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**From Bright Light to Blackout: The Influence of the Europeanization
Paradigm on Bulgarian Foreign Policy and Transport and Energy
Infrastructure Policy**

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Declaration

I hereby declare that no parts of the thesis have been submitted to no other institution different from CEU towards a degree. To my knowledge nor does the thesis contains unreferenced material or ideas from other authors.

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Abstract

This dissertation presents a constructivist account of the dynamics of the europeanization process in Bulgaria. It focuses on the interpretive frameworks that structure policymakers' approach to the europeanization agenda, on the interplay between the rival policy discourses that shape these frameworks, and on the manner in which political actors employ the symbolic power of policy ideas in the process of political mobilization.

On the basis of in-depth case studies of two important crisis periods in Bulgarian policymaking, I trace the mechanism through which the Europeanization approach that emerged as Bulgaria's dominant policy paradigm in the late 1990s has impacted on foreign policy and transport and energy infrastructure policy. The first crisis followed Bulgaria's involvement in the Kosovo conflict and was caused by the government's decision to support NATO's air war against Yugoslavia despite heightened domestic controversy. The second crisis was caused by Bulgaria's resistance against EU nuclear safety conditionality that envisaged the premature decommissioning of four allegedly unsafe nuclear units at the Kozloduy Nuclear Power Plant.

The Europeanization paradigm emerged as a two-sided construction that joined a grand project of identity transformation with a grand project of economic development and social welfare. During the Kosovo crisis, it was deployed as the dominant policymaking framework. The leadership's Europeanization-inspired foreign policy doctrine started out by defining Bulgaria's identity as European and non-Balkan. On this basis, it determined the national interest as an interest in demonstrating Euro-Atlantic solidarity in order to join the EU and NATO sooner rather than later, predetermined the policy outcome, and delegitimized alternative policy options and domestic resistance. During the Kozloduy crisis, the Europeanization paradigm failed to influence the elite and the public. It was outperformed by a discourse focused on national interests, sovereignty, national dignity, and economic development and prosperity, all of which were equated with the nuclear energy industry. Neither strategic calculation nor economic rationality fully dominated policymaking during the two crises. Policy was largely shaped by the

divergent ability of the Europeanization paradigm and its rivals to influence the interpretive frameworks that guided policymaking.

The dissertation analyzes the factors that account for the changing effectiveness of the Europeanization paradigm. The paradigm's decline has been partly due to the declining importance of its 'identity' elements under the influence of the changing domestic and international ideological environments. During the Kozloduy crisis, the paradigm became vulnerable to challenges also due to its failure to keep its identity project and its developmental project connected. Political mobilization has mattered, too. The policy impact of the Europeanization approach and its rivals has depended on how skillfully their proponents have utilized the symbolic power of policy ideas to enframe their policy agendas, to produce hegemonic constructions of the national interest, and to affirm their moral authority to participate in the policy debates. The diminishing policy impact of the Europeanization paradigm has reflected its diminishing ability to respond to Bulgaria's international marginalization and domestic socio-economic crisis and to recover Bulgarians' sense of collective self-esteem. It has also reflected perceptions of its growing incompatibility with Bulgaria's agenda of transport and energy infrastructure development.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Two Stories of Bulgaria's Europeanization

Although Bulgaria is geographically and historically part of Europe, at the end of the 1990s domestic public and political debates frequently evolved around the problem of the country's 'civilization choice'. The 1999 Human Development Report on Bulgaria, published by the United Nations Developmental Program, suggested that Bulgarians' civilizational aspirations articulated "the country's desired location on several symbolic maps – the maps of values, traditions, political organization, economic relations, security mechanisms" (*Human Development Report 1999*, 15):

In terms of civilisation choice the majority of Bulgarians choose the European model – and more precisely the Western European political tradition... The desire of respondents to see their country as part of Europe is obvious. (*Ibid.*, 5)

Now, less than ten years later, this is all probably still true, but it is no longer obvious. Back in 1999, Bulgarians readily imagined integration into the European Union (EU) as the light at the end of the tunnel. Now many of them would more readily associate it with the electricity blackouts that supposedly await them after the EU-impose closure of four units of Bulgaria's nuclear power plant (NPP).

After the end of socialism, relations between Bulgaria and 'Europe' evolved slowly. Bulgaria's starting position was not favorable to fast European integration because of the immediate return to power of the barely reformed communist elites. The government of the former communist party, renamed into Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), which won the first free elections, failed to make any significant progress in this respect. In 1992, the government of the anticommunist rightwing Union of Democratic Forces (SDS) (in office from 1991 to 1992) started negotiations with the EU on signing an Association Agreement. In late 1995, Bulgaria submitted its official application for EU membership.

In the early phases of post-socialist transition, the political sphere remained split between former communists wary of radical reforms, and a disorganized, and often disoriented, rightwing anti-communist bloc. It was a period of geopolitical indolence that, despite the formal bid for European integration, left Bulgaria in a gray zone as

regards international status and geopolitical location. Both foreign policy and domestic politics wavered directionless between pro-Western and anti-Western models. On the whole, Bulgaria's transition was closer to failure than to success. And so was the country's economic performance. Due both to the ethnic conflicts in Yugoslavia and to the unstable domestic political situation, Bulgaria was not on the maps of foreign investors. It had fallen

into the category Thomas Carothers has labeled 'feckless pluralism,' dwelling in a 'gray zone' where formal democratic processes are combined with a corrupt elite, a public disaffected from politics, and poor economic policy. (ESI 2005a, 51)

The BSP's notorious Videnov government (in office between 1994 and 1997) led Bulgaria to financial and economic collapse and was forced to resign amidst rampant social protests that erupted in late 1996 (for details see Ganev 1997). The crisis secured a comfortable parliamentary majority for the coalition of the United Democratic Forces¹ (ODS) and lent strong legitimacy to its government (in office between 1997 and 2001). Immediately after the crisis, all major parties solemnly pronounced a consensus on EU membership. Between 1997 and 1999, public support for EU membership grew from around 50% to around 80% (see Graph 1). During the ODS's term in office, Euro-Atlantic integration dominated both foreign and domestic policy. At the EU's 1999 Helsinki Summit Bulgaria was invited to start EU accession negotiations.

There are different ways to tell the story of Bulgaria's post-1997 transformation. In the story told by a leading European think tank – the European Stability Initiative (ESI) – the 1999 'Helsinki Moment' was a defining moment. With the prospect of EU membership at once tangible, Bulgaria's transition trajectory changed miraculously. The story of Bulgaria's virtuous cycle of economic development and democratization deserves to be quoted at length:

Less than a decade ago, two of Europe's most respected senior statesmen, former French president Giscard D'Estaing and former German chancellor Helmut Schmidt, had publicly declared that neither Bulgaria nor Romania should ever join the EU, since they belonged to a different civilization (Orthodox/Byzantine). Yet today there is no evidence of clashing civilizations, and the Commission's report surprised nobody and aroused little comment.

¹ The ODS coalition united the SDS and several smaller and less influential parties.

Romania and Bulgaria have gone through transformations no less dramatic than that of Turkey...

The fortunes of both countries changed decisively once the EU-integration process became immediate enough to give it a direct political salience. Domestic champions of reform had existed in both countries ever since the fall of communism, yet they had achieved only limited success in the years before the late 1990s. The decision taken in 1999 in Helsinki to begin membership negotiations led to an extraordinary convergence of political programs across the ideological spectrum. Institutional reforms and economic policies became firmly anchored to European standards. During the last five years the Bulgarian and Romanian economies have been growing steadily, powered by the objective of catching up to EU levels.

The momentum that developed soon proved irreversible. Thus in June 2001, when Bulgarian voters threw out the EU-oriented reformist government of Ivan Kostov in favor of the former exiled king Simeon Saxe-coburg-gotski, whose movement for economic renovation was formed less than ninety days before the election, the pursuit of EU economic and political criteria did not slow. The new government soon had to cohabit with socialist president Georgi Parvanov, who was elected in November 2001, but the reforms again were not affected. (ESI 2005a, 5; see also EPC 2008, 35)

For these proponents of the Europeanization perspective for the Balkans, Bulgaria and Romania are success stories that should serve as models to the rest of the region. The Europeanization account explains Bulgaria's transition and its policy choices since the late 1990s as the outcome of international influence. On this interpretation, domestic political developments are determined by diffusing European models. Strong European influence and effective diffusion bring about policy change and succeed in chaining elites' agendas in favor of long-term reforms. Bulgaria has ostensibly been a good candidate for such a miraculous transformation. Marginalized by a powerful discourse that sets the Balkans apart from Europe and tainted by the image of violence and conflict attached to the Balkans, one would expect Bulgarians to voluntarily and even eagerly pursue their un-balkanization and europeanization – both in terms of socio-economic development and in terms of identity – in order to detach themselves from such images.

A report by Balkan policy and research institutes, however, told a different story about the same period of miraculous transformation that the ESI refers to (Krastev 2002). According to this story, trust in Bulgarian institutions was low; citizens were disillusioned with politics and tended to distrust political parties and to abstain from

voting; the majority of citizens approved neither of the political, social, and economic developments in the country nor of the reform agenda of the elites; the economy was deindustrialized; standards of living were persistently in decline; social inequality was growing; poverty was widespread; unemployment was endemic; welfare policies were ineffective; social and economic dislocation was accompanied by a growing sense of personal insecurity; corruption was widespread; widespread perceptions of corruption were a key symptom of a crisis of democratic representation; organized protest was missing due to the lack of capacity for collective action but the gap between the elites and the citizens was widening. In short, this was a story about a democracy in a state of profound crisis. In this story, external pressure, including European conditionality, was a mixed blessing for Bulgaria. It ensured the predictability of policies, disciplined elites and locked the country into reforms. Yet, it confounded the crisis of democratic representation by allowing elites to excuse their lack of responsibility for the welfare of citizens and it intensified voters' perceptions that elections could change governments but could not change policies (Krastev 2002, 29).

Both stories are useful. The first one describes the overall policy outcome in Bulgaria's transition to EU membership. Yet, it also leaves important questions unanswered. It shows that the country has apparently 'upgraded' its status from 'Balkan' to 'European', but does not tell us what difference it has made that Bulgaria was Balkan before it officially left for Europe. It shows that the pressure of EU conditionality induces policy change but does not help us understand how it induces change and how, if at all, it interacts with the local political process. It underscores the importance of European policy models, but does not ask how they take root in the local policy process. It stresses Bulgaria's 'socialization' into European models but does not want to know if these models are resisted, modified, or strategically utilized by political elites. It suggests that the Europeanization idea has strongly affected Bulgarian politics but it does not tell us in what way it has done that.

The second story tells us that Bulgaria's transition to 'Europe' has been anything but smooth and that to neglect the country's socio-economic development and the domestic political process is to neglect a great deal. It has emphasized, on the one hand, the strategic behavior of elites who have utilized European integration to cover up their self-

interested and socially irresponsible political projects, and, on the other hand, the unrelenting pressure of EU conditionality on policymaking. Yet, it also neglects some important questions. It does not ask if local policy discourses such as the Europeanization approach and its rivals have made any difference for Bulgaria's post-socialist transition. It does not deal with the contentious process through which conditionality has induced compliance: it suggests that conditionality has influenced policy by imposing external constraints and forcing compliance but does not ask if the ruling elites have ever adopted European models voluntarily.

In this dissertation I try to bridge the two stories and answer the questions that they fail to ask. My goal in this project is to understand the dynamics of the Europeanization process in Bulgaria and to outline the mechanism through which the Europeanization policy approach that emerged as Bulgaria's dominant policy paradigm in the late 1990s has influenced policymaking. I have done this by in-depth case studies of the workings of the paradigm in the course of two important crisis periods in Bulgaria's policymaking. The first such period is Bulgaria's involvement in the Kosovo crisis. The crisis was caused by the government's decision to demonstrate Euro-Atlantic solidarity and provide an air corridor for the military campaign of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) against Yugoslavia despite heightened domestic controversy and despite the potentially high political costs of the decision. The second crisis was caused by Bulgaria's resistance against EU nuclear safety conditionality that envisaged the premature decommissioning of four allegedly unsafe and non-upgradeable Soviet-built nuclear units at the Kozloduy NPP. This resistance was prompted by the strong pro-Kozloduy stance of the general public and by the active pro-Kozloduy campaigns of the nuclear energy lobby and the local political opposition.

I have focused on crisis situations because these are periods when 'normal politics' is suspended and gives way to politics that is much more contentious and more explicitly ideological. During crisis, political actors intensify their efforts to enframe and present their policy choices in a way that would enable them to successfully mobilize political coalitions, legitimize their policies, and contain dissent or limit contestation. Such periods, therefore, provide a clearer picture of the interaction between rival policy discourses and other factors relevant for policymaking.

On the basis of the empirical material provided by the case studies, I argue that the dynamics of europeanization in Bulgaria are better grasped by a constructivist theoretical approach than by a narrow rationalist one. In order to understand these dynamics we need to focus on the interpretive frameworks that have structured policymakers' approach to issues of europeanization, on the interplay between the rival policy discourses and ideological constructions that have shaped these interpretive frameworks, and on the manner in which political actors have employed the symbols, representations and arguments holding these policy discourses together in the process of political competition and mobilization.

The Europeanization paradigm ascended in conditions of economic and political distress after the 1996/1997 crisis and served as a comprehensive interpretive framework that enabled the leadership to formulate a set of policy guidelines for Bulgaria's future economic and political development. It emerged as a two-pronged ideological construction that joined a project of 'europeanizing' and 'civilizing' Bulgarian identity with a project of economic development and social welfare.

During the Kosovo crisis, the Europeanization paradigm was again deployed as an interpretive framework. On the basis of this paradigm, the leadership affirmed Bulgaria's identity (namely a European, as opposed to Balkan, one), determined the national interest with a view of this identity (namely to be identified as a committed supporter of Euro-Atlantic values in order to be allowed to join the Euro-Atlantic community sooner rather than later), established the range of prudent and morally defensible policy options (namely a pro-NATO stance), discarded and delegitimized other policy options (e.g. neutrality, which was equated with support for Milosevic) and justified the ultimate policy decision. The Europeanization paradigm is thus the key to analyzing decision making during this crisis.

It was deployed in the form of a foreign policy doctrine with a dual identity/interest structure. The identity-centered part of the doctrine focused on differentiating Bulgaria from the Balkans by presenting the country as one that exerted a europeanizing influence on the region and that was ready to take on the moral obligations entailed in its European identity despite the costs involved. The interest-centered part of the doctrine

linked demonstrations of European identity and Euro-Atlantic solidarity to the pursuit of political compensations in the form of fast Euro-Atlantic integration, and economic compensations in the form of constructing a second bridge on the Danube between Bulgaria and Romania.

The form of the requested economic compensations is also accounted for by ideational rather than material factors: the economic feasibility of Danube Bridge-2 was dubious, but the project enacted all the key imageries and causal arguments that were at the base of the government's foreign policy doctrine. It provided a route to Western Europe that circumvented Yugoslavia and thus symbolically disengaged Bulgaria from the conflict-ridden Balkan zones; it demonstrated Bulgaria's invulnerability from Balkan crises, its position of a stabilizing factor and a trustworthy partner of the West in the region, and its role of a regional infrastructure center; and it appeared to safeguard the national economic interest.

The fortunes of the Europeanization paradigm changed radically during the Kozloduy crisis. The paradigm failed to influence the behavior of the elite and the public and was outperformed by a pro-nuclear discourse upheld by a powerful informal coalition of political actors, civic organizations and nuclear energy lobby groups. The pro-nuclear discourse focused on national interests, sovereignty, national dignity, and economic development/prosperity, all of which were equated with the nuclear energy industry. The once Euro-enthusiastic Bulgarians now appeared intent on keeping four old units even at the cost of EU accession. Although Bulgaria closed the units under relentless pressure from the EU, the issue remained contentious and Bulgaria has continuously campaigned in favor of reopening the second pair of units. In 2002, the leadership re-launched the construction of Bulgaria's unfinished second NPP with the declared intention to preserve Bulgaria's status of a nuclear energy power. Economic rationality does not carry the day in this story. The economic feasibility of Bulgaria's second NPP has been bitterly disputed, forfeited profit from the closed Kozloduy units has been much smaller than the financial support Bulgaria has received from the EU, and each argument of the pro-nuclear coalition is unconvincing or at least disputable. What accounts for Bulgaria's resistance against EU nuclear safety conditionality is the ability of the pro-nuclear discourse, and the concomitant inability of the Europeanization discourse, to influence

the interpretive frameworks that have guided the public's and the policymakers' approach to the Kozloduy dilemma. Under the influence of the pro-nuclear discourse, the key stakeholders in the Kozloduy crisis have emphasized Bulgaria's identity of a regional nuclear energy power and have de-emphasized its 'European' identity. They have articulated the national interest as an interest in economic development through extensive development of the nuclear energy industry and on this basis have designated acceptance of EU accession conditionality as an undesirable policy option.

I identify six important factors that account for the rise and the decline of the Europeanization paradigm. One factor is the paradigm's relationship to the changing international ideological environment created simultaneously by an international discourse depicting the Balkans as un-European and by the increasingly influential Europeanization approach in the international community's Balkans policy. Changes in this environment (especially the decline of the former discourse) weakened the 'identity' elements of Bulgaria's Europeanization paradigm and left it vulnerable to contestation. Another factor was the paradigm's relationship to the changing domestic ideological environment. Changes in this environment emphasized economic development and welfare and weakened public support for the Europeanization agenda. A third factor was the paradigm's position vis-à-vis rival policy approaches. The paradigm's appeal and coherence appears to have depended on its ability to maintain its dual structure of a simultaneous project of identity transformation and economic development and to sustain the underlying assumption that European integration would gradually lead to economic development. This ability was impaired during the Kozloduy crisis and the pro-nuclear discourse usurped the 'economic development' project by asserting that only national economic development (achievable through the development of the nuclear energy sector) would lead to successful and dignified European integration. A fourth factor is the process of domestic political mobilization. The fortunes of the Europeanization approach and its rivals have depended on how coherent their proponents are in pursuing their political mobilization strategies, on how skillful their proponents are in utilizing the symbolic power of rival policy discourses when enframing their policy agendas, on how successful their proponents are in articulating the national interest in line with their favored policy approach, and on whether their

proponents are perceived as having sufficient moral authority to ‘speak’ about particular policy issues. A fifth factor is the ability of the Europeanization paradigm to tackle the problem of Bulgaria’s marginalization in the international sphere and the problem of the growing social malaise at home, and to thus recover Bulgarians’ sense of collective self-esteem. A sixth factor has been the perceived compatibility between the Europeanization agenda and the agenda of transport and energy infrastructure development.

Several clarifications regarding the terms I use are necessary. Following Hall, I use the term ‘policy paradigm’ to denote an interpretive framework that is comprehensible to all actors involved in the policymaking process, and that specifies the goals of policy, the instruments that can be used to achieve these goals, the nature of the policy problems, and the way the ‘world functions’ (Hall 1993, 279). A policy paradigm is embedded in the discourse and language shared by policymakers, covers all fundamental elements of the policymaking process, and is for the most part uncontested and taken for granted. I have used the term ‘policy approach’ to denote an interpretive framework, too, but one that is less comprehensive, less extensive, and more contested. Hence, I differentiate between policy paradigms and policy approaches in order to differentiate the degree of their ideological power. The term ‘representations’ stands for the ways in which phenomena are depicted, presented and evaluated by policy-makers, journalists, writers, academics, etc. The term ‘discourse’ refers to a body of texts in which representations are produced, but also to the social practices and conditions related to these representations (Doty 1996, 6). I have used the specific term ‘policy discourse’ as a synonym for ‘policy approach’. I differentiate between the terms ‘Europeanization’ (capital letter) and ‘europeanization’. In my analysis, ‘Europeanization’ stands for a particular policy approach, while ‘europeanization’ stands for the process of domestic adaptation to EU rules, policy guidelines and institutional setup, and for the process of adopting European values and identity.

I have organized the analysis in five large sections. The next chapter presents the international ideological environment in which Bulgaria has been situated and traces the ascent of Bulgaria’s powerful policy paradigm of Europeanization. Chapter three presents the case study of the Kosovo crisis. Chapters four and five present the case study of the Kozloduy crisis. In the last chapter I address the theoretical issues at stake in

the analysis, present the basic tenets of a constructivist theoretical framework, and on the basis of this framework I join together and rethink the empirical material provided by the two case studies in order to outline a more general mechanism through which the Europeanization paradigm has impacted upon policymaking in Bulgaria. This last chapter concludes by drawing some lessons about europeanization in the Balkans.

Chapter 2

Europeanization Midway between Europe and the Balkans

This chapter deals with the first question that the ESI's story of Bulgaria's miraculous transformation under the influence of Europeanization did not ask: What difference has it made that Bulgaria was perceived as Balkan before it started to be perceived as a normal European country? I answer the question in two steps. First, I focus on the effects that widely circulated representations of the Balkans and widely shared beliefs and conceptions about Balkan societies, culture, and politics have had on the Balkans policy of the international community and on Bulgaria itself. Second, I trace the ascent of the Europeanization paradigm in Bulgaria in the late 1990s and analyze the international and domestic ideological structures that have shaped this paradigm.

The Discourse of Balkanism

The Balkans on the Cultural and Civilizational Maps of Europe

Until the end of the 19th century, the Balkans were associated at the same time with ancient civilizations and with modern barbarism (Ballinger 1999, 74; Todorova 1997, chapter 4). The image of the Balkans as the cradle of European civilization encouraged Europeans to enthusiastically support Greek independence but the enthusiasm backfired into disappointment with the region's cultural and civilization hybridity (Todorova 1997, 92-5; Herzfeld 1987, 109-10). The preoccupation with 'stages of evolution' brought by the Enlightenment was a similarly mixed blessing for the Balkans. The region appeared to be a perfect place to study the history of the civilized world by exploring uncivilized cultures. This provoked interest in the different ethnic groups living on the peninsula but also solidified the conviction that the Balkans were still at a low stage of socio-cultural development (Todorova 1997, 63; Ballinger 1999, 75-6). The underlying assumption – that humankind developed in a linear evolutionary manner – constructed a symbolic hierarchy between societies that were civilized, advanced, industrialized and guided by

rationality and moderation, and societies that were uncivilized, backward, agricultural, and irrational (Todorova 1997, 109-11). Balkan societies were put squarely in the latter category.

Around the time of World War I, the image of the Balkans was already relatively stable, shared across the Western world, and altogether negative (Todorova 1997, 123). The dispute and fighting over Macedonia after the decisions of the 1878 Berlin Congress, the 1903 Belgrade regicide, the 1913 Balkan war, and the assassination of the Habsburg Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo, which signaled the outbreak of World War I, solidified the outside world's perception that the Balkans were in the grip of violence, savagery, lawlessness, ethnic conflict, and terrorism. The region was conclusively identified as the 'powder keg' of Europe (*Ibid.*, 117-22; Norris 1999, 11). It was regarded as culturally, religiously, and politically incompatible with Europe 'proper'. The perceived un-Europeaness of the Balkans was linked to its hybrid, though principally Oriental, culture, to its complex ethnic makeup, and to its political instability and unpredictability (Todorova 1997, 119-28).

Representations of the Balkans have followed patterns sufficiently coherent and resilient to allow analysts to speak about a distinct Western discourse on the Balkans². This discourse is either designated as Balkanism (the term was coined by Todorova (1997)) or treated as a 'Balkan' variation of Orientalism³ or of the broader colonialist discourse⁴ (Bakić-Hayden and Robert Hayden 1992; Bakić-Hayden 1995; Norris 1999, 11). In the

² For a detailed discussion of Western representations of the Balkans, see Todorova 1997; Norris 1999; Bakić-Hayden 1995; Bakić-Hayden and Hayden 1992; Allcock and Young 2001; Iordanova 2001; Goldsworthy 1998; Hatzopoulos 2003. For a similar study on Eastern Europe see Wolff 1994.

³ According to its critics, Orientalism has had three basic tenets (see Said 1979). First, it has constructed the Orient as backward, stagnant, inferior and fundamentally different from the rational, developed, and humane West. Second, Orientalism and Orientalist knowledge were intricately related to the project of colonial domination. Third, the construction of the Orient has been implicated in the construction of the identity of the West itself.

⁴ The uniqueness of the Western discourse on the Balkans has been subject to debate. One camp argues that Balkanism should be differentiated from Orientalism (and other colonialist discourses) because while Orientalism conveys the Orient as fundamentally different from the West, Balkanism represents the Balkans as hybrid and ambiguous (Todorova 1997, 78; Allcock and Young 2001, 227-9; Norris 1999, 5-8; Goldsworthy 1998, 6-9). The other side in the debate focuses on the way Orientalist representations have been replicated within Europe itself and have thus drawn a symbolic border between Europe 'proper' and the European territories that used to be under Ottoman rule. In this interpretation, Balkanism emerges as a variation of Orientalism and colonialist discourses (Bakić-Hayden 1995, 919-20; for the basic scholarly debates on colonialist discourses see, among others, Loomba 1998; Paolini 1999; Young 1990; Moore-Gilber, Stanton, and Maley 1997a, 1997b; Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1995; Williams and Chrisman 1994; Chambers and Curti 1996; Castle 2001).

process of discursive construction of the Balkans, particular identities have been ascribed to both the Balkans and Europe. Each of the two entities has played an indispensable role in the formation of the identity of the other entity. With their hybrid/Oriental culture and characteristic violence and volatility, the Balkans have underscored and stabilized European identity that has stood for order, civilization, development, and progress (Todorova 1997, 119).

During the Cold War, the ideological rivalry between communism and the West marginalized cultural differences. The discourse of Balkanism to a large extent receded in the background. General perceptions of Eastern Europe's inferiority, however, remained in place (Bakić-Hayden and Hayden 1992, 4). The symbolic geography of Europe was preserved and reinforced. Thus, after the end of the Cold War, the reemerging discourse of Balkanism was able to fit well into the existing ideological setup.

The Return of 'Cultures' as Explanatory Variables

The reemergence of Balkanism in the 1990s was encouraged by the increasing influence of analytical frameworks that used civilization and culture as explanatory factors, such as Huntington's influential theory of inter-civilizational conflicts (1996). From the point of view of such frameworks, the Balkans are predestined for tension and discord. According to Huntington's scheme, for example, the border of Western civilization goes through the Balkans, along the southern and eastern borders of Slovenia and Croatia. The rest of the region, including the alleged cradle of European civilization, falls in the non-Western, Slavic-Orthodox sphere (*Ibid.*, 158-63). The two spheres are held to be incompatible because of differences in religion, historical experience and politico-economic development. The peoples in the Slavic-Orthodox sphere are Orthodox or Muslim, and economically backward. Being part of the Ottoman or Tsarist empires, they have remained aloof from the foundational moments and the important processes of European history. The Slavic-Orthodox sphere is therefore deemed unable, or anyway

unlikely, to develop stable democracy and to integrate in Western institutional structures like the EU and NATO (Huntington 1996, 160-1, 1991, 23).

The Ottoman legacy of the Balkans is pointed out as key evidence of the fundamental difference between Southeast Europe and Central/Western Europe (Schöpflin 1999). Turning a blind eye to the modernization and adoption of western institutional models that has been taking place in the Balkans since the region achieved independence from the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century, the ‘civilization’ approach considers the pre-modern social structures allegedly inherited by Balkan societies to be a legacy that makes the Balkan worldview incompatible with Western values and norms and that leaves the region incapable of introducing the complex modern institutions necessary for democracy and Euro-Atlantic integration. The bottom line of this view is that prospects for genuine and profound modernization are poor in a region where “the complexity of social structures is not matched intellectually, cognitively or semantically by society and social knowledge” (*Ibid.*, 69; see also Djordjevich 2003, 10-1).

Balkanism and the Wars in Yugoslavia

The violent breakup of Yugoslavia rejuvenated Balkanism. Balkanism seemed to offer an appealing interpretive framework through which to understand and respond to the conflicts. When the federation started to fall apart, the Western public – especially the American one – knew little either about Yugoslavia or about Southeast Europe. The scarcity and irrelevance of scholarly analysis on the Balkans frequently led the numerous newcomers to the subject to turn to

old and out of print books on Balkan history, on the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires, and on the Catholic-Orthodox schism – long forgotten subjects which had suddenly reemerged as the signposts needed to understand what was happening now. (a journalist, quoted in Djordjevich 2003, 6)

Simple explanations derived from the allegedly cyclical Balkan history won against more serious analytical work (Djordjevich 2003, 3-4). The fad for old historical subjects, together with the overall marginalization of scholarship in favor of accessible and publicly visible semi-scholarly work, brought about explanations that in fact “were profoundly dismissive of the need for historical knowledge” (*Ibid.*, 4). This body of

knowledge – aptly nicknamed as ‘instant history’ – was mushrooming, leaving a clear trace on the scope and quality of explanations of Balkan events (Iordanova 2001, 73).

Such accounts have been concerned with the purported irrationality and uncontrollability of ethnic violence in the Balkans and have interpreted it as a phenomenon intrinsic to the region (e.g., see Kaplan 1993; Meštrović, Letica and Goreta 1993). Ethnic hatred and ethnic and religious conflicts are regarded as constant features of Balkan culture and politics that were temporarily suppressed by Yugoslavia’s communist regime but were unleashed again by the disintegrative processes in the federation. The irrationality and violence of the conflicts are traced to a warrior ethos inbuilt into the psychological makeup of the Balkan peoples (Todorova 1997, 137; Djordjevich 2003, 4) or are regarded as unavoidable effects of the recurrent historical experience of war, conflict, and destruction of civilization in the unstable conflict-ridden border zone between different civilizations (e.g. see van der Port 1998, 110-34; Bax 1995, 102).

Even rationalist accounts of the Yugoslav conflicts – the ones least likely to fall for the imagery of recurrent ethnic antagonisms – have let explanations invoking ‘traditional’ Balkan mentality and violent behavior to slip through the backdoor. In one such account, for example, Kaufman (2001) suggests that ethnic hostility was initially not high among the population of former Yugoslavia and that its escalation was the result of intentional manipulation and violent provocations by the elite seeking to secure political power. The Yugoslav conflicts are depicted as escalating security dilemmas (*Ibid.*, 165-6, 184-8). Yet, even as Kaufman posits a rational explanation of the conflict, he brands Serbian nationalism as irrational (*Ibid.*, 171). He argues that nationalist myths were consciously nurtured and exploited by the Serbian elite but suggests that these myths determine contemporary Serbian politics due to the Serbs’ collective susceptibility to mythology. The latter, however, remains unexplained and rather mythical itself:

The [battle of Kosovo myth] encourages a tendency in Serbian political culture constantly to suspect plots and treachery, and therefore to be suspicious of negotiations or deals of any kind, since they might involve betrayal... The Serbs prosecuted the war with their traditionally inflexible, self-defeating belief in their own unassailable righteousness. (*Ibid.*, 172, 192; for similar arguments by a Southeast European scholar see Pirjevec 1995, 87-9)

The Yugoslav security dilemmas are thus not characterized as ‘normal’ rational ones, but as profoundly Balkan, caused by inexplicable, yet pervasive, nationalism and irrationality that led each side to turn chauvinist (Kaufman 2001, 200).

By picking and choosing particular events out of complex historical developments, the body of knowledge that revived Balkanism has constructed an appealing narrative of cycles of violence in Balkan history (Iordanova 2001, 72). Its underlying argument is that the Balkans do not follow the natural path of progressive development characteristic of the Western world. In the Balkans, the past allegedly recurs in the present continually – through nationalist myths and ideologies – and determines current politics and identities (Hatzopoulos 2003, 27-8). Global and Western media strengthened such interpretations of the Yugoslav wars by underlining their fratricidal character, by drawing heavily on historical analogies and explanations, and by representing the conflicts as the inevitable outcome of the intractability of ethnic relations in the Balkans (Woodward 1995, 297-8).

Preoccupied with ancient *Balkan* ethnic feuds, *Balkan* mental pathologies, and the dangerous *Balkan* border zone, the body of knowledge dealing with the Yugoslav conflicts has tended to obscure the particularly *Yugoslav* character of these conflicts. Many analysts simply labeled the wars as ‘Balkan’ (Todorova 1997, 136). Apocalyptic scenarios of imminent spillover of instability to the rest of the region were proliferating despite the fact that none of the other Balkan countries (e.g. Bulgaria, Romania, Greece) was even indirectly involved in the conflicts or showed signs of intention to do so. Predictions that Macedonia would follow the “disastrous path of Bosnia” and would lead “to a new world war” started circulating long before any signs of ethnic instability were in sight (Iordanova 2001, 76).

The image of the Balkans as mired in the past and haunted by long-standing ethnic strife won the day in the early policy analyses focused on the Yugoslav conflicts. In 1993, in the midst of the Bosnian war, the Carnegie Endowment reprinted an old report on the 1912 and 1913 Balkan wars, complete with a new introduction (Todorova 1997, 3-4; ICB 1996, vii; Hansen 2000). The new introduction focused on revealing the deep roots of the present conflict by highlighting analogies with the past. One root was found in the “sad fact” that the Balkans’ past – Ottoman domination and earlier dominations – placed

the region in the domain of a non-European civilization that remained non-European till the present day (Kennan, quoted in Hansen 2000, 356). Another root was Balkan states' aggressive nationalism that "drew on deeper traits of character inherited, presumably, from a distant tribal past..." (Kennan, quoted in Todorova 1997, 5).

As Hansen argues, the 1914 Carnegie report constructed a hierarchy between the only true civilization – Europe and the United States (US) – and the backward Balkans, but assumed that the deficiencies of the Balkans were due only to long-lasting separation from Europe and civilization rather than to any inherent unchangeable traits (2000, 353-4). Framed by the vision of the West's civilizing mission, the old report allowed for the possibility of 'improvement' in the Balkans. In 1993, however, the report's introduction ended up with the pessimistic notion that due to their history the Balkans were irreversibly permeated with an un-European predisposition towards violence (*Ibid.*, 356), mired in history and tribal nationalism, deprived of European culture, and caught in a cycle of ethnic strife and violence that neither the passage of time nor the West's civilizing mission could break.

Such an interpretive framework not only demonstrated loss of memory of comparably shocking violence in the West's own history (Todorova 1997, 6-7), but was also questionable with regard to the quality of the understanding that it provided. Were policymakers served well by repetitive arguments of unchangeable, unmanageable, and inexplicable (to the civilized mind anyway) Balkan bundle of hatred and violence? Could Yugoslavia's demise be analyzed differently?

The 'Other' Story of Yugoslavia's Breakup

The story of Yugoslavia's demise could have been told differently if other relevant explanatory factors were taken into account. Such factors include the economic decline and constitutional conflicts that accompanied Yugoslavia's transition from communism to market democracy, the use of nationalism as a tool for mobilization in struggles for political power, and the ideological legacies of communism.

In her detailed account of the breakup of Yugoslavia Woodward has argued that the reasons for rising nationalism and for the ultimate breakup of the federation were the economic, political and social tensions in communist Yugoslavia, and especially the economic decline and constitutional conflicts that accompanied the federation's transition from communism to market democracy (1995; see also Emmert 2003, 171; Jovic 2001, 101-3). According to Woodward, the stability of the federation had depended on its internal structure, as well as on Yugoslavia's balancing role in Cold War international politics. Yugoslavia's internal structure was based on a complex politico-economic system that guaranteed shared sovereignty to the federation's constituent nations and republics, and on the protection of individual security in the form of civil, political and social rights (Woodward 1995, chapter 2). The model worked well in conditions of relative economic wellbeing.

Throughout the 1980s, however, the sources of stability were gradually undermined as Yugoslavia started implementing austerity measures and launched thoroughgoing economic reforms in order to deal with its large foreign debt (*Ibid.*, 50-9). The reforms were accompanied by deprivation, inflation, unemployment, and deindustrialization, all of which were breeding feelings of personal insecurity and eroding the social bases of stable order and government. The destabilizing effects of reforms, however, were not being countered by building social safety nets or political and institutional capacity to manage the ensuing political conflicts (*Ibid.*, 383). In addition, the reforms shifted the balance of political authority over economic assets in favor of the federal government to the detriment of the republics (*Ibid.*, 59; ICB 1996, 26). The wealthy Slovenia and Croatia were losing control over economic policymaking and foreign currency earnings and grumbled against the federation's redistribution policy that in their view took away their resources to subsidize poorer regions (Woodward 1995, 60-3).

Conflicts over the distribution and control of economic assets and resources, together with the attack on the welfare system, encouraged the governments in the northwestern republics to resist both the reforms and the federal government (*Ibid.*, 61-3; Jovic 2001, 102). Resistance was increasingly being framed in terms of the republics' national interest and invoked moral arguments and images of national exploitation (Woodward 1995, 99). Gradually, it escalated into demands for turning Yugoslavia into a

confederation, and caused a constitutional crisis that led to the breakup⁵ (*Ibid.*, 15; Jovic 2001, 102). Scholars supportive of this interpretation disagree about the extent to which economic factors account for the federation's collapse. On the whole, however, they agree on the basic argument: conflicts that originally concerned predominantly economic and political issues gradually mutated into conflicts over sovereignty, control over territory, and international recognition (Woodward 1995, 201; Jovic 2001, 102-3).

