investigation. They can also prevail in multinational states such as in the old Yugoslavia or USSR, but under conditions of one-party political monopoly authoritarian structures. The Communist parties in the USSR and Yugoslavia emerged as elite identity communities in their respective authoritarian, one-party states. Their identity legacies in the post-Communist political role of their security apparatuses would be a fruitful focus to understand international relations and domestic politics today in the post-Soviet space.

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