Explanations of Yugoslavia's demise based on the legacies of communism tell a story about nationalism and ethnic violence that differs from the story told by explanations based on ancient ethnic hatreds. On this view, escalating internal instability, radicalization of demands for republican sovereignty, and the collapse of social order and political authority that accompanied Yugoslavia's economic liberalization strengthened the position of leaders who appealed to their constituencies on the basis of exclusionary claims to territory and who, in order to gain public support, linked to nationalist intellectuals, popular protest, and demands for sovereignty⁶ (Woodward 1995, 82-93; Jovic 2001, 106; ICB 1996, 24-6). It was only at this point that historical memories of ethnic conflicts became an efficient tool for mobilization, propaganda, and elite survival (Woodward 1995, 339; Jovic 2001, 103-4; ICB 1996, 25). The wars were fought over statehood, over rights to live on a particular territory, and over rights and protections of citizens transformed into minorities in the process of redrawing borders. According to Woodward, it was the desire to associate the people with a territory that encouraged the use of historical arguments, memories, and myths, not the other way around, and to explain the Yugoslav crisis with historical feuds and ethnic hatreds is to mistake its effects for its causes (1995, 271).

The ideological legacies of Yugoslavia's communist regime, too, go some way towards explaining the rise of nationalism. The anti-state ideology on the basis of which the federation was restructured under the 1974 constitution nurtured the constitutive nations' nationalisms (Jovic 2001, 105; ICB 1996, 24). At the same time, the lack of a single

⁵ The federal government was further destabilized by Yugoslavia's changing position in the international sphere. With the end of the Cold War, Yugoslavia lost its strategic importance to the West, as well as its special easy access to credits necessary to refinance its debt (Woodward 1995, 104).

⁶ The communist party's efforts to undermine the influence of liberal political and social forces and the liberal press prevented the emergence of a liberal alternative to republican-centered nationalism (Woodward 1995, 76-7).

Yugoslav cultural space and of political institutions to represent citizens with a Yugoslav identity prevented the emergence of Yugoslav nationalism that could serve as an alternative to republican nationalisms⁷ (Jovic 2001, 105-6). In combination with the weakness of liberalism during the communist regime, this peculiar ideological setup led to the emergence of nationalism as a major political ideology after the end of communism (*Ibid.*, 104).

Popular accounts of the Yugoslav wars that have focused on ancient ethnic hatreds have eschewed analysis of these destructive, albeit less sensational, failures of the economic, constitutional, and ideological structures of communist Yugoslavia. In these accounts, Yugoslavia's communist legacies have been either overlooked or their role in the violent breakup of the federation has been openly rejected (for the latter position see Bax 1995, 105; van der Port 1998, 11-2). The communist period in Yugoslavia has been perceived as a period of temporary freezing of the characteristic forces of Balkan politics (i.e. ethnic conflict and violence), as a process of gradual erosion of communist social structures under the pressure of nationalism, or as a period of nationalism in a communist/internationalist disguise (Hatzopoulos 2003, 34-6). In such accounts, nationalism invariably takes precedence over economic, political and social developments.

Balkanism and the International Response to the Yugoslav Conflicts

The international community's response to the Yugoslav conflicts demonstrated the policy relevance of Balkanism. One of the two widely accepted explanations of the conflict in Bosnia (as well as of the preceding conflicts in Slovenia and Croatia) reflected the basic tenets of Balkanism: the conflict was perceived as a civil war caused by the eruption of ethnic hatreds after the collapse of the authoritarian communist regime that had held them frozen (Woodward 1995, 7; Bose 2002, 18-9; Andreatta 1997, 9). Proponents of this explanation traced the roots of the conflicts deep into history. Also widely accepted by international publics were arguments about the fundamental cultural

⁷ In addition, communist Yugoslavia's independence from the Soviet Union precluded the identification of an external Soviet 'enemy' of republican nationalisms (Jovic 2001, 106).

and civilizational incompatibility between Croats, Serbs, and Bosniacs, that allegedly accounted for the disintegrative tendencies inbuilt into the Yugoslav federation (Woodward 1995, 221). The civilizational incompatibility thesis was also advanced by the leaders of the three ethnic groups that clashed in the Bosnian war⁸ (ICB 1996, 15-21). The other explanation of the Bosnian conflict, mostly promoted by the US, was that it was the result of Serbian aggression that began in Slovenia and Croatia and spread to other parts of the former federation (Woodward 1995, 7; Bose 2002, 18-9; ICB 1996, 62).

Critics have argued that the international community's failure to acknowledge the real causes of the Yugoslav conflicts was a contributing factor to its failure to prevent these conflicts in the first place⁹ (Woodward 1995; Andreatta 1997; Gow 1997, chapters 3,4). Once the conflict had erupted, the two alternative explanations of the Bosnian war predetermined the policy response of the international community. The explanation focused on age-old ethnic animosities and civilizational incompatibility presupposed a policy response focused on containment of the conflict (Woodward 1995, 9). Explanations focused on Serbian aggression called for sanctions against Serbia. According to critics, both measures were ineffective.

Tensions between the two alternative explanations, as well as between the recognition of Bosnia as a sovereign country and the tacit, if reluctant, recognition of the nation-building projects of Bosnia's three ethnic groups, were never resolved and undermined

⁸ Arguments about a putative civilizational divide in the region predate communist Yugoslavia but came truly in vogue at the time of the federation's dissolution (e.g. see Letica 1989, 188-95; Tudjman, quoted in ICB 1996, 16; Emmert 2003, 162). Croatian President Tudjman, who had developed the civilizational incompatibility thesis already during communism (1997, 311-45), invoked Croatia's moral rights as a member of the Western civilization and portrayed the conflict with Serbia as a struggle of democracy and civilization (synonymous with Croatia) against dictatorship and barbarism (Woodward 1995, 208). The Tudjman era was accompanied by pronouncements about 'Croatia's return to the West' after a prolonged imprisonment in the un-European and culturally and religiously alien Balkans, and about Croatia's fate of an old European nation positioned on the boundary of Western civilization and called upon to prevent the penetration of Islam into Europe (Hedl 2000, 104; Perica 2002, 187-8). Tudjman, who won the 1997 presidential elections on the slogan 'Tudjman, not the Balkans' (Razsa and Lindstrom 2004, 639), asked Parliament to explicitly define Croatia as a Central European country and to pass a constitutional amendment banning the country's participation in Balkan associations (*RFE/RL Newslines* 4.11.1997).

⁹ This was demonstrated, for example, in the decision to recognize the republics' right of self-determination, while ignoring the claims of ethnic minorities within the republics; in the failure to pay due attention to minority rights early enough to strengthen moderate political and social forces and to prevent the destabilization of Bosnia; and in the EU's failure of use an effective carrot-and-stick strategy vis-à-vis Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia.

the effectiveness of the international response. While the international community promoted Bosnian independence, it was not willing to use force to defend it. In practice, it treated the conflict as a civil war and sought a settlement between the three ethnic groups¹⁰ (Woodward 1995, 274; ICB 1996, 47). International interventions reinforced ethnic divisions. International actors treated nationalist politicians as representative of their ethnic groups and accepted their interpretation of the conflict as an ethnic one, thus in effect allowing this interpretation to become self-fulfilling (Woodward 1995, 299). Non-nationalist political forces were ignored and undermined; pro-Yugoslav citizens were disenfranchised (Woodward 1995, 169-98).

The Bosnian war did not threaten international stability or the strategic interests of the major Western states. The major powers were therefore unwilling to engage military and risk soldiers' lives. At the same time, mass media and domestic public opinion were putting pressure on Western governments to deter Serbian aggression and stop human rights violations (Woodward 1995, 273; Andreatta 1997, 9-13; ICB 1996, 57-8). In this situation, the discourse of Balkanism was useful for justifying non-intervention: if the Yugoslav case was an historically predetermined tribal feud of a cyclical nature, then external powers could not be expected to solve it (Andreatta 1997, 9-12; Woodward 1995, 285-9).

Balkanism was utilized as a powerful interpretive framework and a convenient tool for policy legitimization during the Kosovo crisis, too. It was again used to justify non-intervention. By representing the Balkans as a dangerous 'powder keg' and by interpreting the conflict as an outgrowth of centuries-old irrational ethnic hatreds, supporters of non-intervention could prove that it was unwise of the US to get involved in a conflict that was impossible to settle and that could easily explode into a wider war (Paris 2002, 440). Balkanism rendered the Kosovo crisis in the terms of one of the most influential interpretive frameworks in US foreign policy – the 'Vietnam war' narrative

¹⁰ Other factors that contributed to the international community's failure to resolve the conflict were the chaos in international security structures during the period of transition from the Cold War to a new world order, disagreements among the major international actors and the failure of collective action, the discrepancy between the objective of the US to guarantee a fair settlement of the conflict and the modest resources and effort devoted to this end, and the treatment of the army as an illegitimate aggressor, which transformed it into an independent participant in the conflict (Woodward 1995; Andreatta 1997; Gow 1997; ICB 1996, 37-75).

(*Ibid.*, 444). Like the Vietnam war, the Kosovo war was portrayed as an intractable and incomprehensible civil conflict that had simmered for hundreds of years. US involvement in Kosovo – “with less justification than there was in Vietnam in the midst of a cold war” – was depicted as an imminent policy debacle (senator Gorton, quoted in *Ibid.*, 444). But Balkanism came in handy for legitimizing intervention, too. By representing Kosovo as a ‘powder keg’ that could explode at any moment and cause instability to spill over not only to the rest of the Balkans but also to Europe, supporters of intervention provided a rationale for US military involvement (Paris 2002, 434). Such representations encouraged historical analogies with the outbreak of the First World War and served as a warning that the US could (again) end up fighting a major war in Europe unless it stepped in to prevent the spread of instability (*Ibid.*, 434-6).

Balkanism and the Major Policy Approaches towards the Balkans

The policy relevance of Balkanism did not end together with the Yugoslav conflicts. Balkanism has always related to the issue of democratization (or the impossibility of democratization) in the Balkans. This relationship became especially salient in the post-conflict period.

The ‘Legacies of Ethnic Conflicts’ Approach and the ‘Transition’ Approach

In the war-shattered areas of the Balkans, the post-conflict agenda was initially dominated by peacebuilding. Like elsewhere around the globe in the post-Cold War period, peacebuilding in the Balkans was pursued primarily through democratization and economic liberalization, upon the assumption that the best foundation for peace is the transformation of war-shattered societies into market democracies (Paris 1997; Bose 2002, 89). At the same time, however, the legacies of ethnic conflict were an important determinant of the international community’s policy towards war-torn Balkan societies. For the rest of the Balkans, too, potentially explosive ethnic minority problems were identified (see ICB 1996) and the agenda was conflict-prevention in the course of post-socialist transition to market democracy that was already underway.

Managing the legacies of ethnic conflicts and managing transition have in principle been two different approaches that, on their own right, could guide policy towards the Balkans. The former assumes that dealing with ethnic problems is the key to dealing with Balkan problems inasmuch as political problems in the Balkans are primarily ethno-political (Krastev 2002, 9). The Yugoslav wars are believed to have been the result of ethnic fragmentation and lack of civil society (Chandler 1998, 79). According to the ‘legacies of ethnic conflicts’ approach, the primary task of post-conflict international involvement in the Balkans is to reduce the conflict potential of the region through conflict management (e.g. see CFRCPA 2002; USIP 2002), to build or revive civil society organized along non-ethnic lines and media free of political control, to install the rule of law, and to ensure protection of human and minority rights¹¹ (ICB 1996, 150-7, xviii). Security issues, ethnic relations and treatment of minorities are vital priorities. On the other hand, the transition approach, which has been a powerful paradigm across the whole of Eastern Europe, posits that sustainable conflict-free future in the Balkans can only be achieved through simultaneous democratization and economic liberalization.

In practice, in the Balkans the ‘legacies of ethnic conflicts’ approach and the ‘transition’ approach have come together. Although their relative importance has varied across areas (ethnic reconciliation agendas have been much more important in post-conflict areas than in other parts of the Balkans) and in time (long periods of ethnic peace have brought to the forefront issues of transition), the two approaches have not appeared to work at cross-purposes. The allegedly explosive nature of ethnic relations in the region has had policy implications for democratic transition (hence the emphasis on civil society, independent media, and minority protection). At the same time, transforming Balkan states into market democracies is believed to be the only viable long-term solution for ethnic disputes.

Each of the two approaches has brought problems for policymaking. The ‘legacies of ethnic conflicts’ approach has been criticized for assuming that nationalist rhetoric of

¹¹ This approach influenced international democracy assistance in the region (Krastev 2002, 9). According to representatives of non-governmental organizations, even in the early 2000s in a democratically stable country like Croatia, for example, many international projects still focused on basic human and minority rights and neglected other, arguably more urgent, social issues (interviews D; E).

policy legitimization is the *essence* of Balkan politics, and for thus neglecting both the actual political process in Balkan states and issues of post-communist transition (Krastev 2002, 9-10). The assumption of the transition approach that it is both possible and desirable to simultaneously pursue political and economic liberalization has been widely debated in the context of Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries' transition to market democracy. In this context, it has been argued that economic liberalization undermines democracy by undermining the welfare state and by thereby creating vast dissatisfied majorities prone to bring populist authoritarian regimes to power; alternatively, it has been argued that simultaneous political and economic liberalization is difficult, or altogether impossible, in post-communist societies in particular, due to these societies' impairing cultural, political and economic communist legacies (Greskovits 2002, 222-3). The transition approach is deemed to be even more problematic, indeed potentially damaging, in the context of peacebuilding (in this context it has often been referred to as 'liberal internationalism') inasmuch as post-conflict societies are especially ill-equipped to handle the polarizing effects of political and economic liberalization¹² (Paris 1997, 73-82). The transition agenda's prospects of success in Balkan societies that feature a uniquely frustrating mix of post-communist and post-conflict legacies have seemed bleak to many policy analysts.

The democratization approach in particular has been criticized on account of its claims to universal validity (Carothers 1999; Mendelson and Glenn 2002; Wedel 1998; Burgess 2001; Stubbs 1999; Belloni 2001; Sampson 1996; OSF Bosnia-Herzegovina 2001; McMahon 2001). Critics have focused on the tendency to equate democratization with institutional modeling, whereby new democracies reproduce the institutional arrangements characteristic of established democracies. They have also challenged the effectiveness of top-down strategies of installing democratic institutions in new democracies and the neglect of local specificities in favor of universal models. Like the 'legacies of ethnic conflicts' approach, the democratization approach, too, has been

¹² Political liberalization encourages political mobilization and the expression of conflicting interests, and can thus reinforce already existing divisions in post-conflict societies. Economic liberalization in war-shattered societies tends to widen economic inequalities, at least in the short term. In the absence of adequate welfare and redistribution policies, it, too, can exacerbate ongoing conflicts. In addition, economic and political liberalization often work at cross-purposes and, when pursued simultaneously, could have destabilizing effects in post-conflict societies (Paris 1997, 73-82).

judged unable to grasp the internal logic of the political process in new democracies (Krastev 2002, 11-2).

Let us, however, pose to consider the issue of how the two approaches have taught policymakers to ‘think’ about the Balkans. Even when it discards ‘instant’ history as a guide to understanding Balkan reality, the ‘legacies of ethnic conflicts’ approach nevertheless sets the region apart from Europe before it sets out to formulate policy directions for it. A foundational assumption of the approach is that the Balkans present the “the civilized world” (that emphatically excludes the Balkans) with a difficult case for intervention since they are “a lasting menace to peace,... and a shame for Europe” (ICB 1996, xiii). Of all approaches, this one is most clearly grounded in the representational schemes of Balkanism.

The distinct category of ‘the Balkans’ is not abandoned in the transition approach either. Democracy promotion emphasizes cultural differences. Democracy is deemed to be a universal value but assessments of the prospects of democratization in non-Western societies have been sober and even pessimistic (Burgess 2001, 55-9; Chandler 2000, 17; Doty 1996, 127-44). For the two divergent positions to be reconciled, democracy is analyzed in terms of degrees of democratization. Critics have argued that while in this way ethnocentrism has seemingly been rejected and attempts to deny democracy to culturally ‘unfit’ societies are no longer considered legitimate, the current democratic consensus has created new hierarchies. Instead of eroding the distinction between the West and the ‘rest’, it has positioned developed (Western) countries in the group of ‘consolidated’ democracies, and the rest in the lower parts of the hierarchy depending on their degree of democratization (Burgess 2001, 66; Chandler 2000, 14). The new hierarchy hinges on judgments on cultural characteristics such as presence of civil society, civilizational traits, and adequacy of culture. When such characteristics attest to democratic immaturity, potential for destabilization, and necessity for international regulation, they create a distinction between fully sovereign countries that have the capacity to assist, supervise and regulate others in their path towards democratization,

and countries incapable of democratically governing themselves that should be subject to supervision and regulation¹³ (Chandler 2000, 9-7; Doty 1996).

Thus, while in theory the transition approach should have conceived of democratization in the Balkans as a routine case of a universal trend, in practice it has treated it as a special case. All new democracies are held to be potentially unstable and in need of international surveillance, but of all post-communist states the ones in the Balkans – with their ethnic-based culture and proclivity for irrational nationalism and chauvinism – are believed to be farthest from the West in terms of democratic culture and civil society.

Despite their differences, both the ‘legacies of ethnic conflicts’ approach and the ‘transition’ approach have translated some elements of Balkanism into practical assumptions that have influenced and legitimized the international community’s Balkans policy. Two major assumptions, on which both approaches have concurred, are that the region is susceptible to violent ethnic conflict and that Balkan societies and leaders lack adequate political culture and proper values. Both of these assumptions imply that the Balkans can be trusted to bring nationalists to power but not to autonomously manage conflict resolution. A regulatory and interventionist role for the international community is thus legitimized, and even presented as unavoidable. The consent, opinion, and political preferences of the local populations are considered irrelevant (Chandler 2000, 26; for such a stance see ICB 1996, xiii-ix).

These assumptions have been most obvious and consequential in cases of direct international intervention in peacebuilding, such as the peacebuilding mission in Bosnia. Following the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA), a consortium of international organizations was tasked to guide the peace and democratization process and to prepare Bosnia for self-government. Although the international administration was intended to last only for a short transition period, in 1997 the term of the Office of the High Representative (OHR) that was in charge of the civilian implementation of the DPA was extended for an indefinite period of time and its mandate was broadened to

¹³ This distinction perpetuates the difference that democratization is expected to wipe out and allows the democratization project to defend its claims to universality even in the face of continuous failure to install ‘real’ democracy in many parts of the world (Doty 1996, 136).

include extensive powers over governance and institution building, including the power to unilaterally impose legislation and enact punitive measures against obstructionist local politicians (Chandler 2000, 43-55; Knaus and Martin 2003, 64; Westendorp 1997; ESI 2000, 25-6). Instead of gradually transferring governmental powers to elected Bosnian representatives, since 1997 the international community has been directly involved in all areas of government, policymaking, and institution building, and has not refrained even from electoral engineering and intervention in the media.

The unprecedented Bosnian case has provoked heated debate. The conservative view on the international community's involvement in the democratization of Bosnia has renounced the endeavor as unrealistic and misplaced due to the very nature of Bosnia. Being generally the view of those who do not want "to make the world safe for democracy" but rather "to make democracy safe for the world" (Zakaria, quoted in Chandler 2000, 182), this perspective considers attempts to impose liberal democracy and a unitary state on Bosnians to be not only futile but also dangerous and potentially destabilizing in a society irreversibly divided into antagonistic ethnic and religious groups (Chandler 2000, 169; Bose 2002, 42-7). The conservative perspective explicitly draws on the discourse of Balkanism and digs into history. It is concerned with the danger that the conflict could recur and the West could be mired into another intractable faraway crisis, this time one provoked by the imprudence of the international community (Chandler 2000, 170-2).

In contrast, the pro-interventionist liberal perspective – upheld by liberal policy analysts and think tanks, as well as by the OHR itself – is based on the assumption that the seemingly rigid ethnic identities of Bosnians are not fixed and immutable, and are not an obstacle to multiethnic democracy. On this view, the standoff between the three ethnic groups has not reflected the stance of the Bosnian people but has rather stemmed from the unwillingness of the international community to abandon the politically disabling perspective that presumes the permanency of ethnic divisions in the Balkans, to take the democratization process firmly in its own hands despite the costs of the democratization mission, to impose a unitary multicultural makeup on Bosnia, and to eliminate nationalist obstructionism (*Ibid.*, 164). Next to nationalist politicians, the DPA (where

ethnic groups' veto rights are guaranteed), free elections and unrestricted freedom of speech have all been deemed harmful for Bosnian democracy because they have tended to cement the power of nationalists (*Ibid.*, 165). These critics have welcomed the gradual extension and the increasing use of the OHR's powers:

The High Representative continues to work as Bosnia's chief reformer, moderniser, defender and promoter. It is he who sounds the alarm when insolvency looms, plots the defence, wages war on slackers and recidivists, and offers inspiring glimpses of the sunlit uplands ahead... The High Representative is the unwritten but functional part of the constitution. (ICG 2003b, 10)

These seemingly conflicting positions share an important assumption about Bosnia: that Bosnian culture is currently ethnically organized and adverse to democratization. Bosnian society has been characterized as "a deeply sick society, ill at ease with even the most basic principles of democracy" (OHR's spokesman, quoted in Chandler 2000, 162), where nationalism is entrenched and "nationalist politics is ever present" (Lajčak 2008), where "alternative poles of attraction or organising principles in... political life" are sorely absent, and where, due to a "quintessentially Balkan mixture of obstinacy and spite", citizens fall victim to despair, cynicism, and lack of leadership (Beecroft 2004). Supporters of the Bosnian democratization project have presented intrusive international intervention that occasionally rides "roughshod over the norms of legality, transparency and democracy" as a temporary measure justified by the adversity of the situation and imperative both for preparing the country for self-government (as liberal critics insist) and for preventing it from slipping back into violence (that bothered conservatives) (ICG 2003a: 42; see also Ashdown 2004).

The OHR has legitimized its tendency to bypass the local political process also by referring to the 'real' interests of Bosnian citizens that it has assumed to serve better than Bosnian politicians:

[The Bosnian leaders] have a wrong perspective. They are not serving their population properly, the real interest of the population, which is to cooperate with the international community. (Westendorp, quoted in Chandler 2000, 162, see also 157; Petritsch, quoted in Carpenter 2002, 27; Ashdown 2002: 4, quoted in *BRR* 29.7.2003; Lajčak 2007)

Such legitimization has suggested that, at least initially, democratization in a society that lacks democratic culture and capacities could not be achieved by self-government but

only by imposition of decisions made by the international community (Chandler 2000, chapter 7).

As the OHR's policy was growing more intrusive despite the gradual normalization of the situation in Bosnia, some of the previously pro-interventionist liberal policy analysts turned critical. They have argued that the authoritarian use of the OHR's special powers disables Bosnia's representative democracy and is thus illegitimate, increasingly unproductive, and detrimental to the prospects of using the EU's much more sustainable soft-power policy tools (Knaus and Martin 2003; ESI 2003a, 2007a, 2007b, ICG 2007, 4-6). The new vision on Bosnia, apparently shared by the OHR itself, envisages that "the pull of the Euro-Atlantic institutions [would replace] the push of the High Representative's emergency powers" (Ashdown 2003; see also ESI 2003a, 2003b, 2005a, 2007b; ICG 2007, 23-8). Europeanization is winning the day in the Balkans.

The Europeanization Approach to the Balkans

A European Perspective for the Balkans

According to the Europeanization approach, the solution to 'Balkan' problems is straightforward – namely integration of the Balkans into the European 'mainstream'. The approach has been gaining strength parallel with the increasing involvement of the EU in the affairs of Southeast European (SEE) countries, especially following the introduction of pre-accession monitoring in 1997 and accession partnerships in 1998, and the development of the Stabilization and Association Process for the Western Balkans¹⁴ (officially formulated in 2000). It is based on the conviction that durable stability, democracy and prosperity in Southeast Europe can be achieved by a sweeping process of europeanization in SEE countries (van Meurs and Yannis 2002, 2; EPC 2008, 8; ICB 2005, 12). By implication, the assumption is that if the EU reneged on its promise of a 'common European destination' for the Balkans, it would destroy its leverage in the region and undermine local pro-Europeanization political forces. As

¹⁴ The term 'Western Balkans' currently refers to Albania, Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, and Kosovo.

Europeanization is held to be the only vision capable of competing with nationalist political currents, the fear is that a failure of Europeanization would destroy incentives for much needed reforms and would initiate a vicious circle of exclusion and destabilization that would lead the region back “to the destructive politics of the past” (ESI 2005b, 3, see also 2005c, 5-7).

The Europeanization approach to the Balkans has three basic pillars. The first one is development. Among the earliest proposed remedies for the economic problems of the region were trade liberalization, immediate introduction of EURO-dominated currency boards, with complete Euroization to follow, and granting direct responsibility for economic reconstruction and infrastructure development to a subsidiary of the European Investment Bank (EIB) (CEPS 1999). Currently, the profound socio-economic crisis and the crisis of democratic representation in the Western Balkans have been identified as problems graver than nationalism and ethnic conflict. These crises have been gradually setting up what Carothers has aptly described as ‘feckless democracies’ (ESI 2002, 4-12; Carothers 2002; Krastev 2002). According to proponents of Europeanization, EU assistance for economic reconstruction in the Balkans is no longer adequate (ESI 2002, 5, 2003b, 2-11).

Stronger financial commitment, active EU involvement, and, above all, promotion of structural reforms and cohesion are deemed necessary in order to reverse economic decline, tackle chronic socio-economic problems such as deindustrialization and rural underdevelopment, and eliminate the sources of political and economic instability. The belief is that such a policy would increase the EU’s leverage to demand faster economic reforms and liberalization and to bring about real change in the Balkans (ESI 2003b, 2-11, 2002, 2004, 4, 2005b). In the view of the proponents of Europeanization, the alternative is bleak – a widening developmental gap between the Western Balkans and the rest of Europe (including the rest of Southeast Europe) and transformation of the region into a ‘European ghetto’, doomed to poverty, unemployment and instability, and locked behind walls of visa restrictions (ESI 2005a, 1, 2005b, 3; ICB 2005, 28).

The second pillar of the Europeanization approach is the containment of the remaining security threats in the region. It envisages EU involvement in resolving outstanding

disputes, in removing the legacies of ethnic conflicts, in bringing law, order and democracy to the region (Emerson 2000, 336; van Meurs and Yannis 2002, 14-5; CEPS 1999), and in guaranteeing stability (van Meurs and Yannis 2002, 14-5; CEPS 1999).

The third pillar is the fast European integration of the Balkans through special forms of membership. In early statements of the Europeanization approach, a new type of associate membership for Western Balkans countries was envisaged (CEPS 1999; Whyte 2002; Emerson 2000, 2001). Participation in EU institutions, albeit on a limited basis, was expected to ‘socialize’ associate members into EU political and institutional culture (CEPS 1999, 18-9). More recently, the ESI has made a case for granting full candidate status to Western Balkans countries even before they qualify for accession negotiations, in order to enable them to access pre-accession programs, and, in turn, to allow the EU to immediately bring all its financial and institutional tools to bear on the region (ESI 2003b, 9, 2005a, 10, 2005b, 4-6). Most proponents of Europeanization advocate 2014 as the target date of EU enlargement to the Western Balkans (ESI 2005b, 11; Kempe and Klotzle 2006, 15; ICB 2005, 14). ‘Fast European integration’ solutions share a common rationale: special membership categories are expected to motivate and give Balkan countries a feeling of inclusion, to make the promise of EU integration more tangible, and to thus strengthen pro-reform and pro-European political actors within these countries. The idea is that the Europeanization miracles of Bulgaria and Romania could thus be replicated in the Western Balkans. ‘Fast European integration’ solutions necessitate that the EU abandon the strict conditionality-based and performance-based approach to enlargement in favor of a more political and strategic approach that could make the European integration of the Western Balkans a reality soon enough to prevent another Balkan crisis (EPC 2008, 38; ICG 2007, 22-3; ESI 2005b). The politically enabling functions of the approach have been wringed in a powerful historical analogy:

It was in Sarajevo in the summer of 1914 that Europe entered the century of madness and self-destruction....

It is in Sarajevo in the summer of 2014 that Europe should demonstrate that a new European century has arrived. (ICB 2005, 6)

Ideological Underpinnings of the Europeanization Approach: Soft Power and Legitimacy

The ideological foundation of the Europeanization approach is the idea of Europe's soft power, defined simply as the power to make others "want what the EU wants" (ESI 2007a, 3). The success of the EU's enlargement towards CEE countries, Bulgaria and Romania is held to demonstrate the enormous transformative potential of EU integration and the soft power of enlargement conditionality. The forthcoming enlargement to the Western Balkans, Croatia and Turkey is believed to hold a similar potential, even if the tasks ahead are deemed to be specific and difficult due to the legacies of armed conflicts and the existence of international protectorates in Bosnia and Kosovo (ESI 2005a, 2, 2005b, 2; EPC 2008, 7). A prerequisite for the EU's soft power is the presence of broad domestic consensus in favor of EU membership that could contribute to the willingness of accession countries to bear the costs that integration entails.

The soft power of the EU derives from legitimacy. The Europeanization approach (especially as it developed in the early 2000s) is partly a response to the contemporary US foreign policy doctrine which, according to proponents of Europeanization, is "military, pre-emptive and unilateral" and is "not the language or the method of the EU" (Emerson 2002, 1). Proponents of 'hard power' solutions have defied European feelings of superiority and have questioned the viability of the 'postmodern' European system that rejects the use of force in favor of self-imposed rules, international cooperation, transnational negotiations, and persuasion (Kagan 2002). On this view, Europe's self-contained world of rules and persuasion, and its "post-historical paradise of peace and relative prosperity", might be a glimpse into the bright future, but in the present are the result of Europe's military weakness and are dependent on the power and willingness of the US to use force to make the hostile outside world safe for democracy (*Ibid.*).

In response, proponents of Europeanization delineate a geographical area on the periphery of Europe in which the EU should increase its influence and to which it should seek to extend its paradise of peace and prosperity (Emerson 2002, 2, 13). The 'language' and 'method' of the EU is the replication of European models and the use of

the promise of EU membership as a carrot in the process of conflict resolution, whereby the idea of a ‘common European roof’ and the overarching power of postmodern Europe are expected to moderate or suppress ethnic conflicts and state fragmentation (*Ibid.*, 4-15; ESI 2005b, 2). The proponents of Europeanization counter allegations of the EU’s limited capabilities in the international field but otherwise fully subscribe to the image of Europe as a postmodern paradise of persuasion and prosperity, as opposed to the “brutal clarity” of US power (Emerson 2002, 2). The approach has been fittingly framed in terms of Europe’s ‘vital concern’ and not in terms of ‘vital interest’ that “smells of hegemonic possession and old-style *Realpolitik*” (*Ibid.*, 20). Its normative foundation – extension of the Kantian eternal peace – is central because it ensures its legitimacy and democratic character (*Ibid.*, 13).

The model of EU policy that is at the center of the Europeanization approach to the Balkans is the model of member-state building applied in countries candidates for EU membership. It is based on extensive EU involvement in institution building in candidate states. It is understood as a model of ‘voluntary empire’, in which the lure of EU membership motivates transformation and regime change that are ‘revolutionary’, yet voluntary, cheap, and durable (ESI 2005a, 3-10). For the model to work, membership has to be perceived as achievable and not too distant, and the EU’s financial and institutional engagement has to be extensive (ESI 2005a, 10, 2005b; EPC 2008, 11; ICG 2003b, 1, 11). Under these conditions, the model is expected to lock Balkan countries “into a virtuous circle of reform and development” (ESI 2005c, 1) and to achieve “a slow but unrelenting transformation of the state” (ESI 2005a, 6).

This soft-power based model is deemed to be a cheaper way of ensuring regional stability than models that rely on peacekeeping (ESI 2005b, 3). It is also considered superior to the model of authoritarian state building that has been applied in Bosnia and is about to be applied in post-independence Kosovo, mainly because it offers a long-term developmental strategy and strengthens local institutions instead of weakening them by overtaking their functions in an unaccountable manner (ESI 2005a, 2-10). Some analysts suggest that hard-power based models are necessary for dealing with ‘specific challenges’ such as remaining security threats, unfinished nation-building projects, and the legacies of war (EPC 2008, 15-6). Yet, the dominant view is that if EU involvement

in the Balkans is to have sustainable positive effects, it must shift from protectorates, from costly and morally unjustifiable hard-power tools (such as imposition), and from a policy of containment, to enlargement, soft-power tools (such as inducement of reforms), and a policy of voluntary transformation (*Ibid.*, 7-13; ICB 2005, 8-11).

Vestiges of Balkanism

The Europeanization approach is a powerful alternative to other policy approaches applied in Southeast Europe. Yet, it does not compel policymakers to rethink the Balkans outside the framework of Balkanism. Despite the stress on soft power and despite frequent references to ‘regional ownership’ of the Europeanization processes, policy prescriptions mostly boil down to application of EU conditionality, whether in the form of carrots or of sticks. The approach is built upon the assumption that the democratic and consensual character of EU governance makes EU involvement inherently legitimate and ensures unlimited support from recipient populations. The conception of tight EU conditionality as part of the EU’s persuasion-based and consensus-based ‘methods’ would be unthinkable without this assumption. However, the consensus about the inherent legitimacy of European involvement has been tacitly propped up by a consensus about the disastrous social, political, cultural, and economic conditions in the Balkans. The Europeanization approach has invoked ethnic violence, nationalism, instability and threats to European stability when defining the policy problems that the EU faces in the Balkans.

Europeanization, like the policy approaches before it, often starts off by implicitly questioning the Europeaness and cultural fitness of the Balkans, for example by noting that “developments in the 1990s... have only painted in brighter colours the imagery of the Balkans as the land of perpetual instability, ethnic divisions and state fragmentation” (van Meurs and Yannis 2002, 8), by urging the Balkans to adopt the European values of civilization and democracy, by calling for efforts to bring the Balkans into “civilised Europe” (CEPS 1999, 16), or by welcoming the efforts of certain “forces in the region to ‘re-dignify’ the Balkans as a European region” (van Meurs and Yannis 2002, 9). The

cultural immaturity of the Balkans is assumed to complicate the tasks ahead of the Europeanization project: “Massive incentives and constraints would be required to induce real change in political, economic and societal behaviours, effectively a categorical change in the course of [the Balkans’] history” (CEPS 1999, 34). Some promoters of Europeanization have accordingly worried about “how many [Balkan leaders who talk about europeanization] *really* understand what it means, or the major practical and cultural adjustments it entails” (Patten 2001a, 3, emphasis in the original).

Alternatively, but in a related vein, the Europeanization paradigm often starts off with noting the catastrophic conditions in the Balkans. While europeanization processes are said to have effectively reduced security threats, the region is seen as having a strong potential for destabilization. Weak states, institutions and administrations are seen as struggling to make their way through an insecure environment, where “potentially destabilizing domestic and regional ethnic tensions simmer just below the surface” and where “inadequate rule of law mechanisms allow corruption and organised crime to flourish” (Kempe and Klotzle 2006, 7; see also EPC 2008, 13; ICB 2005, 7). As has historically befitted the Balkans, all key security threats facing Europe in the 21st century – terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, regional conflicts, state failure, and organized crime – are said to be “highly applicable” to the region (Kempe and Klotzle 2006, 18). ‘In the Balkans’ – as the story usually begins – progress is always slow and is typically met with resistance, setbacks and reversals (e.g. see Patten 2001a, 1).

The Balkans have been described as a volatile region where “at any moment any part of it can still topple into crisis” (Patten 2002, 1; see also 2001b; van Meurs 2002, 7) and where “[c]orruption and organised crime have descended like carrion crows [, posing] a huge threat to the security of the European Union itself” (Patten 2002, 3). They have been described as “unruly” “territories”, where law and order have to be imposed (Emerson 2000, 336, 330), as a “depressing” region where people’s desperation and distrust are aggravated by dire economic and social conditions and where the “smell of violence” can still be felt (ICB 2005, 4). In the picture drawn by Europeanization, the Balkans appear as an isolated ghetto that looms as a threat to Europe’s stability and peace (*Ibid.*, 4):

Political instability in the Balkans threatens Europe with the prospects of never ending military conflicts, constant flows of immigrants, flourishing of Balkan-based criminal networks and the erosion of the EU's credibility in the world. (*Ibid.*, 6)

The socio-economic problems of the Balkans are well known and the point is not to deny them. I argue, however, that through the general and indiscriminate association of these representations with the Balkans as a whole, a generalizing synoptic construct of 'the Balkan problem' has been articulated. The use of this construct as a ready-made definition of the policy problem that Europeanization faces in each and every Balkan state has had implications for Europeanization-inspired policy analyses.

The first implication is that the consensus on the dire state of affairs in the Balkans implicitly props up the consensus on the indispensability of the solutions proposed by the Europeanization approach and thus discourages critical analysis of the feasibility of the approach itself. Some Europeanization analyses suggest that it is "a bold hypothesis that the process of EU integration in the region would qualify automatically as a strategy for development, modernisation and transition, all in one" (van Meurs and Yannis 2002, 3). Some even warn that the EU might become a "hostage of the destabilizing potentials of the region" (van Meurs 2002, 7). Yet, they still have us believe that the remedy for Balkan problems is entry into the European paradise of peace and prosperity. Few analysts have analyzed the concrete causal relationships that yield the equation between EU integration and Balkan peace and prosperity.

For all the perceptiveness of their analyses, even those that have analyzed this causal relationship fail to convince that the EU integration process alone can bring about the expected revolutionary changes. According to the leading think tank International Crisis Group (ICG), for example, the assumption that the lure of EU membership alone would suffice to overcome nationalist resistance in Bosnia has been proven wrong (2007, 19-22). The think tank, however, goes on to suggest that a more determined EU involvement would do the trick. But then in light of the ICG's own analysis of the OHR's activities in Bosnia, it remains unclear if the intensity of determination that would be required by the EU to break nationalist resistance would not be rather akin to the OHR's authoritarian powers.

Or let us take the example of the member-state building model propagated by the ESI as the most suitable EU approach to the Western Balkans. The model begins with a radical reform of institutions and public administration, proceeds with social and economic convergence with the level of development of the rest of Europe, and ends with transformation of the democratic process (ESI 2005a, 6-8). Yet, the concrete causal mechanisms that the ESI envisages at each stage are less revolutionary. Radical reform of the administration should be instigated and pushed forward by continuous EU monitoring and by the process of adopting EU legislation. There is not much analysis on how to pursue the mammoth and complex task of social and economic convergence, apart from the suggestion that SEE countries should design and implement National Developmental Plans that should be approved by the EU and should serve both as general developmental strategies and as frameworks for EU structural assistance. Problems of democratic representation are to be tackled by improving the democratic process through the development of mechanisms for dialogue and consultation between the social partners (ESI 2005a, 6-8). Not only are these policy instruments modest in comparison with the tasks they are supposed to achieve, but they also focus primarily on external (EU) pressure for policy change while their relation to the domestic component of the policy process remains understudied. It is thus unclear if the model is really up to the task of instigating revolutionary transformation in societies identified as ‘hard cases’ for pro-European reforms.

The presumption that the ‘Balkan problems’ are grave problems means that the goal of the Europeanization approach is to dispose of the ‘Balkans’ as soon as possible and produce a mainstream European region. But it also means that the political, social and economic developments in SEE countries in the period *until* EU membership are neglected (Krastev 2002, 15). For example, few proponents of Europeanization would doubt whether it is really feasible, or even prudent, to expect Bosnia to adopt “thousands of pieces of legislation and regulations in line with the EU”, when “half the population live on or below the poverty line” (Lajčak 2007) and could in theory be served better by a different order of priorities. The Europeanization paradigm is unconcerned with the way in which SEE countries’ political and power relations interact or interfere with

Europeanization processes, because local political processes should not and cannot change the policy direction.

Given the admitted difficulties ahead of the Balkan Europeanization projects and the frequency with which the international community has lamented obstacles to reform created by resilient local power structures, this has been an odd approach. Some analysts have been content to suggest that opposition to Europeanization might only come from those profiting from corruption and crime, but the honest business community and the population at large would be supportive (Emerson 2000, 324, 331). Other proponents of Europeanization have relied on opinion polls to show that the priorities that the EU has set for the Balkans “respond directly to the preoccupations of people across the Balkans” (Patten 2002, 6-7). While thoroughgoing Europeanization policies have been proposed, it has not been analyzed how local support or opposition might relate to the rationale and implementation of these proposals. The lack of sufficient analysis of the *process* through which the Balkans would be brought into “civilian, civilised Europe” (CEPS 1999, 16) has usually been compensated by invoking the greatness of the goal that Europeanization is expected to achieve in the historically antagonistic Balkans – namely a “breakthrough that would lead the region *away* from the divisions and the conflicts of the past and *towards* stability, co-operation and prosperity” (van Meurs and Yannis 2002, 8, emphasis in the original).

A second implication of the representation of Balkan countries as unstable and culturally immature is that these countries need not be treated as equal partners of the EU. EU involvement in the region has been represented not only as legitimate, but also as necessary. Despite the desire of many proponents of Europeanization to completely replace the hard power of the EU (showcased in protectorates) with soft power (showcased in candidate countries), the logic of justification of the latter follows the logic of justification of the former. Assured by the professed superiority of the postmodern system of the EU and its normative rather than self-interested basis, Europeanization proponents have tended to disregard the reactions of Balkan societies to the postmodern power that, in the short-term at least, has made them recipients of policies in which they have not had a say.

EU conditionality complicates democratic representation. It limits the control of elected governments over domestic policies and, by implication, allows them to deny responsibility for these policies and their consequences (Krastev 2002). Europeanization analysts have recognized these problems. They have acknowledged that it is necessary to balance “creatively the demands for greater regional/local ownership in the process towards EU integration with the inevitable EU intrusiveness, comprehensive norm-setting and the Brussels-imposed conditionality for EU membership” (van Meurs and Yannis 2002, 22). In reality, however, Europeanization-inspired policy analyses have been predominantly concerned with ways of making EU involvement more effective rather than more accountable.

The legitimacy deficit of ‘virtual’ EU membership have been acknowledged, too. It is believed that the solution is full membership (Emerson 2002, 7). Yet, the Europeanization approach presupposes a more or less protracted period of pre-membership ‘socialization’ into EU rules and norms. While it has been noted that no country is pressurized to ‘socialize’, in reality this is expected from every country that has chosen “the EU model in the most fundamental sense – economics, politics, society, identity” (*Ibid.*, 20). It only remains unclear if and how the choice for a European destination and identity would settle problems of legitimacy and democratic accountability. What is clear is that problems of legitimacy and accountability do and will exist and that the only remedy that the Europeanization approach has to offer is the normative superiority of the European order and the Balkan countries’ choice for a European identity.

In sum, the Europeanization approach in the international community’s Balkans policy assumes that Balkan countries’ development and security is a function of their fast EU integration. It encourages association with Europe as the best way to manage transition. Unlike Balkanism, which is *primarily* focused on identity issues, the Europeanization approach is primarily focused on political and social change in the Balkans in line with EU developmental models. Yet, this approach not only preserves some of the basic assumptions of Balkanism but also considers identity transformation and adoption of European values as key prerequisites for europeanizing countries’ fast association with Europe.

Bulgaria and the External Discourses on the Balkans

During most of the transition period, Western governments and public opinion have relegated Bulgaria to a gray, yet precarious, zone on the mental map of Europe between the westernizing Central Europe and the violent Balkans. Bulgaria has been a borderline case for both the discourse of Balkanism and for the international community's Europeanization approach. Despite scenarios to the contrary, it remained uninvolved in the ethnic conflicts in its neighborhood and retained internal ethnic peace. It was not in the center of attention of Balkanism but it was affected by it because its international image frequently suffered from indiscriminate judgments about the region. In the Balkan context, it was a promising case for europeanization because it retained relative political stability and in many respects was more similar to the CEE countries than to the post-conflict areas of the Balkans. In the broader East European context, however, it was an intermediary case that obviously could not keep up with Central European frontrunners such as the Visegrad group states.

What has been the effect of the Balkanism discourse and of the increasingly influential Europeanization approach in the international community's Balkans policy on Bulgaria? One of the main effects of the strong Balkanism discourse was to make issues of identity and identity transformation an integral part of Bulgarian politics. If Bulgaria wanted to join Europe, it seemed that it had to change. Although Bulgaria was not considered to be a purely 'Balkan' case, Balkanism unsettled its self-identification as a European country. It provoked anxiety about the country's international reputation, uncertainty about its place in Europe, and fears of its possible exclusion from the process of European integration.

Bulgaria's ambivalent position was thus particularly propitious for europeanization. Prospects of inclusion into the 'club' were good enough to encourage pro-europeanization attitudes and to support pro-europeanization political forces. At the same time, they were sufficiently unclear to mingle policymaking with identity politics focused on affirming Bulgaria's European identity. Although the discourse of Balkanism

was exclusionary, it had a politically enabling effect on Bulgaria – it encouraged active attempts at, and demonstrations of, identity transformation.

This effect was strengthened by the growing importance of the Europeanization perspective for the Balkans as a policy approach that the international community was willing to apply in the Balkans. On the other hand, the Europeanization perspective also suggested that europeanization was the best way to deal with the economic and political problems of transition. It thus clearly linked europeanization and identity transformation to economic development.

The Ascent of Bulgaria's Europeanization Paradigm

The remainder of this chapter examines the emergence of Bulgaria's grand Europeanization project in the late 1990s. It analyzes how Balkanism impinged on this project and examines the fit between the Europeanization idea and the conceptual 'baggage' of the public, the intellectual elite, and the decision-makers in Bulgaria. I focus only on the emergence and consolidation of the paradigm at the end of the 1990s, when the stories of the two case studies begin. Subsequent developments will be discussed in the context of these case studies.

Europeanization, Nationalism, and Bulgaria's Historical Experience

Despite the tendency – visible both in the East and in the West – to represent the Europeanization project as a novel and unprecedented challenge, there is hardly anything novel about europeanization in Bulgaria. The europeanization debate was a central debate throughout Bulgaria's pre-socialist modern history. European cultural models were used as reference points in the course of the social transformation that started in the 19th century. The period was marked by fundamental change brought about by the gradual retreat of the values of traditional society. The profound reshuffling of values and the development of Bulgarian cultural identity was conceived and carried out on the basis of comparison, imitation, and sometimes rejection, of European models and

values (Dimitrov and Krasteva 1998, 124-9; Daskalov 1997, 1994; Elenkov and Daskalov 1994; Dimitrova 1996; for a study covering the Balkans in general see, for example, Kitromilides 1994). From the very beginning, Bulgaria's relationship to Europe was characterized by a painful awareness of Bulgaria's backwardness and un-European character and the country's social and cultural transformation was accordingly aimed at europeanization and elimination of the difference between Bulgaria and Europe (Dimitrov and Krasteva 1998, 124).

During this period of social transformation, Europe was the model of progress. In the minds of large sections of the Bulgarian elite (and especially of the political elite), europeanization was synonymous with modernization and civilization, with technological progress and industrial development, and with modern science and education. It was the epitome of progressive political development, civic rights, the rule of law and representative democracy (Daskalov 1997, 142, 1994b, 2-5). Bulgaria was expected to replicate the development of Western Europe, which encouraged industrialization and borrowing of western institutional templates (Daskalov 1997, 141-3; Dimitrov and Krasteva 1998, 129). The European developmental trajectory determined both the chain of successive stages of the modernization process and its desired end. Large parts of the political and cultural elite posited the emulation of European models as Bulgaria's only viable path towards progress.

Admiration for Europe was complemented by a strongly disparaging attitude towards Ottoman culture in particular, and towards Islam and Asia in general. The identification of Islam and the Orient as irreconcilably different from Bulgaria was part of the process of creating a distinct and stable Bulgarian national identity and was central to the nationalist project of creating a sovereign Bulgarian state. Partly, therefore, progressive Europe was elevated in the discourse of the Bulgarian intellectual elite by virtue of its perceived opposition and superiority to the backward Ottoman Empire (Daskalov 1997, 142).

Throughout Bulgaria's modern history, however, the europeanization idea has had to cohabit with another staple ideology – nationalism – that, too, has had a great deal to say about the relationship between Bulgaria and Europe. The westernization process in the

19th century provoked sobering experiences and critical reactions to the ideal of Europe and to promises of europeanization. Many local intellectuals were frustrated by the observation that the europeanization of Bulgarian society brought little more than utterly superficial alterations in the traditional ways of life. Such frustration engendered a traditionalist counter-discourse. The counter-discourse opposed the shallow and degrading imitation of the outward appearances of civilization that led to no genuine social and cultural change, yet was carried out at the cost of rejecting national traditions. It reflected fears that the superficial imitation of European models would be detrimental to the morals and national consciousness of the people, whose collective identity was deemed to be still fragile (*Ibid.*, 143-4, 1994b, 13).

Disillusionment with the painful and slow processes of europeanization and with Bulgaria's backwardness and provincialism disrupted the symbolic power of Europe. Cultural elites split in their opinion on the desirability of European influences on Bulgarian culture and society (Daskalov 1997, 148-63). An anti-modernization trend emerged in reaction to the difficulties of modernization and to the perceived crisis in Bulgarian society. It reflected a sense of insecurity engendered by the profound social change that was eroding the old certainties of tradition while offering no clear future paths and no credible promises of achieving European blueprints (Elenkov 1994, 14). The sense of crisis intensified in the period between the two World Wars (*Ibid.*, 23; Dimitrova 1996, 48). The anti-modernization discourse gained strength and became more clearly nationalist. It opposed modernization, liberal conceptions of individual and social development, and the project of europeanization (Elenkov 1994, 24; Dimitrova 1996, 70-86). Having announced the end of the epoch of emulation, the new intellectual project reclaimed the national cause, focused on national traditions and propagated a unique Bulgarian way of development that, unlike europeanization, would guarantee the consolidation of national identity (Dimitrova 1996, 70-83; Elenkov 1994, 25; Janev [1933] 1994, 342-3; Galabov [1934] 1994, 228-9; Shejtanov [1933] 1994, [1942] 1994, [1925] 1994).

The europeanization debate was stifled during socialism but reemerged in the post-socialist period. Europeanization was perceived as an ideological antidote to socialism and was reinvigorated after the regime change. It fitted well into the post-socialist

ideological environment. The delegitimization of communism legitimized the europeanization project and contributed to its popularity and wide acceptance. In addition, the Europeanization idea addressed the most pressing qualms of post-socialist Bulgaria. It offered an alternative model of development that could claim proven efficiency, eliminated the confusion about right and wrong values, put order in developmental and foreign policy priorities; and proposed a new suitable geopolitical orientation for Bulgaria (Dimitrov and Krasteva 1998, 130). It was suited to become the leading post-socialist political ideology.

Unlike Europeanization, nationalism had cohabited well with communist ideology and came out of socialism intact, too. The socialist state had utilized the symbol of the Bulgarian nation in its attempts to gain legitimacy but for ordinary Bulgarians nationalism remained related to the history of the Bulgarian 'nation'. It was not equated with socialism and was not delegitimized together with it (Stamatov 2000, 563).

Europeanization, Balkanism and the Domestic Intellectual Environment

During the early stages of transition, the domestic intellectual elite had to react to a growing and influential body of Western scholarship and analysis dealing with the Balkans and to 'decide' which parts and assumptions of the Western discourse on the Balkans would be accepted unconditionally, which would be diffused or adapted to the local context, and which would be rejected. Bulgarian intellectuals were apparently eager to open up for Western scholarly ideas after a long period of forced closure and in general were in search of new authoritative analytical frameworks that could replace the old delegitimized ones inherited from communism and that could, probably, also strengthen intellectuals' institutional positions. As a result, a large part of local policy analysis and academic work contributed to the emergence and acceptance of a particular interpretation of the europeanization process in Bulgaria which emphasized the cultural, civilizational, and un-Balkanizing effects of europeanization. Two key issues were in the center of this interpretation: the issue of Balkan nationalism and ethnic conflicts and the issue of the level of socio-economic development of the Balkans. Both issues had already been extensively treated in Western scholarship before they started to be

analyzed by local scholars. Both of them were approached as issues pertaining to culture and civilization.

Throughout the 1990s, many local analysts identified nationalism as an integral element of Bulgarian culture that made it incompatible with European culture. Balkan, and in particular Bulgarian, nationalism was assumed to be unpredictable, uncontrollable, and potentially dangerous. Civilization and culture were often identified as the two key factors explaining Balkan nationalism and the recurrence of ethnic conflict in the Balkans. Potential explanatory factors related to the underlying political and economic developments in the Balkans were generally neglected.

Cultural hybridity, and in particular the Oriental elements of Balkan culture, were held responsible for the spiritual backwardness of the region and for its susceptibility to savage nationalism and religious intolerance (Genchev 1995, 41-2). In line with the influential, if controversial, 'clash-of-civilizations' framework on which many Western analyses drew, some Bulgarian analysts assumed that the Balkans had a high conflict potential because they were located in the contact zone of the Western, the Slavic Orthodox, and the Islamic civilizations (Lalkov 1995, 38; *Conference on the Balkans Proceedings* 1995, 58-9). The breakup of Yugoslavia was accordingly explained with the "civilizational determination" of its constituent parts (Hinkova 1998, 16; Mihajlov 1996, 9-15).

A number of Balkan "specificities" – patterns of organization of everyday life, the political system, and even "social psychology" – were said to be products of the inherently unstable 'crossroads' model that characterized the contact zone of civilizations (Georgieva 1992, 46). In civilizational terms, Bulgaria was deemed to be a country "split in discord", the reasons for which were religious diversity, contradictions between the Marxist-socialist ideology and the liberal democratic ideology, and contradictions between western-style democracy and the "authoritarian, chauvinistic and patriarchal" local culture (Mihajlov 1996, 15).

Other analysts located the roots of ethnic conflict and instability in Balkan nations' obsession with history. A survey of ancient and Medieval Balkan history was said to be "a mandatory introduction" to the subject of Balkan politics because "current Balkan

politics [was] always deeply rooted in the historical context” (Ivanov 1996, 13). On this view, it was the continuous reproduction of the Balkans’ past into the Balkans’ present that accounted for the recurrent instability, dramatic chaos, uncontrollable hostility and brutal conflicts that overwhelmed the region (Georgieva 1992, 44). Pessimistic scenarios were common, as it was deemed unwarranted to assume that “the bottle full of past strong passion” would not be open again to turn the Balkans into the peninsula of tragedy¹⁵ (A. Pantev 1995, 190).

Obsession with the past, on its part, was implicitly or explicitly attributed to irrationality and thus again indirectly linked to culture. The stereotypical images of the Balkans created and disseminated by less sophisticated Western scholarship and journalistic accounts were occasionally reproduced in Bulgarian scholarship, too. The world of the putative Balkanite was depicted as a world “overpopulated with the shadows of unforgotten ancestors” (Mihajlov 1996, 17) where cultures were defined only through religion, history, and ethnicity, and remained closed, chauvinistic and confrontational (*Ibid.*, 18). Neither attempts nor abilities for cultural synthesis were found in the Balkans (*Ibid.*, 19). The Balkanites were considered to be immature, psychologically deficient and imbalanced, and fully ruled by emotions. They allegedly neglected reasoning, acted under the imputation of mental and spiritual inferiority, lacked moderation, and went into extremes (*Ibid.*, 18). Even scholars that did not endorse the tendency of Western accounts to attribute ‘tribal irrationality’ to the Balkans nevertheless suggested that people in the region were irrational in that they were incapable of ridding their consciousness of historical obsessions and were susceptible to historical myth and to megalomaniac national/territorial aspirations (Ivanov 1996, 21-2, 151; Popov 1999; P. Pantev 1995, 11). In fact, a great deal of local social scientific work that focused on Balkan ethnic conflicts treated the thesis of the irrationality of Balkan nationalism as an axiom rather than as a thesis. It rarely tested the thesis. It rather perceived its position in the chain of global knowledge production as one of providing a better-informed and more context-sensitive explanation of the irrational Balkan nationalism.

¹⁵ At the extreme, Bulgarians were absurdly accused of “mad nationalism, ... megalomania in triple reverse proportion to the country’s potentials, hatred to anything non-Bulgarian, pathological territorial and ethnic aspirations, [and] monstrous oppression of ethnic minorities within the country” (Georgiev 1995, 1).

Deeply engrained psychological characteristics, too, were treated as factors explaining ethnic conflict and Bulgarian nationalism (Georgiev 1997, 78, 2000, 11; Mateva 1994, 43). Ethnocentrism, which allegedly was “irreversibly set in the DNA” of Bulgarians and other Balkan peoples, was identified as a cause of perpetual hostility (Rajchev and Baruh 2000, 116). Deep-seated psychological conditions, transmitted from one generation to another and stimulated by the volatility of the contact zone of different cultures, were held to explain the particularities of Balkan politics (Georgiev 1993, 63). On this view, the irrational Balkan culture determines politics, as inherited psychological conditions (such as a survival complex, inferiority complex, a complex of the past) translate into political principles that continuously reproduce the patterns of conflictual ethnic relations¹⁶ (Georgiev 2000, 59-112, 1993, 90-3).

By presuming the irrationality of Balkan nationalism, local scholars accepted and affirmed a distinction between “ethnic conflict in the civilized world” (Ivanov 1996, 133) and Balkan ethnic conflicts that “were a far cry from even the most broadly-defined civilized rules” (*Ibid.*, 22). Thus, they ultimately accepted and affirmed a hierarchy between the civilized West and the nationalist Balkans. Bulgarian nationalism was usually not excluded or differentiated from the ‘Balkan’ prototype.

Bulgarian nationalism was renounced also because it was held to provoke Western countries’ distrustful and unwelcoming attitude. In this interpretation, nationalism damaged Bulgaria’s international image because, having “shaken [itself] free of primitive drives and emotions”, the Western world found the passions aroused by Balkan ethnic conflicts inexplicable and interpreted them as “latent forms of possible large-scale aggression” (Popov 1999, 6). For example, Bulgaria’s attitude towards Macedonia was said to be confusing for Western politicians and analysts, to whom it looked irrational, incomprehensible in a typical ‘Balkan way’, and very suspicious (*Ibid.*, 3-4)

The peculiar ‘Balkan problems’ were also often explained by the low stage of social and civilizational development of the Balkans. One line of explanation is grounded in the

¹⁶ These political principles allegedly are self-help culture, propensity to form unstable short-term alliances, fixation on history, proclivity for authoritarianism, anxiety over un-Europeanness, desire to secure the patronage of Europe’s Great Powers, and propensity to exaggerate past grandeur, to assert superiority over neighboring countries, and to perceive other ethnicities as a threat (Georgiev 2000, 43-59)

differentiation between developed and underdeveloped societies. In economically, socially and culturally developed societies, the level of social differentiation is deemed sufficient to allow for the formation of individual consciousness independent of the collective (community). The undeveloped – archaic - societies, on the other hand, are socially amorphous. They lack stratification and complexity and bind individual consciousness to the community (Orachev 1991, 56-7). Balkan societies, which are said to be additionally burdened by “communist, Islamist, and Orthodox Christian primitivism”, are treated as epitomes of the latter category (*Ibid.*, 55).

‘Balkan specialties’, such as ‘archaic nationalism’, Balkanization, instability, and violent ethnic conflicts, are then explained by the alleged archaism and underdevelopment of Balkan societies (*Ibid.*, 55; Georgieva 1992, 45). The immature Balkan societies are said to comprehend reality only in simple polarized terms (e.g. good vs. evil). Constricted by Marxist dogmas, they allegedly understand ethnic relations only as relations between friends and enemies, frequently confuse evil for good, and are prone to fall prey to manipulation and to give in to nationalist passions (Georgieva 1992, 45-6; Orachev 1991, 58). In Bulgaria in particular, the archaic character of the society supposedly accounts for the emergence of a typical Balkan nationalism characterized by “stubborn anti-civilizational attitudes, Balkan isolationism, egotism, narrow-mindedness, patriarchal inflexibility,... exhilaration in one’s own backwardness,... fear of the foreign and of the unknown” (Mateva 1994, 46-7).

Bulgaria’s cultural hybridity and low stage of cultural and social development have often been blamed on its adverse pagan, Ottoman and communist legacies (e.g. see Alexandrov 1995, 6-7; Dunov 2000; Semov 1999, 539-41; Rajchev and Baruh 2000, 91). Such analyses rest upon, and in turn confirm, the assumption that the model of modernization characteristic of the West is inherently superior to any culturally hybrid model of social development (for alternative views see Mutafchieva 1995; Ivanova 1991; Zagorov 1994, 74).

Another way of explaining ‘Balkan problems’ by the low stage of Balkan development has focused on the specific form of Balkan capitalism. On this view, Balkan capitalism is a hybrid between an Asiatic mode of production and banana capitalism. It is

extensive, traditionalist, etatist, based on natural resources, and lacking innovation and linkage between production and science (Mihajlov 1996, 21-3). This hybrid capitalism is in turn associated with conflicts between neighboring countries and autocratic forms of government.

All in all, during the 1990s the bulk of Bulgarian scholarship reacted to the external discourse on the Balkans by accepting and reaffirming the symbolic hierarchy between the developed democratic West and the backward nationalist Balkans¹⁷. The conception of Balkan politics and culture that emerged in this process was frustrating: in the view of many Bulgarian intellectuals, Bulgaria was not a subject of history, at least not of the history written in the developed world (Shopov 1994, 151; Mihajlov 1996, 19), “[t]he engines of Bulgarian history [were] outside Bulgaria” (Rajchev and Baruh 2000, 91), and emulation of European models appeared imperative (Rajchev [1990] 2000, 86). The alternative was believed to be “slow but sure Islamization, Asia, and Asiatic mode of production” (Mihajlov 1996, 25). Satisfactory development within the boundaries of the hybrid Balkan culture, society and economy seemed unimaginable. The local intellectual elite did believe that there was “still hope that Bulgaria could solve its national problems in a civilized way” but appeared convinced that this could happen only if the country were able “to absorb... the revitalizing fluids of [European] culture” (Kosev 1993, 23). In the opinion of both the political elite and the bulk of the intellectual elite, the only way out of the decrepit condition of national malady and grave economic crisis was the way towards the life-sustaining European structures – the way of Bulgaria’s civilizational transformation. This structure of ideas, attitudes, and ideological predispositions was propitious for the political elites’ Europeanization project.

Bulgaria’s Civilization Choice

Bulgaria’s putative civilization problem emerged in public debates in the beginning of the 1990s. The issue of europeanization/Westernization and of EU and NATO

¹⁷ For rejection of this hierarchy from a nationalist, pro-Slavic, and anti-neoliberal viewpoint, see Zagorov 1994; Zagorov and Iordanov 2000. For an approach focused on proving the Balkans’ uninterrupted historical bond with Europe see Georgieva 1995.

membership started to be frequently framed in the symbolically charged terms of Bulgaria's civilization choice. Bulgaria's economic and political transformation started to be frequently understood as a road leading to membership in the community of "Europe and the civilized nations", and europeanization was frequently equated to civilization (Zhelev [1991] 1997b, 70; see also Zhelev [1991] 1997c, 88, [1992] 1997b; Minchev [1992] 1993b, 142). At this stage, however, Europeanization was not a powerful political ideology because it was not adopted by a powerful political actor. The ideas of Westernization and of Bulgaria's 'return to Europe' were constitutive of the SDS's identity in the early stages of its existence but their influence quickly waned. Having no history of dissident protest to legitimize it, the SDS sought to derive legitimacy from anti-communism and from the pre-socialist rightwing political tradition (Kolarova 1996; Dajnov 1996, 5).

Europeanization was marginal in the ideological position of the BSP, too. After the regime change, the BSP upheld a dual political discourse that reflected internal divisions. One faction of the party focused on preserving unity and leadership position and identified the BSP as a radical left party; the other faction strived for rapid modernization, legitimization, and Europeanization of the party and identified itself with European Social Democracy (Dajnov 1996, 2). Although initially the Europeanization perspective appeared to some extent consequential for the BSP's political identity, it was soon marginalized. About all the party had to do in order to improve its public image was to rename itself (from Bulgarian Communist Party into BSP) and to publicize its alleged metamorphosis (Dimitrova 1998, 174-9). The BSP preserved a fair degree of control over state resources and conducted a successful public relations campaign. This proved enough to secure its electoral success in 1990 (*Ibid.*, 167-71). Resort to Europeanization ideas appeared to be a superfluous effort. After the elections, internal discord and loss of political influence compelled the BSP to adopt a more nationalist ideological position designed to regain public support (Dajnov 1996, 2-3). In 1993, a new generation of leaders oriented the party's ideology towards traditional leftwing egalitarianism and resistance against crime and economic inequality, which at that time appeared better suited to restore the party's political power. Both nationalism and Europeanization became marginalized in the party's political discourse (*Ibid.*, 2-5).

Things changed with the coming to power of the rightwing ODS government in 1997 in the aftermath of the devastating economic and political crisis that erupted at the end of 1996. The ODS let the Euro-Atlantic integration agenda dominate both its foreign policy and its domestic policy. It upheld Europeanization as the policy paradigm that could guarantee Bulgaria's future economic development. The project of economic development was thus one of the two integral parts of the Europeanization paradigm. It was a reaction to the failure of the economic policies of previous governments. At the base of the Europeanization project of development was the general assumption that European integration would reverse the economic decline and guarantee prosperity. It was expected to do so by installing a working model of economic policy, by locking national economic policy into the right reforms and priorities, by propelling the structural reforms necessary for economic development, and by bringing in developmental aid. Importantly, economic development was invariably melded with social welfare and better living standards. There was no clear vision how European integration would improve living standards and bring about prosperity. The equation appeared to be a presumption that was also encouraged by the basic propositions of the international community's Europeanization approach towards the Balkans, which propagated the idea that the region's development depended on fast EU integration.

The ODS, however, also equated europeanization with 'civilization' and placed the idea of the civilization choice in the center of public and political debates. Its executive program promised to turn Bulgaria into "a normal European country" (Government 1997):

The end goal of our program is to ensure that Bulgaria would enter the new millennium as a civilized European country. We know how difficult this will be. We know that the trust conferred upon us is unique and will be given only once. This is why we are determined not to waste the opportunity that the people have given us with their vote. (*Ibid.*)

This project of 'europeanizing' and 'civilizing' Bulgarian identity, and of demonstrating this identity transformation to the rest of the world, became the second integral part of the Europeanization paradigm. For the ODS, the realization of Bulgaria's civilization choice meant more than opportunities for a better life for Bulgarians – it was represented as "a chance to leave the twilight zone... [and] board the time machine" (Kostov, address to the nation, 1999). By representing European integration as a unique

opportunity to bring about profound positive social change, the ODS justified a governmental policy agenda that was dominated by foreign policy issues.

The ODS government's foreign policy agenda was based on an interpretation of europeanization that involved a great deal of anxiety over Bulgaria's European credentials. Anxiety was provoked by Bulgaria's location in the politically unstable and culturally ambiguous Balkans. The process of europeanization was defined not simply as a process of adaptation to the politics of the European integration project. It was defined as an attempt to haul Bulgaria out of the Balkans into the community of European (civilized) states. The symbolic opposition between Europe and the Balkans became a staple rhetorical tool for the ODS, which believed that it had a duty to thrust aside "any 'Balkan' or 'Orthodox' arguments against the introduction and application of [European] standards" (SDS 2002). For example, when President Stoyanov (of the ODS) pleaded for ethnic peace, he did not refer to human rights but to the incompatibility between Balkan ethnic conflicts and Europe:

There is no place in Europe, where we all claim to belong, for disintegration and separatism along ethnic lines, for imposing political interests by the threat of terror and violence. (2001b)

For the Bulgarian leadership, basic human rights and international norms were fully embodied by, and synonymous with, Europe.

Europeanization thus stood for something much larger than just EU membership or adoption of EU legislation: it provided the necessary values and guidelines for an all-encompassing political, cultural and civilizational reconstruction. It seemed to legitimize a new policy vision. It was represented as a "challenge of historical proportions" (Bokova 2002, 26) and as a junction on the line of Balkan history that allowed the region to turn away from Balkan violence and proceed towards the European paradise of peace and prosperity:

This part of the world has, never before in its history, had better prospects for building its future on the basis of common goals, aspirations and values shared by the countries in the region. There is no country in the Balkans today that does not subscribe to the European values. (Stoyanov 2001b)

Having defined europeanization as a thoroughgoing cultural and civilizational refashioning, the ODS went on to create an image of Bulgaria as a willing student of the

West. A few years before Bulgaria was expected to become a full-fledged EU member, the SDS pledged to

ask help from like-minded parties [from EU member states] in educating young people so that they grow up as European-minded citizens... and in the affirmation of Christian-democratic and European values in the region. (SDS 2002)

Yet, while the ODS adopted an ‘infantile’ identity vis-à-vis Europe, in the domestic sphere it presented itself as the only political actor that had the credibility and moral authority to europeanize Bulgaria and guarantee the irreversibility of Bulgaria’s civilization choice.

The currency of the images of childlike Bulgaria ‘learning’ the European way was encouraged by a peculiar process of personalization of the idea of ‘Europe’ underway in the domestic media and public sphere. Some of the basic political and social principles that were to guide Bulgarian politics were imputed to the personalized body of ‘Europe’. In the press and political commentaries, Europe was often represented as a body that ‘did’ things - it ‘saw’, ‘watched’, ‘wanted’, ‘hated’, ‘grumbled’, ‘knitted her brows’. Europe even saw things that Bulgarians were allegedly not aware of, and knew Bulgarians’ real needs better than local politicians (Boyadjieva 1999, 127-8). The adoption of ‘Europe’ as an authoritative referent was indicative of the elite’s success in identifying Europeanization as an overarching model of political, economic, and cultural development.

At the end of the 1990s, NATO membership, too, started to be framed in the terms of Bulgaria’s civilization choice. The key to this enframing was the representation of NATO as a union based on democratic values. Although this representation was promoted by influential political figures such as President Zhelev (1995b, 246), due to unenthusiastic public opinion and the BSP’s outward opposition to the alliance, in the early stages of post-socialist transition NATO membership was even less influential for the ideological environment than was Europeanization¹⁸. With the coming to power of the ODS government, however, NATO membership and Europeanization started to be represented as two sides of the same coin; both were understood as expressions of

¹⁸ While parliament declared that Bulgaria was ready to initiate cooperation with NATO, the process was nothing but smooth. The BSP rejected a conception of Bulgarian security that was exclusively centered on NATO membership and insisted on retaining a close relationship with Russia.

Bulgaria's civilization choice. Bulgaria's desire for NATO membership was justified on the basis of:

Bulgaria's belonging to the same value system [as NATO] and [its] readiness to contribute to the general security and share the risks of defending and protecting these same general values. (Stoyanov 1997)

Integral to this interpretation were narratives of the forceful but temporary severing of the natural links between Bulgaria and Europe in the past. These narratives proved that Bulgaria's belonging to the Euro-Atlantic value system was a natural one. "The borders drawn at Yalta" provided one such narrative for the period of socialism; the war in Yugoslavia which was said to have "further delayed [Bulgaria's] way back to Europe" provided another narrative for the post-socialist period (*Ibid.*).

The rendering of NATO membership in terms of values and civilization choice had a strong political impact. Domestically, such enframing upheld NATO membership as a legitimate and strategically important foreign policy goal. The legitimacy of NATO membership in turn legitimized the governmental agenda of the ODS, with its controversial tendency to emphasize foreign policy over domestic economic and social policy:

I [am] proud that I was the head of state in whose mandate Bulgaria officially submitted its application for membership in NATO and who did not allow the country to waste its chances for achieving this strategic goal during the greatest trial for our foreign policy – the Kosovo crisis. Because all major Bulgarian successes after that – both the start of EU accession negotiations and the removal of the restrictive visa regime – were very much due to the Euro-Atlantic solidarity that our country demonstrated at that time... All promises for higher salaries and pensions, for decreasing unemployment, and for access to new and old markets are dependent on Bulgaria showing European and Atlantic solidarity and on using the opportunities such solidarity creates for countries like ours. (Stoyanov 2002)

In the international sphere, the equation of NATO membership with the adoption of 'western' values and with "common civilizational roots" (Stoyanov 2001c) was intended to improve Bulgaria's image and to appeal to the responsibility of the West to support the new aspiring democracy in its quest for adopting the proper value system.

The Nationalism/Sovereignty Discourse

At the end of the 1990s the Europeanization paradigm dominated the way Bulgaria related to Europe and to the Euro-Atlantic institutional structures to which it aspired to belong. However, it was not the only ideological framework around. Europeanization propagated a non-nationalist vision of Bulgaria's future. Unsurprisingly, its most notable ideological rival was nationalism.

As a policy approach, nationalism was much less coherent than Europeanization. Unlike Europeanization, it could not offer a clear-cut model of political and social development. It was a broad ideological framework that structured political actors' responses to certain policy problems. It is therefore best studied through the particular discourses that it engendered in concrete cases. Still, it is analytically justifiable to identify several key elements of this approach.

One element is the defense of national identity and the defense of national unity. The defense of national identity has been a reaction against the Europeanization paradigm's perceived tendency to worship the 'foreign' and look down on the 'national' – a tendency that, according to critics, follows a tradition that marks long spans of Bulgaria's historical development (Semov 1999, 642-3; Minchev 1995, 255). Defenders of national identity view the elite-driven imitation of the West as futile and counterproductive in that it has led to uncritical import of western values, ideas, and social and political arrangements without due consideration of their viability in the national context, and at the same time has rendered social and political arrangements based on local traditions unimaginable (Minchev 1995, 258-9).

The discourse of national unity has been in circulation in Bulgaria's public sphere since 1989. Initially, an important factor behind the importance of this discourse was the sizable ethnic Turkish minority and the legacy of the communist regime's 1984 large-scale assimilatory campaign against it, which was met with resistance and in 1989 triggered a wave of emigration to Turkey. Immediately after the regime change, the Communist Party leadership decided to reverse the assimilatory policies in order to gain

international and domestic legitimacy (Stamatov 2000, 553-5). Anti-communist dissident groups, too, had taken a stance in defense of ethnic Turks' rights, which in fact contributed to these groups' political influence (Dajnov 1996, 9). Despite the political elites' anti-nationalist stance on the 'Turkish' question, in 1990 there was a wave of popular nationalist protests against the reversal of assimilatory practices and against the return of property sold prior to emigration (Stamatov 2000, 553-61). It involved a coalition of ethnic Bulgarians living in ethnically mixed communities and local Communist Party elites defiant of the decisions of the Party Center in Sofia (*Ibid.*, 557-60). The ethno-nationalist protests of 1990 made visible, and lent some legitimacy, to the discourse of national unity (*Ibid.*, 560-4).

During 1990 and 1991, one of the two key political players – the BSP – employed this discourse in response to external challenges and internal confusion. It signed formal alliances with nationalist parties and attacked the SDS on account of its cooperation with the party of the ethnic Turks – the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (DPS), which it promptly branded as betrayal of the national interest (Dajnov 1996, 2-3). Yet, among Bulgarians as a whole, nationalist attitudes were not strong and there was no religious and ethnic intolerance. Nationalism did not motivate political decisions. Both the public and the elite tolerated (even if grudgingly) the existence of the DPS which has since been a major player in Bulgarian politics¹⁹. Certain bitterness towards ethnic Bulgarians could be felt among ethnic Turks around 1990, but it quickly waned (*Ibid.*, 10).

The discourse of national unity continued to exist in the following years, although the 'ethnic Turkish' factor was losing salience. It was promoted by nationalist political actors such as the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (VMRO) and the Bulgarian Democratic Forum. Nationalist elements continued to be present in the political discourse of the BSP, too. Nationalism also had supporters in academia. The discourse of national unity gave vent to fears that Bulgarian national identity would be threatened by Europe's multicultural community, that Bulgaria's national traditions would be crushed under supranational pressures in the EU, and that Bulgarian national unity would be destroyed by EU conditionality regarding the collective rights of ethnic

¹⁹ Some tension was caused by the perception that the overall balance in the political sphere depended on the DPS.

and religious minorities (Mitev 1999, 78-9; Boyadjieva 1999, 187-8; Zagorov 1994, 24). Nationalist political actors and scholars did not reject European integration openly²⁰ but pleaded for the European spirit to remain faithful to the ‘national idea’ and propagated the vision of “Europe of the Fatherlands”, as opposed to the allegedly dangerous “Europe of the regions” that, it was feared, could provoke uncontrollable disintegrative processes within European nations (Mitev 1999, 78-9; Zagorov 1994, 16-23).

The other three closely interlinked elements of the nationalist approach were the defense of national sovereignty, the defense of national security, and the defense of national interests. In the late 1990s, the BSP was the political actor whose policy vision most clearly emphasized sovereignty. The BSP was in favor of a large national army, independent diplomacy, and foreign policy free of NATO’s influence (Parvanov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 9.4.1999). It supported EU membership but retained an anti-NATO stance until 2000²¹.

The last key element of the nationalism discourse was the defense of national dignity. This element involved the politicization of sensitive issues such as the leadership’s self-confidence and ability to reject foreign dictates, the leadership’s ability to counter threats to the country’s sovereign rights and vital interests, the country’s right to demand that its position of candidacy for EU and NATO membership should not be abused or used as a pretext for a condescending and humiliating attitude on the part of the West, the country’s right to be treated as a partner to the West rather than as a subordinate, etc. This element was accentuated by the power asymmetry inbuilt into the EU enlargement process.

Summary

This chapter examined two broad sources of ideological influence that impinged upon Bulgaria’s Europeanization project in the period between 1989 and the late 1990s –

²⁰ The newly established Bulgarian Communist Party was the only political actor that openly opposed EU integration (Mitev 1999, 77-8). It had a very limited electorate.

²¹ In 2000, the BSP endorsed NATO membership. The ideological shift was the result of the ultimate victory of the social democratic faction within the party (led by future Bulgarian president Parvanov) and of the BSP’s bid to build an attractive new image of a European social democratic party.

Western discourses on the Balkans and the domestic structure of predispositions, beliefs and attitudes shared by the political elite, the scholarly community and the public. As a whole, both of these sources encouraged the adoption of European models and created a propitious environment for the elite's Europeanization project. What prevented Europeanization from becoming a leading policy paradigm prior to 1997 was the absence of a strong political actor to uphold it. However, it is this propitious ideological environment, together with the perceived need for a new direction of development after the devastating political and economic crisis of 1997, that accounts for the wide, smooth, and relatively fast acceptance of the Europeanization paradigm in the late 1990s.

Bulgaria's Europeanization paradigm was constructed as a simultaneous project of identity transformation and economic development/prosperity. Yet, the ideological environment in the late 1990s tended to strengthen the identity-transformation project and to encourage Bulgaria to approach the process of europeanization not from a materialist perspective focused on costs and benefits, but rather from an idealist perspective focused on internalizing and 'socializing' into European values and norms.

Bulgarians' anxiety about their place in Europe also nurtured the most compelling ideological rival of Europeanization – a nationalist discourse focused on sovereignty. While it was unable to match the power of the Europeanization paradigm in the late 1990s, this discourse was apparently there to stay. The first major clash between the two ideological rivals followed the ODS government's controversial decision to provide an air corridor for NATO's air war against Yugoslavia during the Kosovo conflict in 1999. This clash is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 3:

‘We Will Not Be Hostage to the Balkans’: Identity Politics and the Europeanization Paradigm during Bulgaria’s Involvement in the Kosovo Crisis

In late March 1999, following the failure of diplomatic efforts to peacefully resolve the Kosovo crisis, NATO started an air war against Yugoslavia. In late April 1999, it asked for authorization to use the Bulgarian airspace during the military campaign. The Bulgarian government responded positively to NATO’s demands.

At home, the government’s response was bitterly contested. Although the government pledged to demand NATO’s guarantees on the full range of issues related to the economic, political and military aspects of national security (Mihajlova, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 21.4.1999), the leftwing opposition BSP rejected the decision. It argued that such a policy in effect involved Bulgaria in a military conflict against Yugoslavia, endangered national security, and violated the constitution. The BSP called for preserving neutrality and for concentrating Bulgaria’s diplomatic efforts on finding a peaceful solution to the crisis. It disputed the legality of the government’s decision to open an air corridor for NATO’s military operations and demanded that such a decision be taken on the basis of a referendum (Parvanov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 20.4.1999; Kornezov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 21.4.1999). The government’s decision to open an air corridor for NATO was followed by an anti-war protest in Sofia that brought together thousands of people and was supported by the BSP, the environmentalist movement Ekoglasnost, the Social Democratic Union, the Green Party, and environmental, agricultural, youth and other social organizations. The ODS government pushed its Kosovo policy through. In early May 1999, parliament ratified the agreement between the ODS government and NATO and authorized the Alliance to use the Bulgarian airspace for military operations against Yugoslavia.

Domestic Repercussions of the Kosovo Conflict

Political Costs

In 1999, the balance of power in Bulgarian politics was clearly in favor of the ODS. The BSP was in a weak political and electoral position, largely due to the still vivid memories of the spectacular failure of its Videnov government which had led to the devastating 1996/1997 crisis. The crisis had lent unprecedented legitimacy to the ODS and had delegitimized and weakened the BSP. It had also secured a comfortable parliamentary majority for the ODS. The government was therefore able to push its Kosovo policy through parliament with relative ease.

Regardless of the nominally strong position of the ruling party, the Kosovo dilemma entailed potentially significant political costs. It emerged at a moment when the popularity of the ODS was in decline. Support for the government had been waning during 1998 in response to continuously deteriorating living standards and rising levels of poverty and unemployment²². The Kosovo crisis seemed more than likely to make things worse.

Indeed, the political controversy was earsplitting. Complete with loud quarrels, physical fights, sexist and other disparaging remarks aimed at government officials, and temporary removal of MPs, the 8-hour long parliamentary debate preceding the ratification of the agreement between the government and NATO was one of the most dramatic clashes that the Bulgarian parliament has witnessed to date. The clash was essentially between the ruling ODS and the opposition BSP, with smaller parties joining one of the principal camps. The parliamentary majority ratified the agreement but could not dampen the controversy. In response to the vote, the BSP issued a declaration with the indicative title “Bulgaria is Already at War”, concluded that May 4th, 1999 would be an entry in one of the darkest pages of Bulgaria’s modern history, and left parliament for a week (declaration by the Democratic Left²³, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 5.5.1999).

²² Public support for the ODS government was 65% in 1997. By October 1998, it had dropped to 44% (MBMD opinion poll, quoted in *OMDA Press Reviews* 22.5.1999).

²³ The Democratic Left was the parliamentary coalition led by the BSP.

Upon return, it demanded that parliament issue a declaration stating in advance that Bulgaria would not open a land corridor for NATO troops across its territory. The political dispute was raging on the background of anti-NATO, anti-war and anti-government demonstrations, protest marches and peace marathons, organized or supported by the BSP and other parties that opposed the official Kosovo policy. The anti-war protests competed with pro-NATO, pro-government, as well as nationalist²⁴, demonstrations. There were occasional non-violent clashes between the protest camps.

The air war against Yugoslavia polarized Bulgarian society. Opinion polls suggested that a great many Bulgarians concurred with the opinion of the leftwing opposition rather than with the policy of the ODS government. Anti-war attitudes were especially pronounced in the first weeks of the bombing campaign, when feelings of uncertainty and insecurity were at their peak. According to express opinion polls, at the end of the first month of bombing – i.e. at the time when the ODS had to decide whether to support or reject NATO's request for an air corridor – between 63% and 69% of Bulgarians were against authorizing NATO to use the national air space for military action against Yugoslavia. Only between 16% and 24% of Bulgarian supported NATO's demands. Around 66% of Bulgarians were in favor of preserving neutrality and 72% believed that if Bulgaria were to open an air corridor for NATO airplanes, it would risk getting involved in the military conflict (Mediana polling agency and Gallup International, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 20.4.1999). For several reasons, including the government's improved communication campaign, the demonstrated lack of serious security threats, and the public's accommodation to the situation, during the second month of bombing public opposition against the government's Kosovo policy declined to between 38% and 54%, while the level of public support rose to 36%-37% (Mediana polling agency, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 3.5.1999; Gallup International, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 17.5.1999). 49% of Bulgarians still believed that by opening an air corridor, Bulgaria had in effect become a side in the conflict; 39% did not see such a link (Mediana polling agency, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 3.5.1999). Around 75% of Bulgarians wanted immediate end to the military campaign (Gallup International, quoted

²⁴ The nationalist VMRO took an aggressive anti-Serbian stance as a corollary to its ardent support for Macedonia.

in *OMDA Press Review* 17.5.1999)²⁵. In addition, the Kosovo war bred popular opposition to NATO²⁶.

Pressure for Adequate Compensations

The ODS government was under heavy pressure to ensure adequate compensations for the economic losses incurred during the war and for the risks Bulgaria took by supporting NATO's military campaign. Trade unions and business associations were voicing demands to this effect (*OMDA Press Review* 2.4.1999). Even in the heat of the air war, the public remained predominantly concerned with domestic economic problems, such as low living standards, unemployment and poor economic prospects (major polling agencies, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 8.6.1999). The issue of the economic losses incurred as a result of the Kosovo crisis was especially sensitive. Due to the high political costs at stake in the domestic controversy over Bulgaria's Kosovo policy, failure to secure adequate compensations was likely to seriously destabilize the political position of the ODS.

Bulgaria's Quest for Compensations

The ODS government did look ahead to economic and political compensations for direct and indirect economic losses incurred during the Kosovo crisis and the subsequent war. The plan was to declare Bulgarian demands concerning the post-conflict reconstruction of the region already before the end of the military conflict, while Bulgaria's position

²⁵ According to different opinion polls, between 88% and 62% of Bulgarians would not support a decision to allow NATO's land troops to use Bulgarian territory for military operations against Yugoslavia (Gallup International, quoted in *OMDA Press Reviews* 17.5.1999; Market Test, quoted in *OMDA Press Reviews* 29.4.1999). 53% of the respondents did not believe that Bulgaria would receive compensations for economic losses incurred during the war; only 28% were optimistic on this point (Mediana polling agency, quoted in *OMDA Press Reviews* 3.5.1999).

²⁶ Prior to the crisis, 40-43% of Bulgarians supported NATO membership. By the end of the first month of bombing, the level of support dropped to 31%. By the end of the second month of bombing, it was 38%. Opposition, however, grew from a pre-war level of around 20%, to 32% at the end of the second month of bombing (Gallup International, quoted in *OMDA Press Reviews* 17.5.1999). In June 1999, opinion polls found out that Bulgarians were completely split on the issue of Bulgaria's NATO membership (44% of respondents were for NATO membership, 44% were against it) (MBMD poll and other polls, quoted in *OMDA Press Reviews* 8.6.1999).

was still being strengthened by its supportive role in the conflict resolution efforts (Stoyanov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 22.5.1999). Shortly after the start of the air war, the government pledged to demand economic compensations for losses caused by the military campaign (Kraus, quoted in *OMDA Information on the Economic Impact of the War in Yugoslavia* 31.3.1999). It pledged to demand full EU and NATO membership, as well as financing from the pre-accession funds of both organizations, if the war were to last longer than one month (Vasilev, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 7.4.1999). The government developed a crisis management program to deal with the inevitable negative impact of the Kosovo war upon the national economy.

The Bulgarian leadership used every opportunity to point out the enormous economic losses that Bulgaria was incurring due to the military campaign. At international forums and bilateral talks with European governments, it energetically tried to negotiate postwar financial assistance for economic recovery and infrastructure development in the Balkans, as well as political support for EU and NATO membership²⁷. It proposed to deal with the consequences of the Kosovo conflict by increasing the EU's pre-accession funds and by creating a special fund to compensate affected countries; hopes were that Bulgaria would host the special fund (Mihajlova, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 9.4.1999; Radev, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 29.6.1999). In the midst of the Kosovo war, President Stoyanov argued that the international community's strategy for assisting the postwar recovery of the Balkans should include debt relief for Yugoslavia's neighbors proportional to the losses they had incurred due to the conflict, financial support for infrastructure development in the region, measures to encourage foreign investments, and commencement of EU accession negotiations with Bulgaria and Romania (quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 13.5.1999). This list of welcome measures also included adoption of the principle of 'individual treatment' of each SEE country in its quest for EU integration (Bozhkov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 13.5.1999).

The ODS government did not demand direct financial compensations. This stance was partly a response to attempts by some Western governments to use compensations both as a 'carrot' and as a source of moral pressure to compel Bulgaria to assume its share of

²⁷ See Mihajlova, Kostov or Stoyanov, quoted in *OMDA Press Reviews*: 17.3.1999, 2/6/21.4.1999, 10/14/25/27.5.1999, 9/24.6.1999, 3/23.11.1999, 3.12.1999.

responsibility and accept more refugees²⁸ (see Kostov and Mihajlova, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 6.4.1999). More importantly, however, the Bulgarian leadership preferred to tap into the prospective flow of long-term post-conflict assistance for the economic recovery of SEE (Stoyanov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 27.4.1999). It appeared confident that “Bulgaria [had come] out of the Kosovo crisis with an improved international standing” (Radev, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 29.6.1999) and was in a good position to demand assistance that was more substantial than one-off material compensations.

By the middle of 1999, the gist of the strategy pursued by the Bulgarian government was clear to all players. In exchange for Euro-Atlantic solidarity, Bulgaria requested political compensations in the form of speedy EU integration, ‘political support’ for EU and NATO membership, and minimal association with other SEE countries. The demands were not modest. Bulgaria expected to be invited to start EU accession negotiations in late 1999 together with the second wave of applicants. It also requested the removal of the visa requirements for Bulgarian citizens traveling within the Schengen zone (Kostov, interview for Deutsche Welle Radio 1999, for *Le Figaro* 1999; Mihajlova, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 12.5.1999, 3.6.1999). All things considered, it got quite a lot of what it asked for²⁹. On the eve of the Helsinki Summit of the EU, the ODS government celebrated not only Bulgaria’s invitation to start EU accession negotiations but also the spectacular success of its foreign policy strategy: “The invitation shows that the EU needs Bulgaria because of its contribution to the pacification and security of SEE. It is a reward for our European solidarity” (Kostov, address to the nation 1999).

Bulgaria also expected maximal economic benefits from the recovery and reconstruction aid earmarked for the Balkans. It called for a comprehensive long-term plan for post-conflict economic recovery, reconstruction, and infrastructure development in the Balkans, in the form of debt relief, debt rescheduling, trans-regional infrastructure projects, and a “massive investment program” “similar to the Marshall Plan”:

²⁸ To the dissatisfaction of the EU and the US, Bulgaria put a limit on the number of refugees it would accept on its territory. The move was justified by the lack of economic resources to deal with a huge wave of refugees and by the threat of political destabilization associated with such a wave.

²⁹ The visa issue continued to disrupt relations between Bulgaria and the EU. The visa requirements for Bulgarian citizens were lifted in spring 2001.

Nowadays every Balkan problem has European dimensions, and this means that it is no longer possible to search for purely regional solutions... We have to look beyond the war. We need a clear commitment and a fast NATO accession of the SEE countries in order to guarantee their security. We need a sound plan for the economic recovery of the whole region. (Stoyanov 1999; see also Mihajlova, quoted in OMDA Press Review 14.4.1999; Radev, quoted in OMDA Press Review 16.4.1999; OMDA Press Review 22.4.1999; Stoyanov, quoted in OMDA Press Review 23/27.4.1999).

Within such a framework for long-term post-conflict assistance, Bulgaria planned to maximize its economic gains above all by participating in infrastructure projects and projects for post-conflict economic recovery (Kostov 1999b, 1999a; Stoyanov, quoted in *OMDA Information on Losses and Compensations* 1.7.1999). The most important infrastructure project that the ODS government planned to realize through participation in the internationally sponsored plans for post-conflict economic recovery of the Balkans was the construction of the second bridge on the Danube between Romania and Bulgaria.

Ideological Underpinning of the ODS Government's Kosovo Crisis Policy

Despite the unprecedented scale of the conflict and its geographic proximity to Bulgaria, the greatest impact of the Kosovo war was not on concrete foreign policy actions but on their ideological underpinnings. The buildup of tensions in domestic politics notwithstanding, the war did not present the ODS government with any real foreign policy dilemmas. Bulgaria simply had no option of staying aloof from the Kosovo war. For one, the conflict was causing direct economic losses. For another, due to the prolonged political instability in the former Yugoslavia, the whole SEE region was becoming increasingly marginalized both politically and economically, and so trouble in the Balkans necessarily meant trouble in Bulgaria. Neither did Bulgaria have the real option of turning down NATO's request for support during the air war. With all countries in the region already onboard, such a stance would have put Bulgaria in a situation of political isolation (see Kostov, BNT interview 1999a, BNT interview 1999b, interview for *Demokratsija* 1999).

The crucial impact of the Kosovo war concerned the ideological enframing of Bulgaria's foreign policy. The war provided an opportunity to make a virtue out of necessity and trade Bulgaria's support for NATO's peacemaking efforts for an improved international image. The ODS government did not miss the opportunity. As soon as the air campaign against Yugoslavia began, it made plans to launch an aggressive public relations campaign aimed at representing Bulgaria as a politically and financially stable country (*OMDA Press Review* 9.4.1999).

Bulgaria's Balkan Predicament

Being part of the Balkans has always been a key component of Bulgarian identity (Todorova 1997, 57; Krasteva 1996, 18-20). Yet, as the ideas of Bulgaria's geopolitical reorientation, profound cultural refashioning, and 'civilization choice' were winning the day, this component was becoming increasingly uncomfortable.

Identity is always constituted through differentiation from others and in relation to differences that have become socially recognized (Weldes *et al.* 1999, 11). Central Europe's identity-building project, for example, has been built upon differentiation from the 'barbarous' and 'backward' Russia (Neumann 1999, chapter 5; Todorova 1997, 140-60). Since Europe's own identity has been constructed by means of differentiating Europe from its 'Easts', one of which was Russia (Neumann 1999, chapters 2,3), differentiation from Russia was a good way for Central Europe to demonstrate affinities with Europe. Central Europe's identity-building project is thus a profoundly political project that has been intended to appeal to Western Europe for inclusion and support and that has not been performed in search of a Central European identity but in search of a West European one (Neumann 1999, 146-52). The construction of internal hierarchies according to degrees of Europeaness within the regions that have themselves been designated as different from, and inferior to, Europe has been even more conspicuous in the Balkans. It has served to justify the breakup of Yugoslavia, to legitimize nationalism, and to give the Western-like Croatia and Slovenia an advantage in the contest for Euro-Atlantic integration (Bakić-Hayden and Hayden 1992; Bakić-Hayden 1995; Razsa and Lindstrom 2002; Todorova 1997, 58).

Unlike Central Europe or the countries located on the geographic periphery of Southeast Europe, Bulgaria has had no feasible option of completely dissociating itself from the Balkans. In the late 1990s, Bulgarian identity politics therefore focused on differentiation from those elements of Balkan politics and from those areas of the Balkans that seemed to contradict Bulgaria's new image of a Europeanized country. Bulgaria attempted to construct its identity in relation to differences that were not commonly recognized in the West, but that, the elite believed, *could* become recognized if emphasized through a proactive identity-building strategy.

Representing Bulgaria as fundamentally different from the putative Balkans was not inevitable. In the early stages of post-socialist transition, when there were no overt signs of political instability in the Balkans and the old Balkanism discourse had not yet reemerged, Bulgaria's international image was not conceived as related to the Balkans in any significant way. At this stage, image building was confined to convincing the international community of Bulgaria's democratic credentials that, in the eyes of the West, were undermined by the return to power of the old communist elites in the first free elections. As the non-communist President Zhelev set out to establish closer relations with the US and the EU in 1990, he put forward the view that a change of international image was indispensable if Bulgaria was to improve its prospects for integration into European and global institutional structures ([1990] 1997, 39-40). The President's discursive framework invoked Bulgaria's loyalty to the community of Western states and Bulgaria's cultural and civilizational refashioning, but did so implicitly and unobtrusively.

The idea of Bulgaria as 'an island of stability' in the Balkans emerged immediately after the beginning of the ethnic conflicts in the former Yugoslavia in the form of predictable declarations of non-intervention. In a national address, the President declared that Bulgaria had no intention to take advantage of the instability in Yugoslavia to advance its national interests; to the contrary, Bulgaria pledged to contribute to the stability of the region and to ensure that the "ghosts of national and ethnic conflicts in the Balkans would never wake up again" (Zhelev [1991] 1997a, 68). In all probability, such declarations were not conscious attempts to launch any thought-out image building campaign. However, once it was introduced into political and public discourse, the

representation of Bulgaria as an island of stability in the Balkans quickly became a key element in the discursive enframing of the country's foreign policy. Most of the time, the enframing appeared to be more important than Bulgarian stability itself, which, as a matter of fact, was never under serious threat. In a typical election-campaign speech, the President promised the electorate

to do [his] best to preserve the international reputation of Bulgaria as an island of social and political stability in the Balkans – a quality that, given Bulgaria's peculiar geopolitical location... and the tragic developments in Yugoslavia and other neighboring countries, will be of a continuously increasing value. It would affirm our country's international reputation of a peaceful, dignified, democratic, and prosperous state. (Zhelev [1991] 1997d, 93-4; see also Zhelev [1991] 1997e, 96)

A patent strategy of differentiation from the Balkans was already at work in such rhetoric.

While the 'island of stability' framework enjoyed the President's favor, it was not the only conceivable discursive framework applicable to Bulgarian foreign policy in these early phases of post-socialist transition. Some foreign policy analysts took inspiration from the Visegrad countries and their successful strategy of improving their EU membership prospects by building a positive 'Central European' identity in opposition to Russia and Eastern Europe. Bulgaria's attitude towards the Visegrad strategy could not but be an ambiguous one because, while it was a luring and efficient tactics, the Central European identity-building project was improving the Visegrad group's position in the contest for EU integration at the cost of deepening the international isolation of the Balkans. For some commentators, however, dissociation tactics following the Visegrad example nevertheless appeared to be a viable foreign policy strategy for Bulgaria. For example, following a bitter comment to the effect that "some Europeans [cannot] *a priori* announce themselves truer Europeans than others" (E. Minchev [1992] 1993a, 78), one commentator apparently put aside his sense of moral outrage to conclude that

[e]specially in the economic sphere, Bulgaria has much more in common with the Central European states than it has with its neighbors. If this potential is realized..., we have a chance to escape, metaphorically of course, from the region that gives us no substantial opportunities... [B]efore we could prove that we are as much Europeans as the West

Europeans, we have to become Central Europeans – in both mentality and achievements. (*Ibid.*, 79-80)

Yet, dissociation could not be pursued with any ease by a country that, in the view of the rest of the world, was located in the center of the Balkans. The strategy was becoming increasingly unattainable as ethnic conflicts in the Balkans were escalating. Partly due to its infeasibility and partly because of Bulgarians' strong, if uncomfortable, Balkan identity, dissociation did not get established as a dominant ideological framework.

Instead, a strategy of differentiation from the Balkans was gradually gaining strength. Throughout the first half of the 1990s, Bulgaria's Euro-Atlantic integration was too slow to allow this strategy to have a decisive impact upon actual foreign policy. But as the quest for fast EU and NATO integration started to dominate Bulgaria's foreign policy agenda after the coming to power of the ODS government in 1997, it became more pertinent than ever before. During the Kosovo crisis, the acute need to minimize the damages that the conflict inflicted upon Bulgaria's international image compelled the ODS to polish up the strategy of differentiation from the Balkans and to turn it into a cornerstone of its foreign policy.

The Doctrine of Differentiation from the Balkans

The ODS government organized the existing elements of the discourse of differentiation from the Balkans in a coherent interpretive framework. It used this framework to represent and legitimize Bulgaria's policy during the Kosovo war and to structure Bulgaria's new image building campaign. In the process, the strategy of differentiation from the Balkans was rationalized, reinforced, and expanded into an efficient foreign policy doctrine that focused on active efforts at differentiation from the Balkans. The doctrine was handy both as a practical guide for decision making and as a style of presenting and legitimizing the government's foreign policy at home and abroad. It was based on three simple tenets.

The first tenet was the representation of Bulgaria as fundamentally different from the unstable parts of the Balkans. At the base of this representation was the dichotomy Europe vs. Balkans borrowed from the Balkanism discourse. The strategy of

differentiation boiled down to separating the culturally European from the culturally un-European parts of the Balkans. It posited a clash between two diametrically opposite political models coexisting in the region:

One [model is marked by] the efforts of ‘great nations’ to create ethnically clean states, which is completely impossible considering the distribution of ethnic and religious communities on the territory of each country. The other is the viable European alternative – states that sustain ethnic peace and religious tolerance, defend individual rights and freedoms, and where governments do not dare to jeopardize the rights, freedoms, and security of their citizens. (Kostov, interview for Deutsche Welle Radio 1999)

The next step was to affirm Bulgaria’s European character, which the ODS government really took pains to do. A host of representations were employed to depict Bulgaria as an exemplary case of the ‘European political model’ and as a viable alternative to the model epitomized by Yugoslavia. These representations clustered around two nodal points.

One nodal point was Bulgaria’s cultural and political ‘health’, best demonstrated by the country’s success in solving ethnic problems “in a very civilized way” (Tafrov 1995, 248):

We have demonstrated that we are able not only to sustain a successful ethnic model within the country, but also to solve our ethnic disagreements with our neighbors. At the moment, we are the country that could serve as a successful model for all SEE countries. (Kostov, interview for Deutsche Welle Radio 1999; see also Mihajlova, quoted in OMDA Press Review 17.3.1999)

Another nodal point was the harmony between Bulgaria’s interests and the interests of the Euro-Atlantic community. A great deal of image building effort was devoted to confirming that Bulgaria had adopted Euro-Atlantic values and defined its national interests in line with the interests of the Euro-Atlantic community:

Bulgaria’s fast and determined response to NATO’s request for access to the national airspace positioned our country among the most reliable partners and allies [of NATO]. The adoption of Euro-Atlantic values made it imperative that Bulgaria take an active position. (Government 2000b)

Bulgarian national interests were defined as identical to “those of the free Western world”, while NATO was depicted as “the champion of these interests” (Stoyanov, quoted in BTA 16.4.1999). Political instability in the Balkans was identified as the most important security problem that Bulgaria faced (Government 2001a, 2000b) and active

regional involvement was recognized as a vital national interest (Government 2000b, 2001a, 2000a). It is indicative that Bulgaria's vital national interest in the Balkans was not articulated as any particular 'Bulgarian' interest. It was articulated as an interest in "joining the efforts of the international community to resolve the conflicts and to regulate post-conflict regional reconstruction" (Government 2000b).

The second tenet of the foreign policy doctrine of differentiation was the claim that Bulgaria promoted Western interests in the Balkans and in this way exerted a stabilizing and europeanizing influence upon the unruly parts of the region. Already in the first years of post-socialist transition President Zhelev advertised Bulgaria's non-interventionist policy vis-à-vis former Yugoslavia as proof of the existing harmony between Bulgarian foreign policy and European interests (e.g. see [1992] 1997a, 97). The passive element of this representation, as embodied in the 'island of stability' metaphor, was gradually abandoned in favor of a more explicitly active one – the representation of Bulgaria as a stabilizing force in the region. Bulgaria started portraying itself as a country that not simply provided an example for others to follow but actively generated security and stability (Zhelev 1995b, 243, [1992] 1997a, 97). The goal of the national foreign policy was then to convince European and Western states that Bulgaria was not only their indispensable partner in periods of Balkan crises, but was also able and willing to assist in the europeanization of the region and in the liquidation of its crisis potential (Minchev [1992] 1993c, 49, [1991] 1993). It was the ODS government that spectacularly completed the shift from the passive 'island of stability' representation towards the active 'generator of security' one (e.g. see Government 2000b, 2000a, 2001a; press conference on the 2000 Annual Security Report 2001; Kostov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 26.5.1999).

Three widely popularized representations – Bulgaria as a source of stability, Bulgaria as a generator of security, and Bulgaria as an agent of europeanization in the Balkans – became ideological staples of the ODS government's foreign policy rhetoric and international image building campaign. The foreign policy doctrine of differentiation from the Balkans was based on the assumption that the only way Bulgaria could improve its international reputation was to position itself against the background of an unstable and uncontrollable region and to affirm its own image of a country that was "a

source of stability” and was thus “not part of the problems but an agent of their solution” (Government 2001a). Bulgaria declared itself able and willing to support the international community’s peacebuilding efforts in the Balkans and to assist in transforming the region in line with the imperatives of European integration:

We are a pole of stability in a region beset by sore problems. Many count on us to help with solving the problems. It is plainly clear that with our strong economy that would soon function again we serve as a regional anchor for the Balkans. (Kostov, interview for *Le Figaro* 1999)

[T]he regional policy of Bulgaria is a source of stability and is oriented towards acceleration of the future integration of the whole region into the EU. Our goal is to help the Western Balkan countries go their way to European integration. In this sense Bulgaria’s regional policy is part of its European policy. (Mihajlova 2001, 7; see also Government 2001a; Press conference on the 2000 Annual Security Report 2001; Stoyanov 2001c; CSD 2001)

Bulgaria’s europeanizing and stabilizing function in the region was affirmed by declarations and demonstrations of unconditional Euro-Atlantic solidarity. The Bulgarian leadership established Bulgaria’s credentials as a trustworthy ally of the West by promising to define its foreign policy stance in accordance with the principle of Euro-Atlantic solidarity even before it had been invited to join Western institutional structures as a full member:

[O]nly through a behavior like [that of Bulgaria and Romania] can the region be changed into a safer place. [These countries] are not members of NATO but they are behaving as if they were already members, i.e. implementing into their foreign policies the democratic Atlantic values.

They have been generating stability in the region. (Tafrov 1995, 248)

Demonstrations of Euro-Atlantic solidarity became the key image building technique during the Kosovo crisis (e.g., see Stoyanov 1999)³⁰.

³⁰This discursive technique survived the change of leadership. During the 2002-2003 Iraqi crisis, Bulgaria represented its support for the US-led anti-terrorist coalition as “yet another expression of solidarity with the common values of democracy defended by NATO and the EU” (Saxkoburggotski 2003) and as yet another proof of Bulgaria’s role of a “responsible partner that respects democratic principles” (Pasi 2003; see also Government 2003a). Bulgaria was represented as one of the West’s “loyal and reliable Allies” that promoted Euro-Atlantic interests both in the turbulent Balkans and in the war against terrorism (Pasi 2002b). The NDSV, like the ODS before it, announced that Bulgaria would demonstrate its belonging to the Euro-Atlantic world by beginning to act *as if* it were a NATO member (Pasi 2003). During the Iraqi crisis, like during the Kosovo crisis, Bulgarians were reminded that the dilemma they faced was “related not only to Bulgaria’s contribution to solving the crisis, [but also to]... its future success in achieving [its] strategic goals – European and Euro-Atlantic integration” (Saxkoburggotski 2003; see also Pasi, quoted in Government 2003b).

The third tenet of the foreign policy doctrine of differentiation from the Balkans was the demonstration of Bulgaria's readiness to take on the moral obligations entailed in its civilization choice. The discourse of moral certitude emerged as a direct response to the controversy surrounding the country's involvement in the Kosovo war, but its ideological impact extended beyond the Kosovo issue. It became a crucial element of the international image building campaign organized by the ODS and a crucial element of the government's effort to delegitimize domestic opposition to its foreign policy. It also provided the ideological link between the doctrine's first two tenets. It made it possible to argue that it was deep-seated moral conviction rather than ulterior motives, shallow imitation, or servile ideological loyalty, that led Bulgaria to promote the interests and follow the policy of the international community in the Balkans. Without this link, it would be impossible to construct a spotless Euro-Atlantic image of Bulgaria.

The ODS government rendered the war in Kosovo as a classical clash between good and evil. The 'good' was embodied in the democratic, pluralistic "civilized" model of Western Europe; the 'evil' was embodied in the "dictatorship and totalitarianism" of Yugoslavia (*Democratizija*, quoted in Linden 2002, 190). The controversial issue of Bulgaria's unconditional support for NATO against a neighboring country was recast as an issue of moral obligation: inasmuch as Yugoslavia promoted values other than the Euro-Atlantic ones (Government 2000b), Bulgaria's support for NATO's military campaign was a matter of defending the right set of values. In the struggle between good and evil, neutrality could not be a legitimate option. Moral obligations made it imperative that Bulgaria take a side in the Kosovo conflict; attempts to remain neutral would have been tantamount to complicity with the evil. Foreign Minister Mihajlova aptly abridged the dilemma: "there is no alternative to opening up an air corridor for NATO, the other possibilities would mean alliance with Milosevic and Lukashenko, or abstract neutrality and self-inflicted isolation" (quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 21.4.1999). Bulgaria's support for NATO's military campaign against Yugoslavia was ideologically framed as a natural, if painful, consequence of Bulgaria's civilization choice: "The choice is made, there is no more commendable place for our country than in the European integration process and we should not show indecisiveness in the very beginning" (Stoyanov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 21.4.1999)

This simplified black-and-white interpretation of the ODS government's Kosovo policy was a conventional way of presenting the policy in as incontestable terms as possible. Discourses that rely on moral judgment typically intensify at times of crisis that threatens to disrupt the ideological order (Doty 1996, 8). The heightened domestic controversy instigated by the Kosovo war was such a crisis³¹. It led to plummeting public support for the government's foreign policy and it threatened to spoil Bulgaria's image of a reliable ally of the Euro-Atlantic community. The discourse that invoked Bulgaria's moral obligation to take a stance against the evil regime in Yugoslavia was used both to legitimize NATO's military campaign and to de-legitimize domestic opposition to the official foreign policy line:

There are no anti-NATO attitudes in Bulgaria. There is fear of NATO airplanes, fear of the missiles, and fear of war. Anti-NATO attitudes are only bred at the poorly attended demonstrations organized by the former communists. There they say: 'NATO, Go Away!'... [But] who is going to stop the humanitarian catastrophe? Who is going to help the people return to their homes? Who is going to stop the crimes against humanity? 'NATO, Go Away!' means 'Milosevic, Come to Stay!' Bulgarian society understands this and there are no friends of Milosevic in Bulgaria. (Kostov, interview for Deutsche Welle Radio 1999)

When addressing the international public, the government denied the existence of anti-NATO attitudes in Bulgaria and maintained a rather artificial separation between anti-NATO and anti-war attitudes. The main motivation behind such rhetoric was the desire to safeguard Bulgaria's international reputation. In the heat of the military campaign, and especially after several stray missiles hit Bulgarian residential areas, it was understandable and certainly not tragic that the anti-war attitudes among the Bulgarian public would translate into temporary – as they ultimately proved to be – anti-NATO attitudes. The unavoidable volatility of public opinion in Bulgaria, however, was detrimental to the ODS government's international public relations campaign that was designed to create and assert a spotless Euro-Atlantic image of Bulgaria. Eager to prevent this image from being covered up by pictures of ordinary Bulgarians waving anti-NATO slogans, the government's response was to underrate the social groups

³¹ The NDSV government used similar discursive techniques to counter domestic opposition to its controversial decision to support the US during the 2003 Iraqi crisis; it argued that Bulgaria was "in a situation when not only interests, but also morale necessitate[ed] to act, and to act quickly!" (Pasi 2003).

involved in anti-NATO protests as marginal ones confused by local communist or Milosevic's propaganda (Government 2000b; Kostov 1999a).

The Doctrine of Proactive Euro-Atlantic Association

The doctrine of differentiation from the Balkans was an outgrowth of the identity project inbuilt into the Europeanization paradigm. The parallel project of this paradigm – that of socio-economic development – led the ODS government to adopt a parallel interpretive framework focused on the material and political benefits of demonstrating Bulgaria's civilization choice and unconditional Euro-Atlantic solidarity. This parallel interpretative framework gave rise to a foreign policy doctrine that was focused on the pursuit and defense of 'the national interest' and whose basic policy guideline was the proactive pursuit of Euro-Atlantic association.

The two parallel doctrines seemed to be ideologically incompatible. The doctrine of differentiation was idealist. It exhorted the virtues of europeanization and purported to be non-nationalist. The doctrine of proactive Euro-Atlantic association was utilitarianist and was preoccupied with the *national* interest. Yet, the two doctrines were colluding rather than colliding. The doctrine of proactive Euro-Atlantic association picked up from where the doctrine of differentiation left off. It adopted and built upon the basic ideological elements of the doctrine of differentiation – i.e. Bulgaria's adoption of Euro-Atlantic values, its fundamental difference from the problematic parts of the Balkans, its self-styled role of an agent of europeanization in the Balkans. The harmony of underlying assumptions bridged and in effect united the two doctrines. Neither of them would hold water without the other.

The doctrine of proactive Euro-Atlantic association was built upon the assumption that Bulgaria's europeanizing and stabilizing role in the Balkans entitled it to fast EU and NATO integration. The assumption was not an invention of the ODS. Since the outbreak of the ethnic conflicts in former Yugoslavia, differentiation from the unstable parts of the Balkans had always been regarded as the best way of escaping the Balkan trap that held Bulgaria down and impeded its European integration (e.g. see Minchev [1992]

1993b, 144; Zhelev [1992] 1997b, 108-9). With the passage from the passive island-of-stability representational frame to the active generator-of-security one, it became common to affirm Bulgaria's reputation of a country that promoted Western interests in the Balkans and that therefore had to be included in international institutional structures as a guarantee that "whatever happens on the territory of former Yugoslavia... in the near or distant future, a new Balkan war would not be allowed" (Zhelev 1995b, 244). The Bulgarian leadership did not seem to be bothered by moral dilemmas. Bulgaria's location in one of the most unstable and conflict-prone regions was treated as a "unique opportunity" for integration into the Western orbit (Zhelev 1995b, 243). The ODS government followed track. It seemed determined to make full use of this opportunity to speed up EU and NATO integration by

affirming Bulgaria's image of a leading Balkan country that boasts vibrant and irreversible reforms and that makes valuable contribution to regional security and stability, thereby ensuring [the] country's individual treatment in the process of EU integration. (Government 2000a)

The Kosovo war made the task easier to achieve.

In the sphere of domestic politics, the ODS utilized the doctrine of proactive Euro-Atlantic association to legitimize its Kosovo policy. The doctrine reinforced the interpretation that support for NATO during the Kosovo crisis was the only viable policy option if Bulgaria wanted to avoid isolation, "pass the test of NATO" and seize the "the historic opportunity to catch the last train to Europe" (Dogan, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 5.5.1999; see also Kostov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 20.4.1999). It also served to persuade the skeptic anti-war minded public that, in addition to being unavoidable, Bulgaria's cooperative behavior vis-à-vis an organization to which it officially did not yet belong would be rewarded:

Now Bulgaria should act as a belt of stability around its troubled neighbour, and gain economic and political advantages from this. Bulgaria should join the countries which insist on a new Marshall plan for the economic stabilization of the Balkans. (Stoyanov, quoted in *BTA* 16.4.1999)

NATO membership is a priority for Bulgaria and if we want it, we have to give something in return... We are in a precarious situation, but we also have a chance to be noticed and taken seriously. (Dogan, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 20.4.1999)

The government's pro-NATO policy could thus be justified as a policy that not only served the interests and values of the West, but also served the national interest by maximizing the country's chances for fast Euro-Atlantic integration and fair compensations.

In the sphere of international politics, the ODS used the doctrine of proactive Euro-Atlantic association to enframe Bulgaria's demands for post-conflict compensations, as well as to structure Bulgaria's international image building campaign. Demands for speedy Euro-Atlantic accession were framed and justified by reminders of Bulgaria's demonstrated Euro-Atlantic commitment and solidarity in the dire conditions of regional instability during the Kosovo crisis. Such reminders were an implicit appeal to the West to assume its share of 'solidarity'. While "common civilization roots" (Stoyanov 2001c) were expected to provide the necessary conditions for admission into the Euro-Atlantic structures, solidarity was expected to make admission possible sooner rather than later.

Bulgaria claimed to deserve NATO membership inasmuch as it had proven that it shared NATO's value system and had behaved as if it were a NATO member even before it had actually become one (*Ibid.*). Invoking the West's share of responsibility and reminding that "[s]olidarity is the core of the European integration philosophy... [and] the key to success and to the strength of NATO" (Stoyanov 1997), Bulgaria called for an end to the squabbling over mundane political questions and to "tightfisted calculations for immediate return" (Stoyanov 2001c):

In times of transition arguments of material and financial nature should not overshadow political approaches... What ensures unity is the overall political will, the strategic commitment to shared destiny and solidarity. (Stoyanov 1997)

Bulgaria appealed for brave political solutions in favor of "enlargement within the natural civilizational boundaries" of NATO (Stoyanov 2001c, see also 1997). Extension of NATO into the Balkans towards Bulgaria, Romania and Macedonia was represented as the key to the alliance's strategic success in creating a 'ring of stability' in Southeast Europe (Stoyanov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 2.4.1999, 26.4.1999, 1999; for an earlier resort to such argumentation, see Tafrov 1995, 248).

The justification of Bulgarian demands for a speedy start of EU accession negotiations and for removal of the visa requirements for Bulgarian citizens traveling within the

Schengen zone, too, started off with the discourse of differentiation from the Balkans and ended up with the discourse of Bulgaria's entitlement to differentiated treatment. It was a smooth passage. First, Bulgaria asked to be differentiated from the Balkans. It called upon the EU to overcome its prejudices against the Balkans as a whole, to recognize that the main source of instability was the Milosevic regime, and to appreciate Bulgaria's commitment to Euro-Atlantic values which had remained firm even in the face of military conflict and insecurity (e.g. see Kostov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 3.7.2000). Second, Bulgaria asked to be treated differently. Encouraging the European integration of the countries from the stable zone of the Balkans, in particular Bulgaria, was represented as an investment into the stability of SEE and as a wise policy of "fire prevention", as opposed to the misplaced policy of "fire fighting" (Mihajlova, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 18.5.1999; Stoyanov, quoted in *BTA* 26.4.1999). The EU was advised not to adhere strictly to the accession criteria when dealing with candidates from the stable zone of the Balkans because this could lead to their destabilization (Kostov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 3.7.2000).

Regional approaches to the Euro-Atlantic integration of the Balkans were vehemently rejected whenever they were perceived as regional 'package deals' that could slow down Bulgaria's Euro-Atlantic integration³² (e.g. see EP 2000, 10; Filipov 2001). The stance against regional homogenization was justified by the need to contain the spillover of instability from the 'unhealthy' conflict-ridden Balkan areas towards countries that had adopted 'healthy' European political models. This interpretation, for example, determined how Bulgaria related to the SP:

[The SP] is to some extent an artificial political framework that does not isolate the source of conflict but in effect places it in a wider context... The Pact does not account for the substantial differences in the level of development of the participating countries and in the nature of social developments in these countries... There is a tendency to use a common denominator for the stable and for the unstable countries in the region..., for countries with a marked Euro-Atlantic orientation and for countries without such orientation, for countries that

³² The rejection was not a matter of principle. It apparently depended on the perceived costs and benefits of such 'regional' approaches. For example, in 1999, when Bulgaria's progress towards NATO membership was not appreciated as much as that of other SEE countries, such as Romania, the Bulgarian leadership lamented NATO's failure to treat the Balkans in its entirety and suggested that "by the piece" approach towards NATO expansion should be abandoned in favor of an all-embracing and comprehensive one (Stoyanov, quoted in *BTA* 25.4.1999; see also Mihajlova, quoted in *OMDA Press Reviews* 26.4.1999)

have started accession negotiations and for countries that have not. We deem such an association artificial, and we are worried that in this way the speed of EU integration of each of these countries is determined by the speed of the slowest one... Sometimes this even sets the stage for the capsulation and the isolation of the whole region. (Filipov, quoted in Mediapool 25.4.2001)

In order to persuade the West to treat Bulgaria according to its own merits, rather than as a part of the unstable Balkans, the image building campaign of the ODS exploited the West's responsibility to reciprocate Bulgaria's Euro-Atlantic solidarity and to allow the country to integrate into Western structures in the dignified manner that it deserved:

We support NATO's military operation; NATO's airplanes will fly through our airspace without visas. What logic can then justify the visa regime imposed on our citizens if our country has proved that it is part of the democratic world? (Stoyanov, quoted in OMDA Press Review 26.4.1999)

We will continue to do all we can... to show not only that Bulgaria is not a source of instability but that, quite to the contrary, the Bulgarian border is now effectively protecting the EU... Bulgaria's stern efforts cannot be overlooked. It would be completely unfair to group our country with other countries and, because of these other countries' failures, to treat our country unfavorably, as part of the group. (Kostov 2000)

Bulgaria expects only one thing: free movement of people... [W]e only want to be treated as Europeans. By the way, we do not feel treated as such. (Kostov, interview for Le Figaro 1999)

Such enframing had two distinct effects – an international one and a domestic one. At the level of international politics, it countered the exclusionary discourse of Balkanism. Its domestic impact was to link the problem of defending Bulgaria's national interests in the process of EU integration with the problem of national dignity. Throughout the 2000s, this linkage was to grow ever more consequential for the ideological environment in Bulgaria.

Rival Ideological Positions: The Sovereignty Discourse

The leftwing opposition enframed its stance on the Kosovo problem through an alternative discourse focused on national security, national sovereignty, and the national interest. One element of this discourse was the representation of Bulgaria's pro-NATO stance during the air war as a policy that threatened national security. The BSP's chief

contribution to the debate was to equate the opening of an air corridor for NATO with actual participation in the war (Parvanov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 20.4.1999, 5.5.1999; Pirinski, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 22.4.1999). Interpreted in this way, the opening of an air corridor was easily associated with looming dangers to national security. It was represented as a reckless policy that could have grave and fateful consequences for Bulgaria. The basic argument was that while Bulgaria took the risk that its airspace would turn into a battlefield, NATO did not provide any real security guarantees in return³³ (declarations by the Democratic Left, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 5.5.1999, 29.5.1999; BSP, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 26.4.1999, 5.5.1999; Tomov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 5.5.1999; Parvanov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 17.3.1999).

Another element of this oppositional discourse was the representation of the ODS government's Kosovo policy as an irresponsible, anti-national, servile, and dependent policy that compromised the national interest and left Bulgaria hostage to foreign interests. The BSP presented its own position on Kosovo as identical to that of the Bulgarian 'people' (*Duma*, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 5.5.1999). In contrast, the government was branded as inept leadership "incapable of sovereign decision making" and willing to "let foreign powers dictate the fate of the country" (declaration by the Democratic Left, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 5.5.1999; see also Parvanov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 7.6.1999).

The BSP blended the problem of NATO's access to the national airspace with the emotional issues of national pride and dignity. Through aggressive rhetoric and demonstrative actions³⁴ it sought to brand the leadership's foreign policy stance as a humiliating and shameful failure of statesmanship. It made much of Bulgaria's unequal position vis-à-vis NATO and emphasized that while the government put the security of citizens at risk, NATO had no obligation to safeguard the security of non-members like Bulgaria (Parvanov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 5.5.1999). The BSP suggested that

³³ A prospective military operation by NATO's land troops was associated with long-term destabilization of the region that would leave Bulgaria outside the borders of Europe (Pirinski, quoted in *OMDA Press Reviews* 29.5.1999).

³⁴ For example, a BSP MP waved a black banner with the slogan "They Sold Bulgaria" and physically resisted attempts to have him removed from the plenary hall.

Bulgaria would receive nothing in exchange for its unconditional support for NATO. What is more, by taking a hostile stance towards a neighboring country, Bulgaria was said to have deprived itself of the opportunity to be an important player in the post-conflict period (declaration by the Democratic Left, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 5.5.1999). The perceived inequality between Bulgaria and NATO was interpreted as loss of sovereignty and national dignity (see Tomov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 5.5.1999).

Finally, the leftwing opposition challenged the moral foundations of the government's Kosovo policy. The government represented Bulgaria's involvement in a military campaign against a neighboring country as a matter of civilization choice and respect for Euro-Atlantic values. In contrast, the BSP represented it as partaking into "a brutal modern-day crusade" (Parvanov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 5.5.1999). The ODS legitimized its policy by a discourse of morality that reduced Bulgaria's Kosovo dilemma to a fairly straightforward choice between violent nationalism and the values of Western civilization. The leftwing opposition attempted to redraw the picture and to change the terms of reference. According to the BSP, "the end [did] not justify the means" (declaration by the Democratic Left, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 29.5.1999) and the "choice [was] not between Milosevic and NATO [but] between peace and war in the Balkans" (Parvanov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 3.5.1999).

Due to the power inequality between the ODS and the BSP³⁵, the ODS had effective control over policymaking and the opposition's sovereignty discourse had no impact upon policy outcomes. In addition, the BSP intermixed the Kosovo debate with vehement opposition against the government in general and attempted to use the controversy as a way of uniting the leftwing opposition parties against the powerful ODS. The anti-war street protests led by the leftwing opposition got mixed with general political demands against the government. In addition, in the heat of the air war, the Left initiated a vote of no confidence in the government on account of the failure of domestic financial and structural reforms.

³⁵ Waning public support for the ODS during 1998 did not translate into increasing support for the BSP.

This strategy of political mobilization was a reason for the weakness of the party's alternative discourse on the Kosovo problem. It lent additional visibility to BSP's oppositional activity, but it also reserved the party's anti-war discourse to its staunch political supporters and effectively prevented it from reaching wider sections of the anti-war minded public. The aggressive oppositional stance of the BSP and its controversial decision to initiate a motion of no confidence at a time when a major international crisis was damaging the national economy allowed the ODS to question BSP's, and to affirm its own, moral credentials. The ODS used the opportunity to dismiss BSP's actions as a "national betrayal" and an irresponsible attempt to divide the nation and exploit public fears to the benefit of narrow party interests (see the parliamentary debates on the no-confidence vote in *OMDA Press Review* 6.4.1999; Kostov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 27.4.1999).

Thus, although the anti-war stance of the BSP was congruent with the attitude of a large part of the Bulgarian public, its interpretation of the Kosovo problem failed to persuade wider sections of society and to grow into a counter-discourse strong enough to challenge the existing ideological setup. What BSP's loud oppositional activities and the heatedness of the debate managed to do, however, was to accentuate those aspects of the Kosovo dilemma that pertained to the national interest and to national sovereignty. The ODS government was compelled to counteract and to follow suit by strengthening the 'national' elements in its own foreign policy strategy and rhetoric.

To sum up, the idealist pro-Europeanization policy doctrine of differentiation from the Balkans and the utilitarianist national-interest centered doctrine of proactive Euro-Atlantic association were the two sides of the influential interpretive framework that structured the ODS government's foreign policy response to the Kosovo dilemma. This two-sided foreign policy doctrine was the offshoot of the Europeanization paradigm that dominated the political and public spheres in Bulgaria in the late 1990s. Its unmatched ideological power was partly due to its congruence with the broad ideological environment of that time. The collusion between its two integral doctrines further solidified its ideological dominance. In combination, these two doctrines stretched across both the idealist/utilitarianist and the Europeanist/nationalist ideological divides. The ODS government could thus comfortably veer between an idealist and a rationalist

interpretative framework that had distinct, yet equally strong, capacity to legitimize its foreign policy conduct. This setup, coupled with the strong political position of the ODS, squeezed whatever breathing space there could have been available for rival approaches. The rival discourse advanced by the leftwing opposition remained weak, yet managed to move issues of national interest and national sovereignty further up on the foreign policy agenda.

Danube Bridge-2 and Bulgaria's Kosovo Crisis Policy

As issues of national interest and national sovereignty became more salient, the ODS was compelled to emphasize the economic and political rewards and compensations that Bulgaria would receive in return for its pro-Western stance during the Kosovo crisis. Danube Bridge-2 thus took on a special role in this crisis.

The Danube Bridge-2 Project

The average distance between bridges along the Danube is 21 km. Along the 470 km-long river border between Bulgaria and Romania, however, the only fixed connection between the two shores is the bridge between Russe (Bulgaria) and Giurgiu (Romania).

The Bulgarian idea for building a second bridge over the Danube to Romania has been in circulation since the early 1990s, but was initially not asserted forcefully. Bulgaria considered the bridge to be a strategic infrastructure project because it ensured that pan-European transport corridor IV would pass through its territory³⁶ and provided an alternative route to the EU that circumvented Yugoslavia. According to the Bulgarian side, for corridor IV to be a feasible alternative to the route through Yugoslavia, it had to cross the Bulgarian-Romanian border at Vidin (Bulgaria) and Calafat (Romania), or at Oryahovo (Bulgaria) and Beket (Romania). The route through Vidin and Calafat had an advantage as it involved longer sections of already existing class-I roads (Gancheva 2007, 1).

³⁶ Corridor IV links Turkey and Greece with Central, Western and Northern Europe via Bulgaria and Romania (see Map 1).

Romania, however, was not interested in building a bridge at any of these two locations. It sought to direct traffic along a branch of corridor IV to its Black Sea port of Constanta, whose development was a major infrastructure priority for the country. In addition, it wanted to avoid a corridor route that would leave Bucharest aside from the main transport links between Asia and Europe. Romanian trade with Bulgaria, Greece and Macedonia was negligible compared to trade with the EU and transportation costs of trade with the Southern Balkans were therefore not of primary importance. Romania stood to gain more from collecting tolls on transit traffic than from shorter trade routes. Routing corridor IV through Vidin and Calafat did precisely what Romania wanted to avoid. It marginalized Bucharest spatially, directed traffic away from the port of Constanta, and shortened transit through Romanian territory (Gancheva 2007, 1-2). Romania therefore preferred to locate the prospective second Danube bridge further downstream. Despite repeated negotiations and Bulgaria's proposal to finance the bridge on its own, the Romanian side did not agree to a bridge at any of the two locations proposed by Bulgaria. Traffic along the route was not substantial and although the EU in principle supported the construction of a second bridge, initially it did not actively engage with the issue.

The Kosovo crisis and the ensuing destabilization of the Balkans, however, made the second Danube bridge a timely project in 1999. The air war made unusable the shortest route connecting Western Europe with the Balkans and Asia, halted international transport flows through the Balkans, and had a devastating impact upon the transport sectors in SEE countries. The issue of an alternative 'safe' route through the Balkans instantly came on top of the international agenda. Danube Bridge-2 seemed especially pertinent to the situation.

The ODS government promptly seized the opportunity. It launched an aggressive campaign intended to step up international pressure upon Romania to acquiesce in the building of such a bridge at a location suitable for Bulgaria. Several days after the start of NATO's air war, the government announced plans to officially ask the EU to assist with the building of a second Danube bridge, both by providing financial assistance and by exerting pressure upon the Romanian side (Kraus, quoted in *OMDA Information on the Economic Impact of the War in Yugoslavia* 30.3.1999). Having off-handedly

concluded that the Bulgarian stance on the Danube Bridge-2 project was “far-sighted” and the Romanian one was “short-sighted”, the leadership pledged not to let Romania’s divergent interests in infrastructure development leave Bulgaria “a hostage of Yugoslavia” (Kostov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 31.5.1999).

Lobbying “on every suitable occasion the EU, NATO, and international financial institutions” in favor of Danube Bridge-2 was one of the key tasks listed in the crisis management program that the ODS government developed in response to the Kosovo crisis (*OMDA Press Review* 9.4.1999). This part of the program was carried out successfully. The government promoted the project in all relevant international forums, in talks with EU, US, and Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe (SP) officials, and in bilateral meetings with the governments of major EU member states. It intensified its efforts to convince Greece, the EU, the US, and NATO that the project was indispensable for regional stability³⁷, and it also tried to secure the support of Balkan states that could be interested in the project, e.g. Macedonia³⁸.

Romania remained resistant. In May 1999 – in the heat of NATO’s military campaign against Yugoslavia – it announced that it was ready to reconsider its position on the bridge project. Shortly afterwards, it signed a memorandum on the development of pan-European corridor IV (Gancheva 2007, 1; *OMDA Press Review* 22.5.1999). A month later, it rejected the project again. Around the end of 1999, Romania accused Bulgaria of long-lasting obstruction of Romanian electricity exports to Turkey and used the issue as a pretext to yet again reject the idea of building a second Danube bridge at a location that would clearly be in Bulgaria’s favor (Basesku, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 21.10.1999). Subsequently, during negotiations within the framework of the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative, the Romanian side argued that such a bridge could become economically feasible no earlier than in 2015 and declared that it did not have the resources to finance the project (quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 2.12.1999). A day later it suggested that it could acquiesce in the project if it received adequate

³⁷ Danube Bridge-2 was, for example, the central issue discussed during a visit by a NATO delegation in April 1999 (*OMDA Press Review* 5.4.1999).

³⁸ For example, see Mihajlova, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 21.5.1999, 24.11.1999; *OMDA Press Reviews* 13.4.1999, 10/20.5.1999, 15.11.1999, 13.9.2000, 22.10.1999; Kostov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 25/27.5.1999, speech at the EU Helsinki Summit 1999; *OMDA Information on Losses and Compensations* 1.7.1999; *OMDA Information on the Kosovo Crisis* 1.4.1999; *Kapital* May 1999)

compensations for the unfavorable location of the bridge (Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 3.12.1999).

Finally, in early 2000, under intense pressure from the EU and thanks to the personal involvement of the special coordinator of the newly established SP, the Romanian side agreed to the project and to Bulgaria's preferred location of the bridge at Vidin and Calafat (interview A). The construction of Danube Bridge-2 was included in the high priority 'Quick Start' list of the SP³⁹. Bulgaria took the responsibility to finance on its own the project's preparatory stages, the design and construction of the bridge, as well as the design and construction of the necessary infrastructure on Bulgarian territory. Romania would only finance the necessary infrastructure on its territory. The project envisages the construction of a combined road and railway bridge.

Following the long-awaited agreement with Romania, the ODS government planned to build Danube Bridge-2 within 24 months after the start of construction. The adjacent infrastructure was to be ready for exploitation 6 months earlier than the bridge itself (Chachey, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 16.2.2000). As a loan from the European Investment Bank (EIB) was being arranged for the project in late 2000, the authorities were planning to start construction in 2001 (*MTC News* 8.11.2000). In the SP, too, there was confidence that construction would commence in 2001 (Hombach, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 5.10.2000). In the ODS government's *Program for the Development of Transport Infrastructure* (MTC 2001), the project's finalization was planned for 2005. The end of the military conflict and the subsequent fall of the Milosevic regime, however, dampened the perceived urgency of the 'safe route'. From 1999 till the present day, the consecutive governments of the ODS, of the National Movement Simeon II (NDSV), and of the BSP-led coalition have taken pains to persuade Romania to treat the (still pending) construction of the bridge as a priority. No longer under international pressure to speed up the project's realization, however, Romania has not been very cooperative.

Since 2000, the starting date and the completion date of the Danube Bridge-2 project have been periodically reconsidered in response to the project's stagnation, caused

³⁹ The project was symbolically important for the SP and became one of its most touted achievements.

primarily by land acquisition problems and alleged delays on the part of Romania. By late 2001, the Ministry of Transport and Communications (MTC) had moved the deadline for the construction of the bridge forward to 2006 (Petrov, quoted in *Mediapool* 21.10.2001). In 2002, the project's financing was secured, but the start of construction of both the bridge and the adjacent infrastructure was moved forward to 2003; the deadline for completion was accordingly moved forward to 2007 (Evtimov, quoted in *Mediapool* 16.5.2002; Busek, quoted in *Mediapool* 25.9.2002; Ivanov and Zhiponov, quoted in *Mediapool* 11.12.2002). At the end of 2002, all procedures and formalities concerning the Danube Bridge-2 project were supposedly dealt with and the Ministry was awaiting "the first dig" (Petrov, quoted in *MTC News* 18.12.2002). In 2003, 'the first dig' was postponed for mid-2004 (Zhiponov, quoted in *Mediapool* 8.7.2003). In early 2004, the Bulgarian coordinator for the SP optimistically announced that the start of the construction of Danube Bridge-2 was a matter of weeks (Keremedchiev, quoted in *Mediapool* 11.2.2004). In a few weeks, the NDSV government announced that construction would commence in 2005, so that in the symbolic year 2007 Danube Bridge-2 could be "almost finished" (Saxkoburggotski and Vasilev, quoted in *Mediapool* 24.6.2004). By late-2004, however, it was clear that construction could start only at the end of 2005 and the bridge could be open for exploitation in late 2008 (Vasilev, quoted in *Mediapool* 1.11.2004, 18.2.2005). At the end 2005, the start of construction works was habitually moved forward into the forthcoming year; the bridge was to open for exploitation in late 2009 (Spasov, quoted in *Mediapool* 13.11.2005). The BSP government's ambitious strategy for transport infrastructure development, written in 2006, planned the event for 2009 (MT 2006, 45-6). Currently, the bridge is expected to be ready by 2010. The project would cost EUR 246 million⁴⁰.

⁴⁰ For this project, Bulgaria has received a EUR 70 million ISPA grant, a EUR 70 million EIB loan, a EUR 18 million loan from the German KfW Entwicklungsbank, and EUR 7 million in grants from the KfW and the French Developmental Agency (AFD). The rest of the funds would be provided by the state budget.

Importance and Feasibility of the Second Danube Bridge

The ODS government singled out Danube Bridge-2 among other elements of the country's transport infrastructure as a project that was crucial for the realization of Bulgaria's geopolitical, economic and political interests. The following sections analyze the practical importance and the economic viability of Danube Bridge-2 and seek to determine whether on the basis of these criteria it was justified to consider it Bulgaria's most important transport infrastructure project.

Importance of Danube Bridge-2 for the National Transport Infrastructure Network

Supporters of Danube Bridge-2 have rightly argued that it is an important element of the pan-European transport network on Bulgarian territory that is indispensable for the smooth functioning of pan-European corridor IV. For traffic to and from Turkey and for traffic between Southern and Northern Europe, corridor IV is a convenient route. The only fixed connection between Bulgaria and Romania on the North-South axis of the pan-European transport network, i.e. the Russe-Giurgiu Bridge, requires a 300-km long detour from the Bulgarian capital Sofia. Traffic at the Vidin-Calafat border crossing has been serviced by a ferry that has a number of disadvantages. It has a limited capacity and no fixed schedule, it is vulnerable to bad weather conditions and it lengthens travel time as it requires loading and unloading. There is no railway connection between the two towns. The project, in short, is generally welcome. But was it economically feasible back in 1999?

Expected Traffic

As an analyst with the Institute for Market Economics (IME) rightly observed, Danube Bridge-2 made sense only if trade and transport flows along the route of corridor IV intensified significantly (Stanchev, quoted in Green 2001). Yet, the decision to prioritize Danube Bridge-2 was not taken on the basis of heartening traffic forecasts. Even before

the fall of the Milosevic regime traffic using the existing Vidin-Calafat ferry was not substantial (around 218 vehicles per 24 hours in 2000⁴¹) (UMIDBP 2001, 8, appendix 3; Interview C). This was almost 5 times less than the capacity of the ferry. According to the fast-growth scenario⁴² in the project's feasibility study conducted in 2001, traffic along the route was to reach 395 vehicles daily by 2006, and the availability of the bridge was expected to encourage additional traffic of 55 vehicles daily⁴³ (UMIDBP 2001, 19-20 and appendix 9a). Such traffic could easily be handled by the existing ferry. As for the prospective additional traffic generated by the bridge itself, it could hardly justify the investment. Forecasts from 2001 used by the EIB reportedly suggested that traffic along the bridge would be gradually increasing and five years after the opening of the bridge for exploitation would exceed 1083 vehicles per day according to the fast growth scenario or 740 according to the slow growth scenario (*Kapital* February 2007). Again, even in the fast-growth case, such traffic could in principle be handled by the ferry. A leading economic weekly in Bulgaria reported that as late as 2007 there were no updated forecasts available neither in the Ministry of Transport (MT) nor in the EIB (*Ibid.*).

Bulgaria's touted 'alternative' route to Europe was apparently intended to serve geopolitical rather than economic functions. The problem was that it could serve these functions only if Yugoslavia were to remain a pariah state. In a report evaluating basic infrastructure needs in Southeast Europe, the EIB recognized that pan-European corridors IV and X (through Yugoslavia) were to a large extent competitive. In this competition, the advantages of corridor IV were not economic but geopolitical. It was the desire to provide an alternative transport route from the Balkans to Western Europe that made corridor IV a priority:

Physical characteristics such as route length... and existing capacities may clearly indicate an economically preferred route (in this case corridor X). However, political circumstances or geo-strategic considerations may make the alternative corridor the only feasible corridor in terms of security in a medium-term perspective. (EIB 2000, 15)

⁴¹ The ferry authorities calculated 316 vehicles per 24 hours (UMIDBP 2001, 8).

⁴² The forecast was based on very optimistic GDP growth forecasts (average for the 2000-2030 period) for Bulgaria and Romania (6.8-7.5%), Greece (4%), former Yugoslavia and Turkey (8-9%), and the CEE countries (5.6%).

⁴³ Since there was no railway between Vidin and Calafat, the building of the bridge's railway facility was expected to generate entirely new railway traffic, albeit a moderate one (UMIDBP 2001, 22, appendix 9c).

Yet, corridor IV was not able to divert much road traffic away from corridor X even while the Milosevic regime was in place. Once NATO's air war against Yugoslavia was over, most of the road traffic returned to the shorter route along corridor X. The geopolitical advantages of corridor IV seemed hooked on military conflicts in the Balkans.

Unsurprisingly, the end of the Kosovo war and the ensuing political stabilization in the region removed the sense of urgency that had accompanied the construction of Danube Bridge-2 and opened the floodgate for criticism of the project's feasibility. A year after the war, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) classified the project as questionable with regard to economic viability (*RFE/RL Newslines* 23.5.2000). The democratization of Yugoslavia further undermined the geopolitical arguments behind the idea of building a second Danube Bridge. In addition, after the fall of the Milosevic regime, Yugoslavia joined major international conventions aimed at facilitating transport exchanges, which made transit easier, shortened waiting time and further increased the attractiveness of the corridor-X route (e.g. in late 2001 Yugoslavia joined the TIR system) (Interview B).

Reduction of Regional Economic Disparities

An additional argument in support of Danube Bridge-2 has been that its construction and the development of pan-European corridor IV would encourage economic growth and reduce unemployment in the region around Vidin which has been one of the poorest in Bulgaria (UMIDBP 2001, 25-9; Interview A; MTC 2000, 40-1; mayor of Vidin, quoted in Green 2001; Dimitrova 2001; Stanishev, quoted in *bpost.bg* 13.5.2007). The official presentation of the project emphasizes that the bridge would "help generate temporary and permanent employment and give a boost to the local, regional and national economies" (ISPA Information Sheet, Measure No. 2004 BG 16 P PT 005). The construction period has been perceived as 'a window of opportunity' for this region and has been expected to attract foreign companies, bring new investments, and encourage

new business and social activities⁴⁴ (representatives of Bulgarian institutions, quoted in UMIDBP 2001, 7).

The presumption of an automatic link between transport infrastructure investment and sustainable economic development, or between transport infrastructure investment and lasting reduction of regional economic disparities, has been disputed. Critics of this assumption have argued that transport infrastructure development could actually hurt rather than encourage local and regional economic growth and employment⁴⁵ (T&E 2002; 2000 Annex 1, vii; T&E *et al.* 2003, 13-4; ECMT 2002). A favorable relationship between transport infrastructure investments and economic growth therefore cannot be presumed; it has to be supported by a concrete context-specific analysis.

Any large-scale construction project like Danube Bridge-2 could be expected to provide a temporary boost to the local economies and to have short-term positive social effects. A long-term economic impact upon investment and employment, however, could be expected only if traffic and trade flows across the region increase substantially (Stanchev, quoted in Green 2001). The latter condition, however, requires more than just the construction of a single bridge. In general, sustainable improvement of social and economic conditions in the impoverished region around Vidin could only be achieved through an effective social policy focused on areas such as education, health, and small business development. Transport infrastructure development could only be a contributing factor to economic growth in this region but certainly not the main one. The ‘local-economy boost’ arguments in favor of Danube Bridge-2 have thus rung rather hollow.

⁴⁴ The NDSV government, too, considered Danube Bridge-2 to be a strategic project that was crucial for the economic development of Bulgaria (e.g., see Saxkoburggotski, quoted in *Mediapool* 6.4.2002, 26.4.2004). It expected a project design that would guarantee 1300 job openings in the course of the construction works and a strong positive impact upon long-term social conditions and unemployment in the regions of Vidin and Calafat (Petrov 2002). Local authorities in Vidin have invested great hopes in the project in the belief that it would guarantee the social and economic recovery of Bulgaria’s Northwest, attract investment, boost business, reduce unemployment and reverse the outward migration that has beset the region (Tsenov 2007).

⁴⁵ For example, new or improved transport connections to an area allow businesses to freely access the previously inaccessible local market and thus remove the need for these businesses to maintain operation and production in the area in question. In addition, improved access to a previously inaccessible area could crowd out or weaken local businesses as it increases competition from the outside (T&E 2002, 9).

Infrastructure along Pan-European Corridor IV

The economic and practical viability of Danube Bridge –2 depends upon the adequate development of the infrastructure along the whole length of pan-European corridor IV on Bulgarian and Romanian territory. Deficient infrastructure along the corridor would make the new bridge difficult to access and unattractive to traffic.

As regards road transport, the bridge is a missing link on two main international routes. One is the route from Turkey, through Bulgaria, and further towards Romania and Central Europe. On Bulgarian territory this route includes the Maritza motorway, the Trakia motorway, and European road No. 79 (E-79) through Sofia to Vidin. The Maritza and Trakia motorways are crucial elements of corridor IV because they are expected to serve transit traffic departing from Turkey or headed towards Turkey, which accounts respectively for 44% and 33% of transit traffic across Bulgaria (*Kapital* February 2007). The other route is from Greece, through Bulgaria, and further towards Romania and Central Europe. On Bulgarian territory this route includes the Struma motorway, the Lyulin motorway and E-79 through Sofia to Vidin. In addition, the feasibility of Danube Bridge-2 depends on the development of railway infrastructure along corridor IV.

In 1999, the ODS government began to aggressively promote Danube Bridge-2 for geopolitical reasons, but without a comprehensive plan for the development of the relevant infrastructure along pan-European corridor IV on Bulgarian territory. Corridor IV was identified as a priority in the government's strategy for transport infrastructure development. Plans were to complete some of its key sections by 2005 or 2008, i.e. simultaneously with Danube Bridge-2 or shortly afterwards (MTC 2001; Petrov, quoted in *Mediapool* 21.10.2001; Keremedchiev, quoted in *Mediapool* 4.6.2004). For example, the electrification and reconstruction of the railway Plovdiv - Svilengrad – Greek/Turkish border and the upgrade of a section of the Sofia-Vidin railway were planned for completion by 2005; the Sofia-Plovdiv railway and the railway linking Sofia with the Greek border were to be upgraded by 2008 (MTC 2001). These plans turned out to be overly optimistic. At the same time, the future of many other vital sections of

corridor IV, such as the Trakia and Struma motorways and important sections of E-79, was completely unclear.

The problems with infrastructure development along corridor IV were gradually emerging while the construction of Danube Bridge-2 was stagnating. Although the authorities were largely successful in keeping those problems dissociated from the public presentation of Danube Bridge-2, they all pertained to the potential feasibility of the bridge project. One such problem, for example, was the construction of the Struma motorway (part of E-79) between Sofia and the Greek border. In the late 1990s, Bulgarian environmental organizations started protesting against the Struma motorway project (discussion B, A). After years of controversy involving environmental groups, relevant state institutions, and the European Commission (EC), the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) procedure for the project was put on hold and a new one was launched⁴⁶. An acceptable, though more expensive, route bed for the motorway – finally in compliance with environmental norms – was designed only in 2008. The motorway project is currently still in a preparatory stage. According to the authorities' latest plans, the motorway should be completed by the end of 2012, but the delays and the increased costs would make it difficult to meet the deadline.

Another major problem of transport infrastructure along corridor IV has been the Trakia motorway. In 2005, the NDSV government signed a 35-year concession contract for the motorway without a public tender and - in violation of the Law on Concessions - refused to make any information regarding the concession public. The deal caused great political turmoil. The leftwing opposition labeled it “the most unprofitable and illicit deal” made

⁴⁶ The bone of contention was the Kresna Gorge. The gorge is one of the most valuable territories for biodiversity protection in Bulgaria. According to the initial plans, the Struma motorway was to pass through the entire length of the gorge, which would have a detrimental impact on protected species and their habitats. In addition, the motorway was planned to pass too close to the densely populated residential parts of the Kresna town and its school, and would disturb the landscape (Bulgarian Environmental NGO Partners 2007, 1). In the late 1990s, the Ministry of Environment and Waters backed the demands of environmentalists, rejected two EIA reports on the motorway, and made it obligatory that the motorway project should include and consider route options outside the Kresna Gorge. In 2000, however, the feasibility study and the design of the motorway did not consider route options that bypassed the gorge. Enraged environmentalists managed to provoke the intervention of the EC. Alternative designs were subsequently developed but were allegedly unsatisfactory. The national road administration rejected them (*Ibid.*, 2-4; CEE Bankwatch Network 2003, 2). Alternative route options were apparently not welcome because they would cost more, would be more difficult to build, and would increase the already too long route of corridor IV (discussion B).

during the post-socialist period (quoted in *Mediapool* 1.4.2005). Transparency International Bulgaria concluded that the deal was anything but transparent, that it created corruption opportunities and opportunities to channel public resources into private hands, and that it was economically disadvantageous for the Bulgarian state⁴⁷. After almost 3 years of legal fights and political controversy, the concession contract was revised in accordance with recommendations made by the EC and was finalized in early 2008. The motorway was to be completed by the beginning of 2011. However, in May 2008 the Bulgarian government canceled the concession contract and subsequently announced public tenders on the construction of the key sections of the motorway. In the best-case scenario, construction works may effectively begin in 2009.

According to the last available official plans for road infrastructure development, the bulk of the infrastructure projects relevant to Danube Bridge-2 should be completed around 2009 and 2010, that is, together with or not long after the planned construction of the bridge itself (MT 2006, Appendix 1.6., 1). Yet, a section of E-79 should be completed only by the end of 2012 and could create traffic bottlenecks if Danube Bridge-2 were really opened for exploitation in 2010. Current plans for railway infrastructure development envisage that several key sections of corridor IV, including the Plovdiv - Svilengrad - Turkish border railway, should be reconstructed and upgraded before 2010 or shortly afterwards. However, the upgrade of other important links, such as the Sofia-Vidin railway and the Sofia-Plovdiv railway, are expected to be finalized only by 2017 (MT 2006, Appendix 1.5., 1).

In 1999, the ODS government prioritized Danube Bridge-2 irrespective of the fact that corridor-IV infrastructure on Romanian territory was in a bad condition or completely missing and required massive investment. Romania declared that it could not start

⁴⁷ The deal allowed the operator to receive compensation payments from the state budget in case of insufficient revenues and low traffic. This encouraged low financial results on the part of the operator, threatened to burden the state budget and allowed for the possibility that state budget resources would be drained illicitly (Transparency International Bulgaria 2005). According to experts, the levels of traffic that would remove the need for compensation payments could be reached in 50 years. According to the government's own traffic forecasts, these levels would be reached in more than 20 years (*Ibid.*, 2-7; Ivanov, interview for *Mediapool* 28.5.2005). The price of construction envisaged by this concession contract was twice or three times higher than the price of construction of motorways financed by loans (Transparency International Bulgaria 2005, 18-9). Certain clauses in the contract amounted to state aid and were criticized by the EC.

developing this infrastructure unless it received adequate external financing (Interview B). In addition, it decided to divert the route of corridor IV through the Carpathian region in order to stimulate the feeble local economy. The relocation increased the route's length by more than 100 km and made it an even less attractive alternative to the anyway shorter corridor-X route⁴⁸. The infrastructure across the Carpathian Mountains in Romania is still not in good condition (*Kapital* February 2007).

To sum up, Danube Bridge-2 is an important transport link in the long run. However, without substantial traffic and without adequate infrastructure along pan-European corridor IV on Bulgarian and Romanian territory, Danube Bridge-2 would make little practical and economic sense. Given the discouraging traffic forecasts and the poor condition of corridor-IV infrastructure, the project's prioritization back in 1999 was difficult to justify from an economic point of view.

Neglected Policy Options

In a world of scarce resources, when one policy option is prioritized, other policy options are sidelined. Back in 1999, when Danube Bridge-2 was prioritized before it made any economic sense to prioritize it (and only to stagnate for almost a decade), it crowded out other infrastructure projects from the policy agenda. Bulgaria received nothing else from the internationally sponsored program for the post-war reconstruction of the Balkans. Following the fall of the Milosevic regime, the government started promoting the project of the Sofia-Nis highway along the previously neglected pan-European corridor X. This highway is part of the shortest, most convenient, and most widely used road transport link between Bulgaria and Europe. The project, however, received no attention from the international community.

In general, the prioritization of symbolically effective large infrastructure projects along the pan-European corridors (such as Danube Bridge-2) has led to the neglect of transport

⁴⁸ In addition, the planned Romanian motorway connecting the port of Constanta to Corridor IV towards Central Europe would divert some of the cargo traffic using the Bulgarian port of Varna to Constanta and steer it away from the Bulgarian section of Corridor IV (Bulgarian consultancy group Industry Watch, quoted in *Mediapool* 15.2.2006).

infrastructure problems at the national, regional and local levels, such as the rehabilitation and maintenance of the road and railway networks within the country. Critics of the EU's approach to transport infrastructure development in accession countries have argued that such distortions have been a negative side effect of massive investment into the pan-European transport networks and have been common to all CEE countries (see CEE Bankwatch Network 2005b, 2005a, 3; T&E *et al.* 2003, 8-10; T&E 2000 Annex 1, vi; Stability Pact Watch Group 2004; Fleischer 2002, 6-7). Bulgaria has not been an exception.

The biggest problem of the Bulgarian transport network has not been the lack of motorways, class-I roads or railways, but the poor physical condition of the network and its inadequate maintenance. At the time when it was setting priorities in the sphere of transport infrastructure, the ODS government identified the poor state of lower-class roads, as well as of more than 28% of the main roads, as a grave problem of the Bulgarian transport system (MTC 2000, 15).

Despite the identification of the policy problem, road reconstruction was planned and carried out primarily on the main road network along the sections of the pan-European corridors and the sections used by international transit traffic (*Ibid.*, 15-6). This policy bias was due to Bulgaria's dependence on foreign funding, to the bias inbuilt into EU conditionality⁴⁹, and to the dominant Europeanization focus in Bulgaria's transport policy (see below). As a result, by the mid 2000s, 65% of the road network in Bulgaria was still in a poor or merely acceptable condition and did not meet the common operational criteria (Government 2006, 171). While the condition of motorways and class-I roads was relatively good, class-II and class-III roads remained devastated⁵⁰. For a large portion of the network, the periodical maintenance scheduled for every 5 to 7

⁴⁹ The Association Agreements signed between the EU and CEE candidate countries included clauses pertaining to the inclusion of accession countries' transport networks into the European transport network and, in particular, to the construction and improvement of transport infrastructure along the pan-European corridors on the territory of the candidate countries. Such projects have received substantial funding through the PHARE, TACIS, ISPA and CARDS programs, as well as EIB loans. This financing has been substantial both in absolute terms and relative to the funds earmarked for other transport and infrastructure policies. National investment plans have as a rule complemented international investment plans. They have tended to reinforce the dominant 'international' focus of external donors rather than offset it by more inward-looking investment strategies (T&E 2000 Annex 1, vi).

⁵⁰ Roughly 70% of motorways, 50% of class-I roads, 36% of class-II roads, and 27% of class- III roads were judged to be in good condition (MT 2006, 9).

years had been repeatedly postponed and no maintenance work had been carried out for periods as long as 15 to 20 years (MT 2006, 9; Government 2006, 15).

Railway infrastructure, too, was in poor condition. Most of the railway lines in Bulgaria were designed more than 50 years ago. As with the road network, the ODS government's transport infrastructure policy prioritized the reconstruction and upgrade of the railway sections that serviced the pan-European corridors, and especially corridor IV (MTC 2000, 35-7). By the mid 2000s, less than 20% of Bulgaria's railway tracks had been renewed; repair work had been carried out on less than 30% of the primary railway track and on less than 3% of the secondary railway track. On most lines train speed was limited to 100 km per hour by design. Postponement of repair works resulted in further speed and capacity limitations. 80% of the engines, 70% of the carriages, and the bulk of the electrification and signaling infrastructure were obsolete (Government 2006, 16, 176). Usage of the rail network has dropped by around 70% since the early 1990s (*news.bg* 15.9.2007). In sum, rehabilitation and maintenance of the road and railway networks within the country were at least as urgent a priority for the transport sector as was the (at that time practically unusable) Danube Bridge-2. Rehabilitation and maintenance of the road and railway infrastructure remains a priority until the present day.

All things considered, it would have made sense for the ODS government to consider the option of postponing the construction of the second Danube bridge. Before traffic had intensified substantially, measures to improve the ferry service, shorten the lengthy customs procedures, and discontinue the practice of double taxation and racketeering at the border crossing, would have been enough to remove traffic bottlenecks along the route (Stanchev, quoted in Green 2001; *OMDA Press Review* 7.4.1999). The construction of the bridge could have been planned for the period around 2008-2010, which would have been in accord with a more or less realistic timeline for the other infrastructure projects along corridor IV and would have made sense because increased traffic along corridor IV was to be expected only after the EU accession of both Romania and Bulgaria. The elimination of border-crossing procedures and customs formalities between the two countries following EU accession has speeded transit, eliminated additional border-crossing costs, and has given the route a competitive

advantage over the route through Yugoslavia, where border-crossing formalities and transit cargo formalities, such as TIR carnets and CEMT permits, remain intact.

Role of Stakeholders and Sectoral Lobbies

The above considerations notwithstanding, there were no significant public or political debates either on the feasibility of Danube Bridge-2 or on potential alternative policy options⁵¹. No political actor or social group in Bulgaria protested against the prioritization of the bridge project or even questioned its feasibility. Business organizations were in favor of Danube Bridge-2, which reflected a general long-standing conviction that inadequate infrastructure curbed Bulgaria's economic development and its ability to attract foreign direct investment (see Danev, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 2.4.1999, in *Mediapool* 16.1.2006).

Despite all the buildup against the ODS government's 'anti-national' and 'irresponsible' policy during the Kosovo crisis, the BSP never criticized or protested against the prioritization of Danube Bridge-2. Its main leftwing partner in the anti-war coalition – the Euroleft – even grew into an ardent supporter of the project. It argued that “the Romanians should be forced to commit themselves to building a second Danube Bridge” and “the EU, the G-25, the IMF and the US should help finance the bridge”, because “when bombs [were] destroying bridges on the Danube, a new Danube bridge [had to] be built immediately” (Tomov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 5.4.1999). Later on, the Euroleft developed their ideas further and recommended that the Bulgarian government press the West to support the building of two bridges on the Danube (quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 27.5.1999).

Sectoral lobbies did not get involved with the Danube Bridge-2 case. Bulgarian road transport and cargo companies have not formed a politically active or publicly visible

⁵¹ Only specialized media sporadically analyzed the feasibility of the project (for a positive evaluation see, for example, *Balgarski Transporten Vestnik* 29.9.2000, 1; for cautious or critical analyses, see *Kapital* May 2000, October 2000, November 2001; *Balgarski Transporten Vestnik* 8.12.2000, 1-7). Such analyses failed to instigate wider debates.

lobby. Until 2008, they were not even united in a single union or business association that could potentially promote their interests. Several factors account for the failure of this business segment to get organized in an efficient lobby structure. The first such factor is the segment's competitiveness. Road transport and cargo companies have always been relatively competitive in international transport. Since they were exposed to international competition and operated efficiently even prior to 1989, their adjustment to market liberalization during transition was relatively smooth and fast. Due to their price competitiveness and to Bulgaria's favorable geographic location, they have successfully withstood the pressure of European competition (Stanchev 1999, 3; *Kapital* August 2006). The second factor is the internal structure of the segment. Bulgarian road transport and cargo firms have been numerous and relatively small⁵². The segment's structure has thus not been conducive to collusion and collective action, and individual players have not been powerful enough to have any political influence.

In the past years, construction firms, and especially road construction firms, have tapped into the massive investment directed towards transport infrastructure in Bulgaria, more than half of which has been allocated to road construction, reconstruction, or maintenance. The scramble for attractive public contracts has encouraged intense lobbying, as well as corruption, within this business segment. This segment of the transport business has been dominated by a few powerful companies. A small number of 'road construction' lobbies have sustained close ties with the political elite and have reportedly had a powerful grip on the national road administration⁵³. The road construction lobbies, however, have been focused on seizing business opportunities and tapping into available resources. These lobbies have not felt threatened by unfavorable public attitudes or by the possibility that large-scale transport infrastructure could

⁵² For the sake of comparison, in the mid-2000s their number exceeded four times the number of transport firms in France and 10 times the number of firms in Italy, but the number of cargo vehicles that they operated was significantly lower in Bulgaria than in these two countries (*Kapital* August 2006).

⁵³ In 2007, there were more than 100 Bulgarian road construction companies, but only five of them account for most of the revenues in the sector (*Kapital* October 2007). The same five firms shared the bulk of the additional resources from the budget surplus channeled through the national road administration (now called National Road Infrastructure Fund) (*Kapital* March 2007b, March 2007a). In late 2007, an investigation revealed conflicts of interest within the National Road Infrastructure Fund and suggested that the road construction lobbies had influenced the awarding of public contracts (see *Kapital* 2007b). It was followed by a corruption scandal. A bitter political controversy erupted when in response to these scandals the EC froze the disbursements of EU funds for road construction and maintenance, and discontinued ISPA, PHARE, and SAPARD funding for Bulgaria.

become a neglected policy area. They have therefore not been compelled to take part into or to try to influence public discussions on issues pertaining to transport infrastructure. They have operated largely behind closed doors and have kept away from public and political debates on transport infrastructure policy.

The Construction of Bulgaria's 'Strategic Bridge'

Let us pose to summarize the discussion so far. There were no significant public and political debates on the economic and practical viability of Danube Bridge-2. There was no public or political deliberation on possible policy alternatives. There was no public or political discussion on the prudence of the government's decision to place Danube Bridge-2 on top of the list of projects for which Bulgaria expected external financial support within the framework of the internationally sponsored programs for postwar recovery and reconstruction of the Balkans. Yet, the preceding sections argued that the economic feasibility of Danube Bridge-2 was too questionable to justify such a decision, let alone to make it obvious and indisputable. And the project has not been propped up by sectoral lobby campaigns either. What, then, accounts for its unconditional acceptance by all stakeholders, political actors, and society?

Below, I argue that it was the ideological enframing of Danube Bridge-2 rather than any economic argumentation that turned this project into an obvious and indisputable priority of the national transport infrastructure policy.

Europeanization and Infrastructure Development

Bulgaria is located on the main transport, energy, and trade routes linking Asia and Europe. It has always regarded this strategic geographic location as a natural wealth and a crucial economic asset. In the popular conception of national history, this extraordinary natural endowment is held responsible for numerous past conflicts and instability resulting from Great Power politics. Yet, present-day globalization is believed to offer an opportunity for Bulgaria, being as it is a stable zone in the Balkans, to turn

this adverse predicament into an economic and political advantage (Petkova 2000, 174). In the apt words of President Parvanov, “Bulgaria has always suffered from its extremely strategic location, [but now] the time has come to cash this crossroad position” (2008b). The issue of Bulgaria’s strategic geographic location has been a locus of emotional public debates. Transport and energy infrastructure are the two spheres of the national economy that have been most affected by such ideological conceptions.

Bulgaria’s infrastructure policy has always been predicated upon the assumption that reaping the economic benefits of the country’s geographic location has less to do with economics than it has to do with geopolitics. Infrastructure development has thus not been placed in the domain of economic policy. It has been placed in the domain of foreign policy. Already in the first years of post-socialist transition President Zhelev declared that one of the key objectives of Bulgarian foreign policy was to ensure that the East-West and the North-South pan-European transport corridors crossed on Bulgarian territory (rather than anywhere else), so that Bulgaria could capitalize on the natural advantages that stemmed from its crossroad location ([1995] 1997, 166). The Bulgarian leadership was called upon to develop and implement a strategy for the maximal utilization of these advantages. Anything that prevented the pursuit of this strategy was interpreted as impermissible encroachment on the national interest (e.g., see Zhelev [1995] 1997, 166; Mirchev 1999, 2001; Ionchev and Baruh 2000, 143-4; Georgiev 1998, 163-70; Stefanov 1998; Devedjiev 2001; Parvanov 2002a).

The ODS’s main contribution was to connect infrastructure development firmly to the Europeanization paradigm. The development of infrastructure links to Western Europe became a top priority for the ODS. It was perceived as an integral part of the general Europeanization ‘turn’ in Bulgarian policymaking. In part it came on top of the agenda because the government planned to tap into the flow of foreign funds earmarked for recovery and reconstruction of the Balkans in the aftermath of the Kosovo conflict. Yet, there was more to infrastructure development than just economic benefit. The perception was that, if exploited cleverly, strategic geographic location would make Bulgaria important for the West and would accelerate its Euro-Atlantic integration. The ODS thus crafted a consensual policy framework that outlived its government and has been adopted without major alterations by the subsequent Bulgarian governments.

Irrespective of the ideological differences between consecutive ruling parties and consecutive Presidents, on the point of infrastructure development they have seen eye to eye⁵⁴.

Infrastructure development is regarded as a key prerequisite for the Balkans' integration into the European mainstream. The deficiency of basic infrastructure is identified as one of the most fundamental problems in Southeast Europe (e.g. see Pasi, quoted in *Mediapool* 15.10.2002, 26.11.2001, 10.9.2001, 2002a, 2005b). It is considered to be one of the main reasons for the political, economic, and cultural fragmentation of the Balkans, as well as one of the main reasons for the region's isolation from the rest of Europe (Parvanov 2005c, 2006b). Infrastructure development is assumed to be one of the several panaceas (the others being the likes of europeanization and NATO membership) that are widely believed to solve a plentitude of problems and to thus guarantee the region's future place in Europe:

[T]he most important fact, of which there is an increasing awareness in the East and in the West, is that the solution to the Balkan problems calls for the development of modern infrastructure... [M]odern infrastructure would transform the Balkan peninsula from the notorious 'powder keg' into the building site of Europe. (Stoyanov 2001a)

There is no European future for our region unless a modern infrastructure is in place. There is no European future for this region unless there is a motorway between Sofia and Skopje, between Sofia and Belgrade... Without a breakthrough in this respect, we do not have a meaningful future. (Parvanov 2008a)

Interestingly, apart from asserting the positive economic impact of infrastructure projects, the policy framework adopted by the Bulgarian leadership does not clarify how infrastructure would solve the complex problems facing the Balkans.

Infrastructure development is also represented as a natural and indisputably appropriate developmental path for the Balkans. The Bulgarian leadership has seen no alternative to transforming the Balkans into a transport and energy crossroad, and the real issue has been how to bring the point home to European, Balkan and business leaders sooner rather than later (e.g., see Parvanov 2006c, 2006b). In light of the region's strategic

⁵⁴ Arguably, President Parvanov has surpassed all Bulgarian leaders in his lobbying campaign aimed at placing infrastructure development in the Balkans on top of the international community's Balkans agenda. These actions have been in line with the President's declared wish to "economicize" Bulgarian foreign policy (Parvanov 2002a).

geopolitical location, this direction of development is perceived as inevitable, in that it alone allows SEE to take advantage of its position on the shortest trade- and energy-flow routes from the Middle East, Asia, and the former Soviet Union towards Western Europe:

[T]he Balkan people are increasingly aware of their new historic and economic responsibility – to guarantee reliably the supplies of goods between the East and the West. This new and promising role for the Balkans is setting new requirements to the countries of the region.

(Stoyanov 2001a; see also Parvanov 2003b)

In line with the new requirements, the leadership's policy framework has translated the old romantic representation of the Balkans as the bridge between East and West (usually understood in cultural terms) into the crude terms of the Balkans' position in the global division of labor, with the added flavor of expected improvement in international reputation. Infrastructure has been the key to this translation. The pride of seeing the Balkans turn into the "building site of Europe", and into a reliable transit route for supplies, has defined the developmental and infrastructure policy of Bulgaria.

The Bulgarian leadership has made special efforts to associate infrastructure development with peacebuilding and europeanization in the Balkans. There is no immediate, natural, and indisputable causal relationship between the two sides of this equation (after all, well developed transport and infrastructure links within Yugoslavia did not prevent it from a violent breakup). The Bulgarian leadership, however, has repeatedly employed fitting representations and arguments in an attempt to establish such an association and to make it appear natural and undisputable. This discursive strategy has sought to present Bulgaria's economic interests in receiving financial assistance from the international community as identical to the vital interests of the international community itself.

All Bulgarian governments have been occupied pursuing this strategy. Prior to the fall of the Milosevic regime, the EU and the IFIs were urged to help transform the 'poverty democracies' of the Balkans into European-type democracies in order to create a circle of prosperity around Yugoslavia and to put the Milosevic regime "between Europe and Europe" (Stoyanov, quoted in *OMDA Press Reviews* 2.5.2000, 27.4.1999). Such transformation was said to require infrastructure development (Stoyanov, quoted in

OMDA Press Review 27.4.1999). Since the fall of Milosevic, the Bulgarian leadership has been warning that inadequate involvement of the international community in infrastructure development in SEE could cause the hotspots of tensions in the Balkans to again collapse into political instability and ethnic conflict (Parvanov 2006c). In order to emphasize the harmony between Bulgaria's interests in the sphere of infrastructure and the interests of the international community in the Balkans, the Bulgarian leadership has been arguing that it is both wiser and cheaper to invest in the economy and in transport and energy infrastructure, than to strive to overcome the consequences of armed conflicts by spending enormous resources on peacekeeping and security measures (e.g. see Parvanov 2006c, 2005c, 2005a, 2006a; Pasi 2002c). Infrastructure investments have been forcefully advertised as the best investment into peace and security in the Balkans that would dampen down historic frictions, prevent future frictions, durably pacify and stabilize the region, provide the crucial preconditions for its future European integration, and "once and for all send the isolation and disintegration of the Balkans into history" (Parvanov 2006c, see also 2006b; Filipov, quoted in *Mediapool* 20.6.2002; Pasi 2002c, 2002a, 2002d, quoted in *Mediapool* 15.10.2002, 26.11.2001 and 10.9.2001).

The Policy Approach to Transport Infrastructure Development

In the sphere of transport, the ODS government's policy approach to infrastructure development was a combination of existing and widely accepted policy principles with the basic principles of the Europeanization paradigm. It departed from the widely shared assumption that strategic location on the crossroad between two continents was a potential source of welfare and economic gains that needed to be continuously guarded and exploited. This element of the doctrine reproduced preexisting ideological conceptions of the relationship between territory, geopolitics, and the economy. Yet, the doctrine also firmly linked infrastructure development to the Europeanization paradigm. It was apparently based on the conviction that Bulgaria should literally pave its 'road to Europe' before it could metaphorically walk on it.

Thus, like the Europeanization paradigm, the ODS government's approach to transport infrastructure policy spanned the idealist/rationalist and the Europeanist/nationalist

ideological divides. It served the fundamental foreign policy priority of Euro-Atlantic integration, but it also served the ‘national’ priority, i.e. the national economic interest. And just like European integration was represented as the best way to ensure national economic development, so the development of infrastructure links with Western Europe was represented as the best way to ensure that Bulgaria would reap the economic benefits of its strategic geographic location.

On this basis, the ODS set ambitious goals for infrastructure development. These goals reflected the ODS government’s equally ambitious foreign policy goal, which was to make “Bulgaria a leading political factor in SEE, an economic and infrastructure center” (Government 2000b, see also 1998a). A fundamental problem was identified: during socialism Bulgaria had lost its traditional role of a ‘transport bridge’ between Western Europe and Asia and between Southern and Northern Europe. The goal of the new transport infrastructure policy was to revive this important traditional role and to fully exploit it in Bulgaria’s efforts to attain its foreign policy priorities, namely fast EU and NATO integration (see MTC 2001). The concrete priorities in transport infrastructure development followed naturally: integration of the national transport system into the European transport system and development of the strategic pan-European transport corridors that crossed Bulgarian territory (see Government 2000a, 2001b, 86-7, 2000b, 2001a; MTC 2001). These policy priorities resonated well with the popular conception of geographic location as a national wealth; they were perceived as the only way to safeguard and utilize Bulgaria’s geopolitical advantages⁵⁵.

The ODS government’s transport infrastructure plans were developed in accordance with the trans-European transport network (TEN-T) and the TINA network⁵⁶. The five

⁵⁵ The ODS government’s vision of transport infrastructure development was adopted by the NDSV and the BSP governments, whose declared ambitions regarding infrastructure have been familiar: to make Bulgaria the transport and infrastructure center of Southeast Europe and to exploit the country’s strategic position of a bridge between Western Europe and Asia and between Southern and Northern Europe (Vasilev, quoted in *Mediapool* 15.3.2005; MT 2006, 17-8).

⁵⁶ The concept of transport corridors traversing and connecting Western Europe was being developed throughout the 1980s. The legal basis for the development of the TEN-T was provided in the Treaty on the European Union as a key element of the creation of the Internal Market and the reinforcement of economic and social cohesion. The TEN-T became a basic pillar of the EU’s 1992 Common Transport Policy (Fleischer 2002), whose principle was to guarantee the interconnection of national transport networks within the EU’s single market. The extension of the TEN-T to the CEE countries was planned between 1996 and 1999 on the basis of an analysis known as Transport Infrastructure Needs Assessment

pan-European transport corridors across Bulgarian territory determined the projects that were given priority (MTC 2000, 28-41, 2001; interviews A, B, C). Economic feasibility studies or traffic forecasts for prioritized projects along the routes of the five pan-European corridors were not officially publicized. The harmony between the government's priorities and the pan-European network was deemed to be sufficient justification for project selection.

The preference for transport infrastructure projects within the pan-European and TINA networks was understandable. For one, the agenda was largely set by the available external financing for infrastructure development coming from the EU and IFIs, both through international assistance for post-conflict economic recovery in the Balkans and as part of the EU's efforts to develop the TEN-T. Lending for the transport sector constituted 70% of the total grants and loans from multilateral developmental banks received by CEE countries (T&E 2000, 8). The EIB invested heavily in transport infrastructure in East-Central Europe. EU support for economic development in candidate countries included substantial funding for transport infrastructure. In addition, EU conditionality stressed the need for substantial national investment. Investing 1.5% of the national GDP into TINA projects was described by the TINA secretariat as modest, although in the much wealthier EU member states the same share of GDP was being spent on *all* investment in the transport sector (*Ibid.*, Annex 1, i). The ODS government's infrastructure development plans 'followed the Euros', and the Euros favored the pan-European corridors rather than other elements of the EU's transport and infrastructure policies (*Ibid.*, 19).

There were also other considerations that led the Bulgarian leadership to give preference to projects within the pan-European network. For one, there was an assumption that the construction of major pan-European transport links would boost economic development in adjacent regions, attract investments, encourage business activities, promote regional

(TINA). The ten pan-European corridors were developed during three Pan-European Transport Conferences between 1991 and 1997 (*Pan-European Transport Corridors and Areas Status Report 2006*, 13). These ten corridors on the territory of the TINA countries are the backbone of the TINA network, although CEE countries can include additional components into the TINA network if they deem necessary. Following the enlargement of the EU in 2004 and the revision of the EU guidelines for the development of the TEN-T (see Decision No 884/2004/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council), most of the pan-European corridors are part of the TEN-T.

economic growth, and lower regional unemployment. For another, funds earmarked for infrastructure project design and preliminary studies have been inadequate throughout the whole period of post-socialist transition (Stanishev 2006). Since the pro-Europeanization ideological environment made compliance with the pan-European networks a widely accepted and undisputable policy guideline, the pan-European/TINA guidelines were handy for drafting policy strategies that appeared ambitious and compelling, yet did not require expensive and time-consuming preliminary research. In-depth preliminary studies could thus be reserved for the few selected projects and were usually the result of the prioritization of a particular project, rather than the reason for it. Even the latest, and arguably most ambitious to date, plans for the development of Bulgaria's transport infrastructure – those of the BSP government (MT 2006) – make no attempt to go beyond general statements and to prove the feasibility of the key prioritized infrastructure projects by providing forecast data, estimated rates of economic return, or concrete estimations of the projects' potential impact upon the national economy and upon the socio-economic conditions of affected regions.

The ODS government, as well as subsequent governments, favored large infrastructure projects and the construction of new infrastructure over smaller-scale investment into maintenance and reconstruction of existing infrastructure or management improvement. To a large extent, large-scale new construction has dominated the agenda due to its ability to attract external funding – a crucial advantage in conditions of financial constraints and overall economic decline. The TINA process, for example, focused upon perceived problems of low infrastructure density and has thus encouraged the construction of new infrastructure to the neglect of economically feasible projects for infrastructure maintenance and upgrade (T&E *et al.* 2003, 10; T&E 2002, 25). Another reason for policymakers' fixation on large-scale projects has been the visibility of such projects and their ability to bring fast and tangible political dividends. A third reason has been the perception that such projects would bring fast and tangible economic benefits and encourage economic growth in the regions involved in the construction.

There was also a 'Balkan' part in the ODS government's Europeanization-inspired policy approach to transport infrastructure development. When the ODS had to set priorities within the pan-European network itself, geopolitical criteria carried the day.

Prior to the fall of Milosevic, the government prioritized those transport links to Western Europe that circumvented Yugoslav territory, namely corridors IV and VIII (MTC 2000, 28-37). It urged the EU to provide funds for infrastructure development along these two corridors and argued that their development should have priority over the reconstruction of Yugoslavia, where there was no democratic regime (Kostov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 9.6.1999).

In the national strategy for transport infrastructure development, the symbolically important corridor IV was conspicuously privileged, while corridor X (through Yugoslavia) was altogether missing (MTC 2000). These policy preferences were not justified. They were rationalized indirectly with reference to the general criterion of ‘transport security’ that was said to have guided the selection of priority projects. ‘Transport security’ required that dependence on one transport route be avoided as it made the country vulnerable to unfavorable developments, such as instability in neighboring countries (MTC 2000, 44). Projects along corridor IV, including the second bridge on the Danube, were ranked highest according to this criterion. The neglect of corridor X and the preference for corridor IV were obvious upshots of the strategy of differentiation from the Balkans. Projects along corridor X were included in the list of priorities only after the fall of the Milosevic regime (see MTC 2001).

Representations of danger have always been an integral part of Bulgaria’s transport infrastructure policy. They have invoked perceived encroachments upon the sovereign right of the nation over its natural wealth, upon its ability to reap the economic benefits of its strategic territorial location, and upon its ability to make use of its geopolitical advantages to improve its international standing. Most such threats are believed to emanate from neighboring countries, whose competitive infrastructure plans are seen as potentially damaging in that they might steer the international transport routes away from Bulgarian territory⁵⁷ (Government 2001a; Stanishev, quoted in *Mediapool* 16.1.2006).

⁵⁷ Romania has resisted the development of better infrastructure links across the Danube with Bulgaria in order to boost the strategic importance of its Black Sea port of Constanta. Greece has obstructed the development of corridors VIII and IX in order to safeguard the competitive advantages of its highly prioritized Via-Ignatia motorway. Macedonia has delayed the construction of the Skopje-Sofia railway, and the development of pan-European corridor VIII in general, because it has prioritized the development

Back in the late 1990s, however, it was the unstable region of former Yugoslavia that was held to pose the greatest threat to Bulgaria's geopolitical advantages. Prior to the air war, some 50% of Bulgarian exports and 45% of Bulgarian imports passed through Yugoslavia⁵⁸ (*OMDA Press Review* 10.5.1999). This dependency prompted the ODS government to identify Yugoslavia as a looming threat to Bulgaria's national interest and security:

Between Europe and Bulgaria now stands the Yugoslav political, economic, and cultural wall that, in case of an embargo, becomes an insurmountable barrier to Bulgarian trade flows... We cannot let Bulgarians remain hostages to the Kosovo conflict. Therefore, we cannot refuse to support the peacemaking operations. (Kostov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 17.3.1999)

The dire scenarios materialized during the air war. The military operations deterred transport flows along the shortest road routes connecting the Balkans with Western and Central Europe, which made trading more expensive and time consuming, undermined the competitiveness of Bulgarian exports, and caused direct economic losses. The Danube was blocked. Almost all railway transit traffic through Bulgaria was halted. Alternative ways of transportation were difficult to find. Railway routes across Romania substantially increased both the cost of transportation and delivery times (Stanchev 1999, 3). Transportation through the Black Sea was expensive. The Bulgarian ports of Burgas and Varna charged fees three times higher than those at the Romanian port of Constanta (*Ibid.*, 3). According to the ODS, Bulgaria and Macedonia were the two countries worst affected by the crisis because they were spatially cut off from Europe (Sokolov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 3.5.1999). Yugoslavia had all but prevented Bulgaria from 'cashing' its geopolitical advantages:

The Kosovo crisis and the severing of transport exchanges through Bulgaria towards Central and Western Europe proved the vulnerability of the existing transport infrastructure. This vulnerability minimizes the effects of Bulgaria's strategic geographic position. (Government 2000b)

of transport connections with its more important trading partners in SEE – Greece and Yugoslavia, and because it has tried to limit Bulgarian and Albanian influence among the population living in the respective border regions (BIRN 2007; CSEES 2002).

⁵⁸ Prior to the outbreak of the crisis, around 55% of Bulgarian exports and 50% of Bulgarian imports pertained to trade with EU and CEFTA countries. EFTA countries received 12% of Bulgarian exports. The trade shock during the Kosovo crisis was unprecedented because in the earlier cases of conflict in the former Yugoslavia, the share of trade with the EU and CEFTA had been smaller (Stanchev 1999, 2; Vasilev, quoted in *OMDA Press Reviews* 7.4.1999).

Last but not least, the threats emanating from Yugoslavia had a symbolic dimension. The perception was that the Kosovo war had severed the symbolically important spatial link between Bulgaria and Europe. In the Prime Minister's vivid words, Milosevic, who held "the only key to Central Europe", now held "Bulgaria hostage" (Kostov, interview for *Spiegel* 1999). By taking Bulgaria hostage, the unstable part of the Balkans rendered its self-designated role of an actor able to promote European interests and European policy in the region altogether meaningless.

Ideological Enframing of Danube Bridge-2

Nominally, Danube Bridge-2 was not a colossal infrastructure project but it stood out for its strong symbolic importance for Bulgaria's foreign policy. It is the ODS's ability to persuasively represent Danube Bridge-2 as a concrete realization of its dominant foreign policy doctrine that explains how this project could emerge as a key priority in both transport infrastructure policy and foreign policy, why it was represented as the project that would compensate Bulgaria for the economic losses it had incurred during the Kosovo crisis, and why it was readily accepted as such by the public.

Danube Bridge-2 stood out for its ability to symbolically disengage Bulgaria from the conflict zones in the former Yugoslavia and served well the strategy of differentiation from the Balkans. The Kosovo war left the Bulgarian leadership convinced that changes in Bulgaria's image building campaign were imperative. It was no longer enough to stress the country's difference from the Balkans, its European characteristics and identity, and its importance as an infrastructure center and a key transport bridge. It was necessary to ensure Bulgaria's invulnerability from the instability in the Western Balkans and to demonstrate this invulnerability both for the rest of Europe and for the domestic public to appreciate. The promotion of the Danube Bridge-2 project was the keystone of this image building strategy because Danube Bridge-2 was not supposed to be an ordinary bridge; it was to be a '*strategic bridge*':

The Kosovo crisis showed once again that the development of the sections of the pan-European transport corridors, and especially the building of the second bridge on the Danube, not only involve direct economic benefits, but also serve important political and strategic functions.

They enable easier connections between the region and EU member states and they make it possible to circumvent the conflict zones of former Yugoslavia. (Government 2000b)

Had this keystone been removed (i.e. had the EU refused to actively support the project and to press Romania to acquiesce in it), the whole ideological structure that the ODS government deployed during the Kosovo war and its aftermath would have been impaired.

Danube Bridge-2 was also a project through which Bulgaria earned additional points in the contest for Euro-Atlantic integration. It thus served well the strategy of proactive Euro-Atlantic association. If the bridge were built, Bulgaria would be entrusted with the task to provide, together with the only other EU accession country in the region, a safe route across the volatile Balkans and to protect the vital geopolitical interests of both Europe and Bulgaria. The bridge would affirm Bulgaria's position of "a stabilizing factor and a trustworthy partner [of the West] in Southeast Europe" (Evtimov 2001, 2). Until the fall of the Milosevic regime, the project's justification followed this reasoning and invoked the need to guarantee that the region would not become hostage to potential new crises in the former Yugoslavia (Mihajlova, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 3.12.1999). After the regime change in Yugoslavia, the presentation of Danube Bridge-2 was adapted to the new situation. Danube Bridge-2 started to be presented as a project that would allow Bulgaria to fulfill a key function in NATO, namely to guarantee the link between NATO's European center and NATO's Southern European flank (Filipov, quoted in *Mediapool* 9.9.2002). Danube Bridge-2 was treated as an opportunity to take advantage of the political instability in the Balkans to augment Bulgaria's reputation of an indispensable EU and NATO ally.

Danube Bridge-2 also stood out for its ability to defend the national economic interest. The ODS cited the disturbing figures of the economic losses incurred during the Kosovo conflict to prove that Bulgaria had a serious problem with its infrastructure and, specifically, with the availability of alternative transport routes to the European market. The construction of a new Danube Bridge was put forward as the solution to these problems (Kostov and Nikolov, quoted in *OMDA Information on the Economic Impact of the War in Yugoslavia* 29.3.1999). The second Danube bridge was expected to

provide an alternative route to Western Europe and to thus prevent future encroachment upon Bulgaria's ability to reap the economic benefits of its strategic geographic location. Amidst popular discontent with Bulgaria's pro-NATO stance in the war against Yugoslavia, this project offered powerful symbols that the ODS could use as focal points for policy legitimization. By promoting the 'Bulgarian' idea for a second Danube Bridge, the ODS demonstrated its commitment to defending the national interest. Bulgaria had taken advantage of the exceptional international situation during the Kosovo war to press Romania to finally accept a proposal that it would have not accepted otherwise, and to press international donors to finance a project that they would have otherwise not considered to be an urgent priority. The success of the campaign in favor of the bridge was invoked to legitimize the government's Kosovo policy and to prove that the ODS had not accepted NATO's demands unconditionally and had not impaired the country's sovereignty and dignity, but had in fact 'traded' Bulgaria's anyway inevitable Euro-Atlantic solidarity for the international community's support for Bulgaria's national interests.

Danube Bridge-2 thus stabilized the ODS's key ideological constructs – the Europeanization paradigm and the national interest defined as an interest in both Euro-Atlantic integration and economic development. The identity elements of these constructions, namely the need to demonstrate Bulgaria's adherence to Euro-Atlantic values, had turned out to be costly. Thanks to compensations such as the Danube Bridge-2, however, the citizens could rest assured that the costs would be offset and national economic and geopolitical interests would be served well.

In the late 1990s, no other transport infrastructure project and no alternative policy option could fulfill all the functions listed above. Danube Bridge-2 was constructed as an urgent project that was in complete harmony with the powerful policy doctrines of its time and that was widely perceived to serve Bulgaria's national interests. In the absence of political actors, sectoral lobbies or social groups who would oppose its prioritization due to divergent economic or political interests, no alternative project or policy option could compete with it.

Summary

The Europeanization paradigm served as the dominant interpretive framework that guided policymaking in the course of the Kosovo controversy. By deploying this paradigm, the ODS constructed a coherent foreign policy doctrine. Its ‘identity’ part – the strategy aimed at differentiating Bulgaria from the Balkans – necessitated that Bulgaria show Euro-Atlantic solidarity during the military campaign against neighboring Yugoslavia. Its ‘interest’ part linked Bulgaria’s demonstration of Euro-Atlantic solidarity and its willingness of assume the moral obligations entailed in its European identity to the pursuit of ‘the national interest’ in the form of fast Euro-Atlantic integration and economic assistance for the building of a second bridge on the Danube. The prioritization of the bridge project, whose economic feasibility was dubious, was part and parcel of the deployment of this two-sided foreign policy doctrine. It provided an alternative route to Western Europe that circumvented Yugoslavia and thus symbolically disengaged Bulgaria from the conflict zones in the Balkans; it demonstrated Bulgaria’s invulnerability from Balkan crises and thus appeared to affirm its position of a stabilizing factor and a trustworthy partner of the West in the region; and it appeared to safeguard the national economic interest.

In combination, the two parts of the doctrine stretched across both the idealist/materialist and the Europeanist/nationalist ideological divides and overwhelmed the rival discourse of sovereignty and national security upheld by the leftwing opposition. The Europeanization paradigm clearly won in the first major clash with its key ideological rival – nationalism. Shortly after the Kosovo crisis subsided, however, the two rivals clashed again – this time over the fortunes of Bulgaria’s nuclear energy. This second clash is analyzed in the next two chapters.

Chapter 4

‘We Didn’t Need This Europe’⁵⁹: Setbacks of Europeanization in the Case of the EU-Imposed Closure of the Old Units of the Kozloduy NPP

Bulgaria’s so far only NPP at Kozloduy has traditionally produced a large share of Bulgaria’s electricity. Following the installment of the sixth unit in 1989, Bulgaria ranked third in the world in per capita nuclear power generation (Curtis 1992). Since 1990, the share of the NPP’s production in overall electricity production has been on average around 40%. During the last decade, this share was even higher (see Table 1).

The construction of a second NPP at Belene started in 1987 but was abandoned in 1990 due to lack of financing⁶⁰, poor economic feasibility, and environmentally-motivated mass protests by people living in adjacent regions. Up to that point, construction had swallowed USD 1.2 billion⁶¹.

International Pressure for the Early Decommissioning of Kozloduy’s Units 1-4

The NPP had six Soviet-design units. The four small units that have now been shut down were 440-MW first-generation pressurized water reactors (PWRs) – VVER 440-230s. The two bigger units are 1000-MW VVERs of a newer design. The NPP has been state-owned and has been run by the Bulgarian utilities - the National Electric Company (NEK).

The safety of the Kozloduy NPP first came under international scrutiny in 1990, when a mission of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) documented a number of safety problems and several serious incidents at the NPP (*ENS* 2003). A year later another IAEA review concluded that the four small units were in extremely poor

⁵⁹ Local businessman from Kozloduy, quoted in *TOL* 18.4.2007.

⁶⁰ At the time, Bulgaria declared a moratorium on foreign debt payments and faced severe financial constraints.

⁶¹ The conservation of the unfinished reactor and turbine hall on the site has required additional financing.

physical condition and failed to meet basic safety standards. In an unusually strong statement, the IAEA recommended that the units' operation be immediately discontinued on safety grounds, pending improvements⁶². Units 1 and 2 were shut down for upgrade. They were upgraded with foreign financial assistance and put in operation again in 1992.

The 1992 G-7 Economic Summit in Munich formulated a strategy for improving nuclear safety in Eastern Europe. Soviet-built reactors were divided into two groups – 'upgradeable' and 'non-upgradeable'. VVER 440-230s were included in the 'non-upgradeable' group, next to the obsolete graphite-moderated high-power channel reactors (the type involved in the Chernobyl accident), and marked down for small-scale emergency safety improvements and premature closure at the earliest conceivable date⁶³. Thus, the four VVER 440-230 units at Kozloduy were declared unsafe and non-upgradeable at a reasonable cost due to structural defects, the most problematic of which was the lack of a protective shell to prevent a radiation leak from being emitted straight into the environment. The US Department of Energy listed the Kozloduy NPP among the world's most dangerous nuclear installations. This view was also adopted by the EU.

In 1993, under the Nuclear Safety Account Agreement (NSAA) signed with the EBRD, Bulgaria agreed to close Kozloduy's units 1-2 in 1997 and units 3-4 by the end of 1998, in exchange for an ECU 24 million grant from the special Nuclear Safety Account (NSA) set up by the G-7. The closure dates were dependent on the completion of investment projects that would provide for alternative sources of supply, as well as on measures aimed at restructuring the energy sector and increasing energy efficiency.

As Bulgaria failed to complete the investment projects and restructure the sector, the closure deadlines were not met. The NSA funds, complemented by additional foreign

⁶² Local inspections reached troubling conclusions, too. In 1991, a safety review by a governmental commission reported serious flaws in the operation of the Kozloduy NPP (Curtis 2002). Later in the 1990s, inspections of Kozloduy's finances registered a major irregular and damaging contract with Westinghouse, a series of illegal financial operations, and non-transparent decisions in the awarding of public contracts (*Active Elements* 2004).

⁶³ The VVER 440-230s are similar to PWRs built in the West and do not exhibit the inherent instability of the high-power channel reactors. Still, experts have converged around the opinion that VVER 440-230s are generally unsafe due to aging, embrittlement of the reactor pressure vessels, and serious design problems (Myers 1993, 5-6; *Nuclear Safety in Central and Eastern Europe* 2001; Nordic Nuclear Safety Research website).

funding and an ECU 60 million investment by the Bulgarian state itself, were used to upgrade the units. From the mid-1990s onwards, Bulgaria was growing increasingly reluctant to close the units, not least due to the investments it had made. Instead, the NEK adopted a program for further upgrades and planned further investments in the units (Bakardjiev 1999; *RFE/RL Newslines* 21.6.1999). The government took the position that the units already conformed to international safety standards and that units 1-2 would be operated until the end of 2004, and unit 3 and unit 4 until the end of 2008 and 2010 respectively (CEE Bankwatch Network 1998; Government 1998b).

The bid for keeping the units' operational made the Kozloduy NPP a constant source of disagreement between Bulgaria and the EU. In Agenda 2000, the EC extended the closure deadlines to 2001 and 2002 for the two pairs of units respectively (EC 1997, 67). Bulgaria responded by asking for a revision of the NSAA to allow all four units to remain in operation 'till the end of their economically justified life', i.e. until after 2004 and 2008/2010 for the two pairs respectively (EC 1999b, 41). The ODS government justified the request by a fabricated *National Energy Strategy* (Government 1998b) based on implausibly high forecasts of energy consumption⁶⁴.

Apparently seeking to strengthen Bulgaria's bargaining position, the ODS government contributed to the escalation of the problem and turned it into an extremely sensitive issue. It started framing the dispute in terms of Bulgaria's national interest and implicitly invoked the EU's responsibility to reciprocate Bulgaria's Euro-Atlantic solidarity demonstrated during the Kosovo crisis (e.g., see Kostov, interviews for BBC Radio 1999, for Reuters 1999). The units were said to be indispensable if Bulgaria was to meet its energy demand and cheap nuclear energy was said to be crucial for economic competitiveness. In a notorious interview, Prime Minister Kostov characterized EU demands for early closure of the units as "an absurd dictate" that was set to damage Bulgaria's economic competitiveness and that reflected the EU's reluctance to assist the country in its European integration efforts (interview for Reuters 1999). At the same time, the EU was reminded of its failure to fulfill its commitments regarding post-conflict recovery in the Balkans (*Ibid.*).

⁶⁴ For an illustration, the forecasted energy consumption for 2010 in this strategy was 1.5 times higher than in the maximal scenario of the NEK's forecast for the same year published in 2004 (NEK 2004b, 15).

The EC remained unmoved. It disagreed with the unrealistically high levels of forecasted electricity consumption, found Bulgaria's request not in line with its international commitments under the NSAA and Agenda 2000, and resorted to its strongest leverage - conditionality. Bulgaria's invitation to start accession negotiations was made conditional upon agreement on the closure of the old Kozloduy units (EC 1999b, 40-1, 1999a, 39, 1998a, 30). A compromise was reached after unnerving negotiations several days prior to the EU Helsinki Summit in 1999. Bulgaria obliged itself to close units 1-2 by the end of 2002, and to further determine the closure dates of units 3-4 in consultation with the EC. The latter dates were supposed to precede those planned by the Bulgarian government. The EC demanded closure by the end of 2006 (*Memorandum* 1999). At the Helsinki Summit, Bulgaria was invited to start EU accession negotiations.

From Kozloduy to Belene: Domestic Politicization of the Nuclear Energy Issue

In Bulgaria itself, the passage from controversy to invitation to EU accession negotiations was anything but smooth. The Kozloduy dilemma put the ODS government between a rock and a hard place. The ODS had started framing the Kozloduy problem in the emotional terms of defending the national interest both in order to strengthen Bulgaria's bargaining position vis-à-vis the EU and in order to stabilize its own position in domestic politics. It had identified the NPP as an indispensable economic asset. It had declared that it did not intend to easily sacrifice the national interest by sacrificing the Kozloduy units simply for the sake of European integration (Kostov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 25.10.1999). During its term in office, however, it had also placed a disproportionate emphasis upon foreign policy and Euro-Atlantic integration. Failure to negotiate a deal with the EC and receive an invitation to start accession negotiations would have amounted to a total failure of its government.

In November 1999, the ODS government requested a mandate to negotiate a compromise on the early closure of the Kozloduy units with a view of securing Bulgaria's place in the forthcoming wave of EU enlargement. While it retained the view that the defense of the NPP was a matter of defending the national interest, it argued that

Bulgaria was trapped by the 1993 agreement on early closure of the units and that accepting a compromise was therefore the only viable option that would not endanger Bulgaria's ultimate priority – EU integration. The ODS government planned to cushion the imminent clash between Bulgaria's national economic interest and Bulgaria's all-important foreign policy priority by demanding compensations and by negotiating favorable conditions of the closure deal (e.g. see ODS, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 5.11.1999).

The BSP, however, took a firm stance against any compromise. It argued that units 1-2 had to remain in operation at least until 2004-2005 and that negotiations on units 3-4 had to continue until 2004⁶⁵. The BSP rejected the tendency to link the units' closure to EU integration. Instead, like in the case of Bulgaria's support for NATO's Kosovo war, it treated the Kozloduy problem as linked to national sovereignty and protested against the inequality inherent in the negotiations between Bulgaria and the EU (BSP, quoted in *OMDA Press Reviews* 3/4/5.11.1999). It took the stance that the ODS government's failure to defend the national interest in the Kozloduy case would leave Bulgaria both without an NPP and without EU membership (Ovcharov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 5.11.1999). The clash between the ODS and the BSP over the Kozloduy problem was a symbolic continuation of the parties' clash over the Kosovo problem and a symbolic culmination of the BSP's sustained opposition against the ODS government. The BSP used the Kozloduy squabbles to dramatize its oppositional stance. It announced that it would terminate all attempts at building a political consensus and would take a radical oppositional stance in defense of the interests of the people (Parvanov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 5.11.1999). The sensitive Kozloduy problem, like the Kosovo problem before it, became a focal point for political mobilization that was expected to unite and strengthen the Left. While it did not really have the desired effect, the Kozloduy dilemma did become entangled with the partisan struggles and electoral strategies of the key players in Bulgarian politics already in this very early phase of the controversy.

⁶⁵ Other stakeholders in the debate, such as workers unions, too, started voicing their opposition to the units' early closure (e.g. see Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria (KNSB), quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 4.11.1999).

After a heated 7-hour long parliamentary debate, the ODS government received a mandate to negotiate a compromise agreement with the EC. The compromise agreement, however, was met with little enthusiasm. The general feeling was that Bulgaria had paid an unexpectedly high price for EU integration already in the very early stages of the accession process. The ODS government had fulfilled its primary goal but, while it declared that it had “solved the problem with the [Helsinki Summit] invitation without compromising any of the vital elements of the national interest” (Mihajlova, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 9.12.1999), it also reckoned that Bulgaria “would not be able to enter the EU with negotiations like this one” (Kostov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 30.11.1999). Predictably, the BSP did not miss the chance to scold the government for humiliatingly accepting all conditions imposed by the EC and for failing to defend the national interest; it characterized the Helsinki Summit invitation as ‘a Pyrrhic victory’ (Ovcharov, Parvanov, or BSP, quoted in *OMDA Press Reviews* 3/8/30.11.1999, 15.12.1999). By the end of 1999, it was clear that the Kozloduy dilemma had set the stage for a genuine political crisis.

As the 2002 closure deadline was approaching, the Kozloduy issue became a major point of political controversy in Bulgaria. The fate of units 1-2 caused a lot of political turmoil but most stakeholders were aware that it was largely predetermined. The closure of units 3-4, however, seemed still open to negotiation and led to a major political conflict.

The conflict unfolded quickly and involved widespread protests. An informal coalition of supporters of the Kozloduy NPP united disparate political actors, civic organizations and lobby groups representing the nuclear energy industry. Its prominent members included the mainstream opposition parties – the BSP and the rightwing SDS with its parliamentary coalition ODS (which had lost the elections to the NDSV), several rightwing nationalist political parties – VMRO, the Gergyovden Movement and the Bulgarian Democratic Union ‘Radicals’ (BDUR); an especially active civic organization called Civic Committee for the Defense of the Kozloduy NPP (CCDK); a Civic Committee for Resumption of the Construction of the Belene NPP (CCRCB), workers’ unions at the Kozloduy NPP; and the nuclear energy lobby, represented by organizations such as the Bulgarian Atomic Forum (better known as Bulatom), the Bulgarian Union of

Nuclear Operators (BUNO) and the Bulgarian Nuclear Society (BNS). In addition, throughout 2002, thousands of people took to the streets to protest against the units' closure.

In mainstream politics, the leftwing and the rightwing opposition seized the opportunity to score political points and each launched a major 'Kozloduy' offensive against the government. The rightwing bloc maintained a conflictual stance and took every opportunity to express outrage at the unpardonable tendency of the ruling NDSV to hold the ODS government responsible for the NPP's predicament⁶⁶ (e.g., quoted in *Sega* 15.10.2002). It accepted the closure of units 1-2, but was opposed to an early closure of units 3-4 (Mihajlova 2002).

The BSP led a pro-Kozloduy campaign in open opposition to the ruling party. It was involved with the mass protest rallies, whether openly or unofficially (see *Mediapool* 2.12.2002). The BSP protested loudly even against the closure of units 1-2, although due to the 1999 compromise agreement it was virtually impossible to reverse (short of opting for a head-on confrontation with the EU). When an agreement with the EBRD on a decommissioning support fund was being ratified, the party walked out of Parliament in protest against 'the passing of a death penalty verdict' on the Bulgarian energy sector (Kornezov, quoted in *24 Chasa* 29.3.2002, 4). During its time in opposition, the BSP never missed a chance to lament the failure of the government to defend the national interest in the field of nuclear energy.

Other political actors and stakeholders took a similarly antagonistic stance. The nationalist rightwing parties organized relatively conspicuous protests on relevant occasions (e.g. see *24 Chasa* 29.1.2002, 3). Workers' unions called for a referendum and demanded that the President veto the closure of units 1-2 (KNSB, quoted in *Trud* 10.4.2002, 3; *Sega* 1.8.2002). Some of the key business associations took a firm stance against the units' closure (e.g. see Danev, quoted in *Trud* 10.4.2002, 3; business organization 'Vazrajidane', quoted in *Mediapool* 2.2.2002). The CCDK claimed to have collected over 500 000 signatures in protest against the closure and demanded a

⁶⁶ As the ODS had inherited the 1993 agreement for early closure of the four old units, it held that it had defended the national interest by postponing the closure of units 1-2 until 2003 and by delaying the final decision regarding units 3-4.

referendum⁶⁷ (*Sega* 15.4.2005; 25.4.2005). Workers unions at the NPP, together with the World Council of Nuclear Workers (WCNW), took the initiative in their own hands and filed a complaint against the EC in the Court of First Instance of the European Communities, claiming that the EC's demand for early closure of the units was not legally justifiable⁶⁸.

In 2002, Prime Minister Saxkoburggotski announced plans to re-launch the construction of the second Bulgarian NPP in a dramatic way at the founding assembly of his party. The project had been briefly dusted off in the late 1990s in response to the overblown electricity demand forecasts in the ODS government's Energy Strategy, which had foreseen the construction of new facilities with an astonishing combined capacity of 3500 MW in the 2006-2010 period. These had included a 600-MW nuclear unit at Belene but concrete plans had been made conditional upon extensive further analysis (Government 1998b). Although the project had been eagerly promoted by the nuclear energy lobby and some political parties such as the Euroleft (quoted in *OMDA Press Reviews* 4/5.11.1999), the ODS had not been enthusiastic about it (e.g. see Kostov, quoted in *Sega* 14.11.2000). In 2002 it appeared to have been shelved again. The NDSV government's Energy Strategy (MEER 2002) produced in early 2002 did not even mention the Belene NPP. The government's decision in the spring of the same year to re-launch the project and finish the NPP was thus unexpected and shocking for almost everyone else but Saxkoburggotski and his closest circle. No economic justification for restarting the construction was offered. It was not specified how the giant project would be financed.

The NDSV government made an ambiguous connection between the launching of the new NPP at Belene and the partial closure of the Kozloduy NPP. Although its position was generally vague (see Saxkoburggotski's speech, quoted in *Mediapool* 6.4.2002), it gave the impression that the construction of a second NPP did not mean that the struggle for Kozloduy's units 3-4 would be abandoned. The declared intention was to keep the units operational long enough to prevent a time gap between their closure and the

⁶⁷ Parliament never reacted on the demand. It was announced that the lists of signatures had mysteriously disappeared.

⁶⁸ The Court refused to initiate a case since there was no decision to this effect adopted by the EC.

launching of the new nuclear facility (Bliznakov, interview for *Mediapool* 8.4.2002; Saxkoburggotski, interview for *Trud* 8.4.2002, 2).

The Kozloduy controversy was yet to unfold. Late 2002 was a crucial phase of the crisis. The NDSV government took a decision that it would close the Energy chapter of the accession negotiations with the EU, concede to EU demands and close units 3-4 at the end of 2006, on condition that a EU expert mission visit the Kozloduy NPP and review the safety standards of the two reactors (the review was referred to as ‘EU peer review’). This created a rift in the relations between government and Parliament. Parliament adopted a decision that Bulgaria would not decommission units 3-4 before actually acceding to the EU. The decision conflicted with the government’s policy. The government, however, composedly welcomed the vote as confirming 31 December 2006 as the decommissioning date, inasmuch as 1 January 2007 was the officially declared date of Bulgaria’s forthcoming EU accession (quoted in *Sega* 3.10.2002). Shortly before the crucial Copenhagen Summit of the EU in December 2002, where Bulgaria was expected to receive a membership roadmap, the Energy chapter was closed and the decommissioning date set for 2006. In turn, the EC accepted Bulgaria’s request for a peer review of the units’ safety.

At that point the controversy reached dramatic proportions. The closing of the Energy chapter proved to be this government’s most unpopular move. The leftwing and the rightwing opposition, as well as the radical nationalist political forces, labeled it ‘national betrayal’, ‘betrayal of the national interest’, ‘a crime’, ‘arrogant violation of the Constitution’, etc. To the NPP’s numerous supporters, closing the Energy chapter meant closing all possibilities for renegotiation of the decommissioning dates (e.g. see Parvanov, quoted in *Sega* 20.11.2002; Nuclear Regulatory Agency (NRA), quoted in *Mediapool* 18.11.2002). Both opposition blocs reacted accordingly by putting before Parliament motions of no confidence in the government. Having announced that it was “ready to make a deal with the devil in order to save the units” and defend the national interest, the BSP supported the Right’s motion (Kornezov, quoted in *Sega* 25.11.2002). In what was an unprecedented political event, the rightwing faction duly returned the

favor⁶⁹. The government survived both no confidence votes. In response, the BSP referred the issue to the Supreme Administrative Court (SAC) claiming that the government's decision contradicted an earlier parliamentary vote that linked the decommissioning date to the date of Bulgaria's accession to the EU. It unsuccessfully tried to initiate a referendum on the units' closure. The SAC ruled that the government's decision to accept the 2006 closure deadline was invalid. The BSP and the energy lobby kept protesting, throwing accusations of failure to defend the national interest, and asking for resignations. Despite the turmoil, the government was unimpressed. No change of policy followed.

All through the Kozloduy crisis, EU conditionality remained clear and firm, and so did the position of the EC. The EU showed no intention to negotiate, let alone back down, on the Kozloduy problem. Bulgaria very reluctantly honored the 1999 agreement and closed units 1-2 at the end of 2002.

The discord among the major state institutions kept growing. Open conflict between the President and the government was altogether unavoidable. The President had his own vision about the old units' fate. In his view, units 1-2 were to be shut down, modernized and, following agreement with the EU, put in operation again. Units 3-4 were considered safe and were to remain operational (Parvanov 2002b, quoted in *Sega* 13.4.2002). Hoping that the Bulgarian elite would unite to jointly resist EU demands, the President intended to broker a compromise between the main state institutions and form a 'united Bulgarian position' on the Kozloduy problem in order to increase the country's bargaining power in negotiations with the EU. When these hopes were dashed, he took a confrontational stance against the government. The government, on its part, scandalously characterized the President's initiatives on the Kozloduy problem as "useless, if not harmful, improvisation" (Pasi, quoted in *Sega* 30.10.2002, in *24 Chasa* 1.11.2002, 4). The President's position regarding EU conditionality was that the closure date should be determined solely on the basis of the conclusions of the safety review. It was centered on the idea of reciprocity in relations with the EU: just as Bulgaria pledged to close the units in case of a negative peer review, so it was a matter of national pride to

⁶⁹ The ODS did not hesitate to also back the leftwing President in the latter's conflict with the government (*Sega* 31.10.2002).

demand that the EU back down in case of a positive review (e.g. quoted in *Sega* 26.9.2002). Although this position diverged from the government's policy line, in talks with the EC Parvanov claimed to present 'the Bulgarian position'. To most external observers, the situation became altogether incomprehensible.

By late 2003 the government had completely backed down on the Kozloduy problem. It appeared inclined to use a positive peer review only to press for more financial assistance⁷⁰ but not to dispute the closure itself (Saxkoburgotski, quoted in *Mediapool* 21.12.2003). An expert mission under the auspices of the European Council carried out the agreed peer review. As soon as the long-awaited event was launched, the government scandalously announced that closure was unlikely to be delayed on the basis of this review (Pasi, quoted in *Trud* 18.11.2003, 8). The official conclusion of the expert mission was that Bulgaria had fulfilled the safety recommendations for reactors 3-4 and could safely operate them until 2006⁷¹. It appeared that, ironically, the peer review had been intended to determine not whether the units could be operated until the end of their design lifespan and longer, but whether it was not necessary to shut them down even earlier than in 2006. The pointless peer review unleashed a flow of astonishment and fury. The government met the full wrath of the opposition, the media, the nuclear energy lobby and the largely pro-Kozloduy public.

Throughout 2004 and 2005, the fate of units 3-4 remained one of the most important problems both in Bulgaria's relations with the EU and in domestic politics. Protests against the units' closure remained intense. The pro-Kozloduy coalition pressed for renegotiation of the Energy chapter, made another unsuccessful attempt to initiate a referendum on the units' closure, threatened to mount citizens' protests, and finally suggested that Bulgaria should postpone ratification of the Treaty of Accession to the EU and schedule a referendum on EU membership. The EC stuck to firm conditionality and openly linked non-compliance on the Kozloduy issue with prospective delays in Bulgaria's EU accession process (Ferheugen, quoted in *Sega* 8/9.6.2004, interview for *24 Chasa* 9.6.2004, 12).

⁷⁰ Bulgaria is eligible for EUR 550 million of EU financial assistance for the decommissioning of the Kozloduy units for the period 2000-2009.

⁷¹ The EC announced that the peer review's mandate was to evaluate the units' operational safety but not their design, which had been declared unsafe on numerous occasions.

In the meantime, the Belene NPP was hailed as a priority investment and duly utilized in the government's public relations campaign. Until 2004, no attempt was made to prove the economic feasibility of the project or to clarify its eventual financing. Until late 2006, information about the project's key economic indicators – the cost of construction, the cost price of the electricity produced at the NPP, and the launching date – could only be obtained from statements of individual officials quoted in the media. Some media commentators were upset by the lack of comprehensive official information and public accountability but, on the whole, there was neither public outcry nor urgent inquiries.

In addition, cost and price predictions about the Belene NPP tended to change in a rather random fashion throughout the years, though with an overall tendency towards deterioration. The initially announced price of the NPP was EUR 1.1 billion (apparently, only one 1000-MW unit was envisaged); construction was expected to begin in 2003 (*Trud* 8.4.2002, 2; Kovachev, quoted in *Mediapool* 6.4.2002). Subsequent assessments raised the price to EUR 1.7 - 2.5 billion, depending on the installed capacity (1000 MW or 1600 MW), and foresaw a launching date in 2008-2009 (Kovachev and Bliznakov, quoted in *Mediapool* 30.9.2003, 11.6.2003). Throughout 2004, price assessments fluctuated between EUR 1.6 billion and EUR 2.7 billion; the launching date moved forward to 2010 (*Sega* 4.5.2004, 5.7.2004). In early 2005, without any public debate, the planned capacity of the new NPP was increased to 2000 MW and the price was set at EUR 2.6 - 2.7 billion⁷² (*Sega* 8.1.2005). The authorities claimed that while the price of such projects would normally be higher, construction costs for the Belene NPP would be “significantly” lowered by using the already supplied (15-year old) equipment (Bliznakov, quoted in *news.bg* 7.1.2005). The project consultants, on the other hand, counted with only a negligible cost reduction due to the existing equipment (quoted in *Sega* 8.1.2005). In 2006, EUR 2.5 billion was declared to be “the most optimistic price” (*Sega* 19.4.2006).

The forecasted cost price of electricity produced at the new NPP – a crucial element as regards its future competitiveness – underwent similar transformations. The government's initial plans were to have the Belene NPP produce electricity at a price no

⁷² Other sources from the same year forecasted a modest EUR 1.5 - 2 billion (*Sega* 15.6.2005)

higher than 2.5 eurocents per kWh (quoted in *Sega* 11.5.2005). The requirement set in the tender procedure, however, was for a cost price between 3 and 4 eurocents (*Sega* 5.7.2004, 4.5.2004). Subsequent estimates located the price indeterminately in the range between 2.4 and 4 eurocents. The Ministry of Energy and Energy Resources (MEER) leaned towards a price of 3.5 eurocents (quoted in *Sega* 8.1.2005). A few months later, the project's financial consultant suggested that the project would require substantial external financing or state guarantees and the fluctuation spread of the cost price was narrowed to 3.2 – 3.7 eurocents. This time round, the MEER stated that it would strive for 2.5 eurocents (quoted in *Sega* 13.5.2005, in *Trud* 11.5.2005, 8). Shortly before closing the construction tender, the NEK suggested that, if matters were revisited, even a price of 5 eurocents could be considered competitive. A price between 3.7 and 4.7 eurocents was said to be a realistic one (NEK, quoted in *Sega* 19.4.2006). At any rate, any price above 2.8 eurocents would mean that the Belene NPP would be producing the most expensive electricity in Bulgaria.

The pro-Kozloduy coalition was ratcheting up its pressure against the government at a time when its prominent member – the BSP – was gaining popularity and looked set to win the elections forthcoming in 2005. The pre-election struggle additionally toughened the BSP's stance and antagonized the sides in the debate (e.g. see *Sega* 19.4.2005). The BSP's demonstratively defiant stance was the outgrowth of pre-election populism and was unsustainable, as it is difficult to imagine how the party could have upheld a long-lasting conflict with the EU and still survived politically. Large parts of the electorate, however, welcomed the tough stance. The BSP won the elections, partly thanks to its demonstrated commitment to stand in defense of the Kozloduy NPP.

Once in government, however, the BSP radically changed its position on the closure of units 3-4. It declared that, with the Treaty of Accession already ratified, the time for renegotiation had passed, since failure to fulfill Bulgaria's international commitments would jeopardize the strategic goal of EU membership. A pro-Kozloduy policy that meddled with EU integration was dismissed as a policy that “meddled with the country's national interests” (Ovcharov, interview for BTV 2005; see also Stanishev, quoted in *Government News* 7.6.2006; Ovcharov, interviews for BNR 2006a, Nova TV 2006b, Darik Radio 2006, BNR 2006b; Parvanov, quoted in *Mediapool* 12.5.2005). The BSP

government, just like the NDSV government before it, found itself grappling with the discontent of the general public (whose attitudes to the Kozloduy problem were largely shaped by the BSP's own radical pre-election stance), with an active nuclear energy lobby, and with relentless criticism by the rightwing opposition, now joined by the center-right populist party Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB) and the surprisingly successful far-right party 'Ataka', both of which made the Kozloduy issue a key element of their electoral and public relations strategies. It was thus impossible for the BSP to close the Kozloduy chapter in Bulgarian politics.

The issue of Kozloduy remained a sore one until the very day of Bulgaria's accession to the EU. The pro-Kozloduy forces made strenuous attempts to persuade pro-nuclear EU officials and members of the European Parliament (MEPs) to support the idea of postponing closure⁷³. A few months prior to the closure deadline the government played the 'Balkan' card and warned the EU that the Balkans would experience severe difficulties with energy supply if Bulgarian electricity exports were interrupted (Ovcharov's official letter to the EC, quoted in *Government News* 1.11.2006; officials, quoted in *Mediapool* 14.6.2006). It bashed the EC for neglecting the energy problems facing Europe and branded the closure of safe facilities that generated extremely cheap energy as imprudent and harmful (Ovcharov, quoted in *Mediapool* 23.11.2006, in *24 Chasa* 24.11.2006, 12). Prominent political figures, including the President, the Energy Minister, and the popular (unofficial) leader of the GERB, openly entertained the idea that the units could be reopened after accession to the EU, when Bulgaria's bargaining position as a member state would be stronger than its current position of a candidate state. Such proposals were boosted by patriotic-sounding public statements of the NPP's management. The circulation of ideas about reopening units 1-2 and about postponing the closure of units 3-4, the general intensity of the debate, and delays in the dismantling of the closed units 1-2⁷⁴ irritated the EC and provoked yet another demonstration of firm conditionality. In its 2006 regular monitoring report and in a special warning note, the EC concluded that Bulgaria failed to fulfill its commitments regarding units 1-2 (EC

⁷³ On several occasions, a group of MEPs promoted the idea of a more flexible approach towards units 3-4.

⁷⁴ Apparently anxious to prevent speculations about reopening units 1-2, the EU demanded that they not simply be shut down, but taken down altogether.

2006a, 29). The government attempted to cool down the resilient pro-Kozloduy coalition and to confirm the irreversibility of the units' closure.

Kozloduy's units 3-4 were shut down in accordance with EU conditionality, several hours prior to Bulgaria's accession to the EU. Just days after the event, the pro-Kozloduy coalition initiated demands for reopening the units. President Parvanov called for a unified Bulgarian position in defense of the NPP (quoted in *Bulgarian President News* 2.2.2007). The rightwing SDS called for all political parties to join forces and make the continuing 'battle' for Kozloduy a national one. The government developed an action plan for reopening units 3-4.

The demands were justified by the damaging impact of the units' closure upon the stability of energy supply and energy prices in the Balkans (Ovcharov and Kovachev, quoted in *Mediapool* 12.3.2007). The underlying strategy was to present the closure as a Balkan, rather than just a Bulgarian, problem. It rested upon predictions of looming energy shortages and economic crisis in some parts of the Balkans that could potentially destabilize the whole region, including the vulnerable area of Kosovo (Ovcharov, interview for *Politika* 2007; Parvanov, quoted in *Bulgarian President News* 2.2.2007). President Parvanov raised the issue in a rather dramatic way in his speech at the special session of the European Parliament (EP) celebrating Bulgaria's EU accession (2007a). He stressed that the region was already suffering electricity shortages because of the closure of Kozloduy's units and that Albania had even introduced a blackout schedule. He called for a new peer review of the units' safety, for reevaluation of the threats to regional stability, and for invoking art. 36 of the Act of Accession, which enabled Bulgaria to take protective measures in case of serious and persistent adjustment difficulties in a particular economic sector up until three years after accession⁷⁵. The EC summarily dismissed Bulgarian demands. In response, Bulgaria tried to persuade neighboring countries to unite in a joint protest against the closure. Four of them supported Bulgaria's demands. Individual MEPs continued to call for a 'flexible approach' to the Kozloduy units. In early 2008, Bulgaria temporarily restricted the

⁷⁵ Invoking art. 36 was a bizarre idea inasmuch as the Bulgarian energy sector experienced nothing remotely close to serious and persistent adjustment difficulties, while difficulties experienced by a state outside the EU (Albania) were technically irrelevant to the Act of Accession.

export of electricity due to fears that the increased domestic consumption (caused by extremely cold weather) could lead to electricity shortages within the country. The event was used to justify a renewed campaign for reopening units 3-4. The campaign was organized by the government, the nuclear energy lobby, and the media, and featured attempts at invoking art. 36, as well as the idea to lease the two decommissioned units to a powerful Western company that could then lobby the EU for their reopening.

The Belene Project

In the meantime, the Belene project has been moving forward, though at a pace somewhat slower than initially expected. Despite the government's claims about strong business interest in the NPP, only two consortiums bid in the tender on its construction – the Russian Atomstroyexport and the Czech Skoda Alliance. Both bidders were to a larger or smaller extent related to Russia's state-controlled gas monopoly Gazprom⁷⁶. At the end of 2006, the tender was won by Atomstroyexport. The choice angered the anti-Russian rightwing opposition and triggered a predictably bitter political controversy (e.g. see DSB 2007, quoted in *Mediapool* 8.11.2006).

Russia's leverage in the case of the Belene project has been obvious. The Belene NPP is important for Atomstroyexport, as it provides entry into the EU market for nuclear technologies and could, in the candid words of the Russian ambassador to the EU, serve as "Russia's Trojan horse in the EU" (Cijov 2006). Just as the main supplier for the NPP's construction was being selected, Gazprom invited Bulgaria to discuss the extension and revision of Bulgaria's gas supply contracts, though they were due to expire only in 2010⁷⁷. The request was related to Gazprom's attempts to increase the price of gas supplies to European countries. The Russian side overtly linked the content of the revised contracts to Russian participation in large infrastructure projects in

⁷⁶ Gazprom-owned Gazprombank had the controlling package of shares in Atomstroyexport. The leading participant in the Skoda consortium – Skoda JS was entirely owned by the Russian engineering company OMZ, in which Gazprom had a controlling stake. While the Russian bidder tied the new NPP to a Russian supplier of fresh nuclear fuel, Skoda Alliance allowed for an alternative American supplier.

⁷⁷ One of the contracts envisaged gas supplies in exchange for the transit of Russian gas through Bulgarian pipelines. Gazprom's position was that it should be terminated and Bulgaria should pay for all gas supplies directly. Bulgaria feared that this would lead to a drop in the amount of gas transited through Bulgarian pipelines because Gazprom could direct transit to the recently opened Blue Stream pipeline.

Bulgaria, including the Belene NPP. The Bulgarian leadership admitted that it had no choice but to link negotiations on gas to negotiations on other issues because Bulgaria had no leverage to stand up to Gazprom in the sphere of gas transit (Ovcharov, interview for *Dnevnik* 2006).

The choice of Russian nuclear technology and the selection of a Russian main supplier for the new NPP thus appeared to have been purely political decisions. The choice of main supplier was traded for a new long-term contract with Gazprom⁷⁸. The choice of reactor type was reduced to a choice of a VVER 1000 type, which made construction firms proposing alternative technology automatically ineligible to bid in the tender. The limitation was officially justified by the need to use the already supplied Soviet-design equipment in order to lower construction costs (Ovcharov 2006, interviews for *Duma* 2006, for Nova TV 2006a). At the end, however, the NEK opted for the construction of two brand new units, rather than for the completion of the half-built old reactor, because the price difference between the two options turned out to be negligible.

The Bulgarian state would hold a 51% share in the NPP; the rest would be left to strategic investors. The share of the state should be partly financed by a loan from a European financial institution (probably the Euratom loan facility), which – it is believed – would secure the EU's political support for the project. The rest would be financed by loans raised on the capital market⁷⁹. State guarantees for the loans would be necessary. As an additional guarantee, the NEK would sign a long-term contract for the purchase of electricity produced by the Belene NPP at fixed preferential prices⁸⁰. Although the government appeared confident that the project would be attractive to investors, there has been nothing even remotely close to an investor stampede.

In the construction contract, the price of the Belene NPP was set at EUR 4 billion and the indicated cost price of Belene-produced electric power was 3.7 eurocents. The two units (third-generation VVER-1000s) were to be connected to the grid by 2013 and 2014

⁷⁸ The new contract foresaw an increase in the quantities of transited gas, construction of new pipelines, and a gradual, rather than a sharp, rise in the price of gas supplies.

⁷⁹ Russian President Putin announced that the financial resources needed for the construction of the Belene NPP were set aside in Russia's state budget and, if necessary, could be used to finance the project (quoted in *Mediapool* 18.1.2008).

⁸⁰ The NEK was downrated by Standard & Poor's from 'developing' to 'negative' due to its majority participation in the new NPP.

respectively. A few months later, the launching date was again moved forward to 2015 and 2016 respectively (*Mediapool* 9.7.2007). In mid-2008, the NEK officially admitted that the NPP would cost at least EUR 5 billion and asked for additional state guarantees (*Mediapool* 8.8.2008).

Bulgaria has made special efforts to extract the EU's blessing for the Belene project, preferably in the form of maximal financial and institutional support. The strategy has focused on repeated complaints about the high costs involved in closing the Kozloduy units before replacement nuclear units have been built. The idea is to bargain one NPP for the other (e.g. see inter-ministerial working group, quoted in *Sega* 16.7.2003).

The EU has not influenced the policy-making process regarding the Belene NPP⁸¹. It has had little leverage to do so, inasmuch as its Green Paper on Energy states that in the sphere of nuclear energy each "Member State will make choices based on its own national preferences"⁸² (EC 2006b, 17). The EC has been anxious to preempt any attempts at linking the Kozloduy units' closure date to the launching date of the Belene NPP and, probably, has also wanted to assuage Bulgarian fears of intrusive EU intervention into 'national' energy matters. It has therefore taken special pains to clarify that it regards the issue of the Belene NPP to be unrelated to that of the Kozloduy NPP, and that the EU would not interfere with the construction of a new NPP as long as it conformed to safety requirements (EC, quoted in *Sega* 19.11.2003, in *Mediapool* 30.5.2002, 13.11.2006). In reality, however, the EU appears to have tacitly accepted the bargain. It has supported the Belene NPP and provided financial assistance for key energy projects in Bulgaria, as long as Bulgarians put up with the closure of units 3-4 (EC, quoted in *Mediapool* 25.5.2007, 17.1.2008; spokesman of the Energy Commissioner, quoted in *Mediapool* 15.7.2008).

⁸¹ Some EU influence could be expected if European financial institutions finance the project.

⁸² The stance reflects the intolerance of several member states towards supranational interference with sensitive issues like nuclear energy.

Key Factors in the Kozloduy Crisis

Political Costs

Compliance with EU nuclear safety conditionality put the two governments that held office between 2002 and 2007 in a precarious position in domestic politics. They had to ensure quick progress in EU integration, which entailed making concessions in the face of EU conditionality. On the other hand, concessions to EU demands for early closure of the Kozloduy units involved high political costs and meant losing votes to the pro-Kozloduy opposition. Both governments stood virtually alone against other key state institutions, against an extraordinarily united political opposition, against a disappointed public and against an adamant nuclear energy lobby. In no other case of international conditionality in Bulgaria have so high political costs been at stake for the ruling elite.

The Kozloduy problem polarized the political sphere. It dominated political debates and often overshadowed other important discussions. The crisis evolved in a partisan environment. Taking up the sore symbolic issue of the units' closure became an effective strategy for mobilizing voters and creating an attractive political image. A snowball effect was at work. As more political actors and social groups were utilizing the Kozloduy problem to secure greater visibility, media coverage and popular appeal, the 'demand' for the Kozloduy drama was rapidly growing and the issue was rising up on the political and media agenda. It ultimately turned into an important focal point of electoral campaigns and parties' public relations strategies. While the political impact of the Kozloduy problem was greatest in the years preceding the units' closure, it is still perceptible and bears on the political controversy over the Belene NPP project.

The Nuclear Energy Lobby

An important factor in the case of the Kozloduy and Belene NPPs has been the involvement of Bulgaria's economically powerful and politically well-connected nuclear energy lobby, apparently linked to Russian interests in the energy sector and to certain

parts of the Bulgarian political establishment. Since the lobby's goals are to make nuclear energy a priority sector of the economy and to secure abundant business opportunities for the key players in the industry, the struggle for the Kozloduy NPP and the construction of a second NPP have naturally dominated its activities⁸³.

The nuclear power lobby is formed around Bulatom and the CCDK. It brings together several professional and scientific organizations related to the industry, such as the Bulgarian Atomic Association, the Bulgarian Energy Forum, BUNO and the BNS. It includes also individual experts on nuclear energy, former officials, and former managers of the NEK and the Kozloduy NPP. The lobby has received support from international organizations such as the WCNW and the World Nuclear Association (WNA). The CCDK is a non-governmental association of scholars, opinion-makers, and others with "proven authority", supportive of the Kozloduy NPP (A. Semov, quoted in *Sega* 27.7.2002). Bulatom is a non-governmental organization that brings together the main construction, engineering, and equipment-supplying companies that have been awarded key contracts in the Bulgarian nuclear energy sector, including the Kozloduy NPP, Atomstroyexport, the Institute for Nuclear Research and Nuclear Energy, Risk Engineering, Westinghouse, Siemens, Atomenergoexport, etc. Bulatom's chairman Manchev is executive director of one of the most powerful companies in the sector – Risk Engineering⁸⁴. The group has openly recognized itself as a lobby group. Its declared goal is to "defend the interests of the Bulgarian nuclear energy industry in dealings with both the Bulgarian state institutions and the European institutions" (Manchev 2006, 3). Bulatom's other declared goal is to "influence the formation of objective public opinion regarding nuclear energy" (*Ibid.*, 3).

⁸³ Some of the lobby's critics, however, argue that the lobby's loud campaign against the closure of the Kozloduy units is only a propaganda campaign intended to sway the public into believing that Bulgaria could not do without new nuclear capacities and to thus enable the lobby to take advantage of the business and professional opportunities that abound both in the decommissioning process and in the construction of a new NPP (Ekoglasnost, quoted in *Mediapool* 31.7.2006; Stanchev 2004c; Minchev, quoted in *ENS* 2004).

⁸⁴ Risk Engineering has been awarded key public contracts, i.e. the upgrade of Kozloduy's units 5-6, reconstruction works in major TPPs, and consultant services, e.g. the conduct of an EIA of the Belene NPP. Risk Engineering and Parsons were selected as architect-engineers of the Belene NPP without a public tender procedure.

Although statements to the effect that the lobby's opinion is 'objective' opinion are generally unsurprising, this case is surprising in that the opinion of the Bulgarian nuclear energy lobby has indeed been widely regarded as objective and representative of the opinion and interests of the Bulgarian nation. The fervent pro-Kozloduy stance taken by the nuclear energy industry has not been regarded as one reflecting particular economic interests but as one serving the public interest. The lobby's interests have been perceived as interchangeable with the national interest. In the minds of most Bulgarians, the energy lobby has replaced local politicians in defending the national interest against foreign pressure. Many Bulgarians have subscribed to the interpretation of nationalist-minded (self-labeled as 'patriotic') participants in the Kozloduy debate, according to whom lobbyists' opinions are "the judgment of experts that unlike [the politicians] have not lost their national identity" (Kutsarov 2002).

Public Attitudes

Next to the industrial lobby, the general public was another major source of political pressure on the government. At the peak of the crisis, public agitation about the fate of the NPP was unprecedented. In opinion polls, the decision to close units 3-4 was ranked as the most important event in domestic politics, surpassing even the sore issue of organized crime (Alpha Research 2004, 5). The percentage of Bulgarians who opposed the units' closure ranged between 70% and 82%⁸⁵ (*Sega* 2.12.2002; *24 Chasa* 13.4.2002, 11).

The extent of public involvement with the issue was bad news for the government. In 2002, between 63% and 73% of respondents in opinion polls declared that Bulgaria should keep the units even at the cost of EU membership. Only a small percentage (11%) believed it was better to give up the units in 2006 in order to enter the EU (opinion poll commissioned by the government, quoted in *Mediapool* 27.11.2002, in *Sega* 28.11.2002; Alpha Research 2002). The picture was roughly the same in 2003 and

⁸⁵ The level of support for the NPP did not vary significantly according to age, gender, education, or party membership.

2004⁸⁶, although according to some opinion polls the share of those who agreed to closure was already larger (*Bulgarian Eurobulletin* 2003; *ENS* 2004). Only some 15% of respondents thought that the government's Kozloduy policy should take into account key aspects of europeanization such as Bulgaria's international commitments or the danger of derailing EU accession negotiations (*Bulgarian Eurobulletin* 2003).

Euroskepticism thrived on the Kozloduy hullabaloo. In 2003, 47% of Bulgarians identified the closure of units 3-4 as the most important downside of European integration (Alpha Research 2004, 43). 54% stated that the government should be taking decisions regarding the energy sector independently of other EU member states. This share was larger than the share of those who were opposed to ceding sovereignty in sensitive areas like agriculture and defense (*Ibid.*, 45). These trends in public opinion survived the completion of the accession negotiations. In 2005, over 50% of Bulgarians still opposed the closure of the units; over 50% thought that Bulgaria's policy on the Kozloduy problem was made under outside pressure; over 30% stated that this policy was the result of Bulgarian governments' inability to defend the national interest (*Evroskeptik* 2005).

Ideological Enframing of the Nuclear Energy Issue

The Europeanization Paradigm

In the earliest phases of the Kozloduy controversy, the ODS government deployed the Europeanization paradigm to counteract political and public opposition to its policy just as it had done during the Kosovo crisis. When it requested a mandate to negotiate a compromise agreement on the early closure of units 1-4, the ODS interpreted the Kozloduy dilemma as a choice for or against European integration. Despite its great economic value and broad public support, the Kozloduy NPP was said to have no precedence over Bulgaria's all-important priority – European integration. Bulgaria's

⁸⁶ 64% of respondents said that units 3-4 should be preserved at any price; 46% said that units 3-4 were more important than EU integration; a stunning 24% could not answer the question (*Bulgarian Eurobulletin* 2003).

national interest was articulated as an interest in ‘European integration above everything else’. Alternative political positions were renounced. Pro-Kozloduy interests and activities, such as those of the energy lobby, were repudiated as interests and activities that endangered Bulgaria’s EU membership and contradicted Bulgaria’s vital national interest (official government statement from 8.12.1999, quoted in Pasi 2002g). BSP’s opposition to the compromise agreement was interpreted as sabotage of EU membership (Agov and Abadzjiev, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 8.11.1999; Bozhkov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 5.11.1999; Kostov, interview for BBC Radio 1999). It, too, was renounced as a stance that sacrificed the national interest in the name of populism:

If Bulgaria’s first priority is EU accession, we have to do all we can to achieve it. Certain groups and forces, however, sabotage the invitation [for starting accession negotiations]. This is a national betrayal. (Radev, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 10.11.1999)

In order to prevent the BSP from representing and justifying its oppositional stance as one that defended Bulgaria’s interests in the field of nuclear energy, the ODS preemptively associated BSP’s position with anti-national narrow-party interests. The BSP was accused of attempting to destabilize the country in order to gain political power (Abadzjiev, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 4.11.1999; Kostov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 5.11.1999). This ideological framework, coupled with the ODS government’s nominally still great political power and the fact that Bulgaria obtained immediate ‘rewards’ for its cooperative behavior – namely the coveted invitation to start accession negotiations – allowed the government to manage this first outburst of controversy over the Kozloduy NPP relatively well.

When the controversy resurfaced in the early 2000s, the NDSV government, too, resorted to the Europeanization discourse. Prime Minister Saxkoburggotski confronted protesting VMRO activists by arguing that the Kozloduy NPP was a price worth paying for Bulgaria’s association with Europe (quoted in *24 Chasa* 29.1.2002, 2). The unpopular decision to yield to EU demands was presented as the position of a reliable partner and a responsible future member of the European family (Saxkoburggotski, quoted in *Sega* 3.10.2002). The government’s acquiescence in EU conditionality was rationalized as a sacrifice needed to put Bulgaria on a stable EU integration track that would secure “the future of our children” and would quickly “lead [the country] away

from poverty into the Promised Land of the EU” (Pasi 2002f, see also 2005a). Like the ODS before it, the NDSV presented the vote ‘for’ or ‘against’ striking a compromise with the EU as “a vote ‘for’ or ‘against’ Europe and ‘for’ or ‘against’ European standards of living for the next generation” (Pasi 2002f).

Europeanization was thus deployed in an attempt to define Bulgaria’s national interest as fast EU integration and to link fast EU integration to economic development and prosperity. However, the identity elements of the Europeanization paradigm appeared rather inconsequential in the Kozloduy debate. The post-ODS leadership (both the NDSV and the BSP) toned down these elements of the Europeanization approach in general, and in the context of the Kozloduy debates in particular. This was partly due to the inevitable concretization of the EU integration problematic following the start of the accession negotiations, which shifted the discourse that structured Bulgaria’s relationship to Europe away from problems of culture and values and focused it instead on problems of economic development and welfare. It was also partly due to the enthusiastic pro-NATO stance of the NDSV government’s Foreign Minister Pasi⁸⁷, whose apparent preoccupation with issues pertaining to Bulgaria’s relations with NATO was accentuated and reinforced by Bulgaria’s quest to secure NATO membership in the first half of the 2000s.

It is not that the identity-focused Europeanization approach did not have a relevant take on the Kozloduy dilemma. It had. The choice for or against closing the units was on occasion depicted as a fundamental geopolitical choice between living isolated with two more nuclear units or “giving up two units for the sake of living a better life in civilized united Europe” (Velikov 2004). No-confidence votes against the government were scorned as “attempts to reverse Bulgaria’s European integration course” and “crush the new national energy [for Europeanization]” (a NDSV MP, quoted in *Sega* 30.11.2002). A former Bulgarian Prime Minister even revived memories of Bulgaria’s civilization choice period. He reproached Bulgarians for having forgotten that membership in Euro-Atlantic structures hinged on the demonstration of civilizational fitness and proper values and urged them to earn their place in Western civilization by putting the common

⁸⁷ Pasi had been campaigning in favor of Bulgaria’s NATO membership for more than a decade before his appointment as Foreign Minister.

values of this civilization (which apparently were assumed to be embodied by Western conditionality) above their narrow self-interest (Dimitrov 2005).

The problem with the identity-focused approach was that it could neither suppress nor accommodate the sensitive Kozloduy issue. After all, the sensitivity of the problem had led even the ODS to defuse the then powerful Europeanization paradigm by a discourse focused on defending the national economic interests. As the crisis was unfolding, the identity-focused Europeanization approach was becoming subject to bitter political contestation and was growing increasingly ineffective as a tool for political mobilization.

It gave way to a version of the Europeanization approach in which identity matters were overshadowed by practical matters and interests, such as Bulgaria's weak bargaining position vis-à-vis the EU and the need to guarantee Bulgaria's hard-earned EU accession:

We have to figure out what Bulgaria's priorities are. In my value system, [the priority] is the signing... of the most important treaty in Bulgarian history for the last 126 years – the Treaty of Accession to the EU... The country has strived for eight years to come to the point of signing the Treaty. The current activities [of the NPP's supporters] are dangerous, because they put at risk the results of these efforts. (Sevlievski, interview for *24 Chasa* 21.4.2005, 13; see also Dogan, quoted in *Mediapool* 1.10.2002; Saxkoburgotski, quoted in *Sega* 20.12.2003).

The gist of this perspective is that however unjustifiable EU conditionality might be, resisting it would slow down the accession process and would ultimately damage Bulgarian interests because EU integration could bring benefits incomparable to those of keeping the units in operation for another year or two (Kovachev, quoted in *Mediapool* 29.2.2004; Tsonev 2004; Saxkoburgotski, quoted in *Sega* 13.12.2003).

The interest-focused Europeanization approach could potentially suppress the Kozloduy controversy. Both the NDSV government and the subsequent BSP-led government used it to counteract populist moves by the opposition or by other supporters of the NPP, which were admonished as attempts to 'ruin the national cause' – i.e. EU membership (e.g. see Pasi, quoted in *Sega* 8.6.2004; Ovcharov, interviews for BNR 2006c, for BTV 2006b, for BNT 2006a). Such discursive practices intensified prior to important events in Bulgaria's EU integration, when the opposition typically stepped up its adversarial

political activities (e.g. see *Sega* 26.11.2002, 25.4.2005). Anti-nuclear activists, too, employed an interest-focused Europeanization discourse to condemn the nuclear energy lobby for impeding Bulgaria's EU integration and for provoking anti-European sentiments in society (Ekoglasnost quoted in *Mediapool* 31.7.2006; No to the Belene NPP Campaign 2005). The pro-Europeanization camp called for recognizing Bulgaria's unequal position vis-à-vis the EU and advocated a pragmatic policy that would not provide the EU with a pretext to delay Bulgaria's accession (e.g. see Bozhkov 2002; *Sega* 20.6.2002, 26.9.2002, 19.11.2003, 23.4.2005). It stressed that Bulgaria had to act as a trustworthy member of the European community and keep its international obligations, reminded Bulgarians that no one had protested or petitioned against the reception of financial support for the upgrade of nuclear facilities, although it was conditional upon early closure of the Kozloduy units, and suggested that Bulgaria had to strive to accede to the EU rather than to sue it (Gjurkovski, interview for *Sega* 31.7.2002; Kaschiev, quoted in *Mediapool* 17.11.2002).

As the crisis was unfolding, however, even the interest-focused Europeanization approach was steadily losing ground to a policy discourse that focused on Bulgaria's national interest, too, but that did not define this interest as an interest in fast European integration.

The Discourse of Nuclear Nationalism

The perceived place of the Kozloduy predicament in the minds of most Bulgarians is aptly summarized by an ardent opponent of the units' closure: "Kozloduy' is not just a legal cause, it is the fate of Bulgaria" (Kornezov, quoted in *Lex News* 12.5.2005). Indeed, the broad powerful pro-Kozloduy coalition has managed to symbolically disconnect the Kozloduy NPP from the sphere of industry and to place it at the center of the big debate on Bulgaria's national interest. The interpretive framework it has deployed to this effect has been grounded in a particular form of economic nationalism that I would label 'nuclear nationalism'.

The pro-Kozloduy coalition has articulated the national interest on the basis of the presupposition that nuclear energy is indispensable for Bulgaria's economic development. Dissenting views have been discarded as 'speculations' (e.g. see Parvanov 2002b). The intimate connection between the particular interests of the nuclear energy industry and the self-appointed defenders of the public interest has been obscured. The pro-Kozloduy position has appropriated the symbolically powerful label 'national' and has presented itself as *the* 'national' position. President Parvanov apparently considered the Kozloduy units so vital for the 'national cause' that he even denied Bulgarian society a basic aspect of democracy – political debate. All political forces were called upon to end political disputes on the Kozloduy issue and rally around a united position, because heated internal discussion would “weaken the Bulgarian position” (quoted in *Trud* 28.1.2002, 5). For similar reasons, a referendum on the issue was deemed redundant:

It is clear whose obligation it is to hold the Bulgarian – the national – ground. A referendum... could lead to an acrimonious, needless debate in Bulgarian society on a subject on which there is obvious consensus. (Parvanov 2002b; see also Gerdjikov, quoted in *Mediapool* 11.2.2002, 11.4.2002)

Neither mainstream media, nor the political elite, nor the general public, appeared to be surprised or outraged by suggestions that democratic debate should be shut down in order to prevent shutting down four old nuclear units.

The Kozloduy NPP has not been perceived as merely an economic asset. It has been perceived as 'national' wealth. It has become the quintessential national cause. Consider, for example, the President's plan for saving units 1-2, which envisaged shutting down the units, investing Bulgaria's own financial resources into their upgrade, and persuading the EU that they could be put in operation again (Parvanov 2002b). The President did not bother to complement the proposal with cost/benefit calculations or any other economic argumentation. He simply believed that “the Bulgarian people, in its entirety, [was] ready to take this risk” (*Ibid.*). The media – otherwise oversensitive to any unjustifiable spending of the money of Bulgaria's impoverished taxpayers – did not question the appropriateness of investing scarce resources into units approaching the end of their design lifespan (e.g. see *Mediapool* 9.4.2002; *24 Chasa* 10.4.2002, 8). None of the stakeholders involved appeared to imagine that there could possibly be anything

wrong with defending the units by all means available. How did Bulgaria come to the point of equating an enterprise with the fate of the nation?

The Kozloduy problem started to be enframed in terms of the defense of the national interest already in the earliest phases of the Kozloduy controversy. The ODS government itself introduced this interpretive framework by representing the Kozloduy NPP as the “pride of Bulgaria” (Kostov, interview for *Spiegel* 1999). The unnerving negotiations with the EC prior to the Helsinki Summit provoked disillusionment and frustration. Both the elite and the public perceived the country as emerging from the economically enfeebling Kosovo crisis and, under the influence of the ODS government’s foreign policy doctrine, expected that Bulgaria’s Euro-Atlantic solidarity would be rewarded. Given these expectations, there was little understanding for the EU’s decision to condition Bulgaria’s hard-earned invitation for accession negotiations upon its consent to sacrifice one of its key economic assets. The legitimacy of the EC’s anti-Kozloduy stance was further undermined by perceptions that international assistance for post-conflict recovery of the Balkans was insufficient. The issue was a sensitive one also because the Kozloduy negotiations were perceived as a critical test for the country’s dignity as a future accession candidate (Kostov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 29.11.1999). The government’s acquiescence in much less acceptable closure conditions than the ones negotiated by Slovakia and Lithuania was especially frustrating and loudly criticized (BSP, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 8.11.1999; Ovcharov, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 3.11.1999). The structure of public and political attitudes that was formed in the early phases of the Kozloduy controversy was conducive to a particular interpretation of the Kozloduy dilemma centered on the national interest and on national dignity.

In the later stages of the Kozloduy crisis, the effects of this structure were reinforced by the consistent efforts of the political opposition to craft a ‘national’ image of the NPP. A coherent set of representations was deployed to this end. The BSP characterized the NDSV government’s Kozloduy policy as “a historical failure of Bulgarian foreign policy that brings to light the state’s inability to defend the national interests” (Ovcharov, quoted in *Mediapool* 23.11.2006; see also BSP, quoted in *Sega* 2.11.2002, 11.1.2003, 20.12.2003). BSP’s attempts to initiate a referendum on the future of the Kozloduy NPP,

as well as the no-confidence votes initiated by the BSP and the SDS, were justified by the need to force the government to defend “the position shared by an enormous part of the Bulgarian nation” (Ovcharov 2004; see also *Sega* 8.4.2002, 20.11.2002, 4.12.2002; *Mediapool* 3.12.2002, 18.11.2002). Although these initiatives failed, the accompanying debates attracted media attention, popularized the pro-Kozloduy interpretation of the problem, polarized and radicalized public opinion, and placed decision making regarding the Kozloduy NPP in an exceptionally partisan environment. BSP’s stance was especially harsh during the pre-election campaign, as the party was consciously trying to make political capital out of demonstrations of firmness in the face of threats to the national interest and out of opposition to a self-interested EU and a timid Bulgarian government. In the latest stage of the Kozloduy crisis, the new major opposition party – the GERB – followed in the BSP’s track. GERB’s popular leader Borisov, who quickly became one of the most vocal opponents of the units’ closure, branded the people who signed the agreement for early decommissioning as “criminals” (quoted in *Telegraf* 8.6.2006, 2). Whether the product of authentic engagement or of artificially sensationalized pre-election image building, the interpretive framework promoted by the mainstream opposition has shaped the way most Bulgarians have approached the Kozloduy problem.

The radical nationalist parties have reinforced the discourse of nuclear nationalism. The far-right party Ataka has denigrated everyone who has supported the units’ closure. It has branded local opponents of nuclear energy and the political leaders who carried out negotiations with the EU as traitors of the nation who have ‘sold their souls’ to foreign interests and have perpetrated a crime against their people (Siderov 2006, statement on the Bulgarian National Alliance (BNA) website; Karamfilov 2007). In a similar vein, the rightwing nationalist BDUR and VMRO have characterized the decision to close the Energy chapter of the accession negotiations as “treason” and “national betrayal” (quoted in *Sega* 25/26.9.2002; Karakachanov, interview for *Trud* 12.4.2002, 31).

The nuclear energy lobby has presented its campaign in defense of the Kozloduy NPP as a campaign in defense of the national and *public* interest. It has argued that the Kozloduy question has long stopped being technical, economic, or even political, and has become a question of national dignity (A. Semov, quoted in *Sega* 27.7.2002; BUNO,

quoted in *Sega* 28.9.2002). The lobby's mission has accordingly been presented in the lofty terms of "arousing national feelings about this national wealth - Kozloduy"⁸⁸ (A. Semov, quoted in *Sega* 27.7.2002).

The discourse of nuclear nationalism has also been taken up by journalists dissatisfied with Bulgarian politicians' tendency to "talk as if they were EC officials" (*Sega* 23.12.2003) or with the perceived servitude of local environmentalists towards Western conditionality (e.g. see Terziev 2008). Opinion columns in high-circulation newspapers have overflowed with outrage at the government's failure to perform its most basic duties - to safeguard the national economic interests, guarantee national security and ensure the welfare of the citizens (e.g. see *Trud* 19.11.2003, 1, 20.11.2003, 11; *24 Chasa* 11.4.2002, 10; Terziev 2008).

The supporters of the Belene NPP have smoothly adapted their campaign to the discourse of nuclear nationalism. Just like the Kozloduy debate, the Belene debate is structured around an interpretive framework that links nuclear energy to the national interest. The government itself has represented the construction of the new NPP as a demonstration of its determination to safeguard the national interest in the sphere of energy:

Bulgaria is and will be one of the main providers of energy in the Balkans. We will not betray the national interest... We will resume the construction of the Belene NPP. (Saxkoburggotski, quoted in *24 Chasa* 7.4.2002, 1)

The framing of the Belene and Kozloduy issues in terms of the 'national interest' has relied upon a relatively coherent set of effective media-friendly symbols, representations, and demonstrative action. These representational 'tools' have invested the mundane, profit-driven and, in fact, largely foreign-capital controlled energy industry with national significance and lofty symbolism. This effect was, for example, evident in the proposal to mark entry into the EU by a nation-wide New Year's Eve light show:

Satellite pictures would show us entering the EU with a newly found self-confidence that Bulgaria can illuminate the dark Balkans... even after units 3 and 4 at Kozloduy have been

⁸⁸ International lobby groups have backed their Bulgarian counterparts in presenting the Kozloduy NPP as a "real treasure, generating environmentally clean energy at competitive prices", whose loss would be a tragedy for Bulgaria (WNA, quoted in *Sega* 8.4.2004).

shut down... If we want to be the energy center of the Balkans, we have to light up for five minutes⁸⁹. (Prokopiev 2006)

Various symbolically charged media-friendly discursive tools have conveyed – and eventually instilled into public opinion – the idea that the troubles in the nuclear energy sector are a flagrant example of the statesmanship failures of the Bulgarian leadership. Public support for the nuclear energy industry has been garnered by making ‘Kozloduy’ the symbol of Bulgaria’s troubled transition. Representations of the elite’s Kozloduy policy have hovered around themes like “betrayal of the national interest”, “demonstrated inability to carry out serious accession negotiations”, “weakness, compensated by concessions in the energy sector”, “crude violation of the Constitution” (*Sega* 20.11.2002), passing of “a death penalty verdict” on Bulgaria’s nuclear energy (BSP, quoted in *Sega* 25.9.2002, 11.1.2003; in *24 Chasa* 29.3.2002, 4), etc. Representations in the nationalist media have been damning: “complete and unconditional surrender”, acceptance of “humiliating conditions without guarantees for future membership”, “servitude to the EU and NATO” (*Nova Zora* 2003). EU conditionality has been labeled as “racketeering” serving the economic interests of the European energy lobby (*Ibid.*). Even the President played up the greatness of the units’ loss by a symbolically charged move: in defiance of the ideological power of Bulgaria’s European aspirations, he chose to cool down Euro-enthusiasm during the parliamentary session celebrating Bulgaria’s accession to the EU:

I am going to say it again, despite the utter solemnity of the moment: the shutting down of the small units of the Kozloduy NPP has so far been the biggest compromise allowed by successive governments and negotiating teams. Making the process of our European integration contingent upon the future of part of our nuclear energy production, and the hasty closure of the ‘Energy’ chapter with resolutions detrimental to Bulgaria, have been tantamount to renegeing on our national interests. (Parvanov 2007b)

⁸⁹ Luckily (for global climate anyway) the authorities ultimately opted for a more modest light show.

Basic Tenets of Nuclear Nationalism

Sovereignty and National Security

The first tenet of the discourse of nuclear nationalism is the assumption that nuclear energy is a guarantee of energy independence, national sovereignty, and national security (e.g. see Bliznakov 2002; *Mediapool* 28.1.2002, 29.11.2002; *Sega* 21.6.2003). Political and media debates on the Kozloduy problem have wittingly or unwittingly exploited the anxiety of ordinary Bulgarians who have been shocked by the loss of sovereignty involved in the EU accession process. EU demands for early decommissioning of the Kozloduy units have been the most visible showcase of Bulgaria's loss of sovereignty. The Kozloduy predicament has typically been invoked as a blatant example of the government's inability to negotiate beneficial terms of EU accession, of the general lack of transparency in the conduct of accession negotiations, and of the tendency to rush through accession negotiation chapters at the cost of conceding to all conditions and renouncing Bulgaria's sovereign right to participate on an equal par in determining the terms of its accession⁹⁰.

Nuclear energy is touted for its ability to boost Bulgaria's long-term energy security and independence (e.g. see Harsev 2004). It is held capable of offsetting the negative impact of hypothetical fluctuations in the prices of imported primary energy – most notably of petrol and gas – by enabling large-scale electricity production at a stable predictable price. Nuclear capacities need fresh fuel refill only once a year and are therefore less vulnerable to interruptions of fuel supply⁹¹. This has been a crucial argument in favor of nuclear energy. The issue of decreasing energy dependency on Russia has ascended to the top of the policy agenda everywhere in Europe, intensifying efforts to diversify energy sources and prompting some European countries to reconsider the nuclear energy option. In Bulgaria, extreme dependency on Russian gas and the expected increase in gas consumption have made the problem especially sensitive. Bulgaria depends on

⁹⁰ For example, see Stanishev 2004; Ovcharov, 2004, quoted in *Sega* 25.9.2002; for criticism in the media see e.g. *Sega* 9.10.2002, 19.11.2003; *Mediapool* 20.11.2002, 9.12.2002; *24 Chasa* 20.11.2002, 11.

⁹¹ There have been ideas to further strengthen energy self-sufficiency by reviving local uranium production (Ovcharov, quoted in *Mediapool* 1.11.2006).

Russia for around 90% of its primary energy supplies, for 94% of its gas consumption and for 100% of its gas imports⁹².

The ‘security’ element of the nuclear nationalism discourse has also featured prominently in debates on the construction of the Belene NPP. The Belene NPP is presented as a vital replacement for the old Kozloduy units that would guarantee long-term energy independence, sovereignty, and security⁹³. The pro-nuclear coalition has been unperturbed over the fact that the nuclear energy sub-sector is itself dependent on Russia. It has argued that replacing the four Kozloduy units with two new ones would not increase this dependency (Dilov 2006; Ovcharov, interview for BNT 2006a).

Economic Importance of Nuclear Energy

The second tenet of the nuclear nationalist approach to the Kozloduy and Belene issues is the identification of nuclear energy as a key asset of the national economy. Together with thermal power using local lignite coal, nuclear power is conceived as the basis for the development of the energy sector. The Bulgarian leadership has never contemplated non-nuclear approaches to energy sector development. It has declared – with significant pride – that Bulgaria intends to make full use of the available nuclear energy infrastructure and specialized skilled workforce, as well as of the tradition of training and education of nuclear specialists (e.g. see Kovachev, quoted in *Mediapool* 11.4.2002). The Kozloduy crisis has dramatically increased the perceived importance of the nuclear energy sector and has further marginalized alternative policy options. At the same time, nuclear energy has been elevated from the domain of economic discourse, where for the most part it would have been subject to expert-dominated cost-and-benefit analysis, and has been placed at the center of the national interest debate, where it is largely exempt from economic calculations.

⁹² For comparison, only 25% of the gas consumed in the EU is imported from Russia.

⁹³ See Saxkoburggotski, quoted in *Mediapool* 6/8.4.2002, in *24 Chasa* 7.4.2002, 1; Kovachev, quoted in *Mediapool* 3.5.2004; business organization ‘Vazrajidane’, quoted in *Mediapool* 2.2.2002; Bliznakov, interview for *Mediapool* 8.4.2002; Ovcharov, quoted in *Mediapool* 1.11.2006; Tsigularov 2002c.

The nuclear energy sector has come to be regarded as the ‘powerful section’ of the national economy that is worth preserving at all costs (e.g. see Ovcharov, interview for *Standart* 2006). It is celebrated as a technologically sophisticated industry that makes Bulgaria a technologically developed country despite the generally grim economic situation, and that turns the available know-how and qualified workforce into major economic advantages (Kostadinov 2007; Dilov 2006; MEER 2004b, 31). The Kozloduy NPP has been represented as ‘absolutely safe’, ‘run by highly qualified professionals’, ‘the biggest producer of electricity’, ‘one of the biggest contributors to the Bulgarian GDP’, ‘a crucial factor for the country’s economic development and social prosperity’, ‘one of Bulgaria’s few competitive economic assets’, ‘the most profitable part of the energy industry’, etc⁹⁴. (e.g. see *Sega* 13.4.2002; Kostov, interviews for Reuters 1999, for *Spiegel* 1999; *Trud* 11.4.2002, 12; Borisov, quoted in *Mediapool* 3.12.2006; *Mediapool* 9.4.2006).

The economic importance of the Kozloduy units has been conveyed by accentuating the grave consequences of their premature closure. Closure is held to involve great economic losses⁹⁵. According to representatives of the nuclear energy lobby, given their safety characteristics units 1-2, in which USD 70 million were invested, could have been exploited until 2008 or longer (quoted in *Sega* 12.4.2002, 28.1.2002). The operating licenses of units 3-4 ran to 2011 and 2013 respectively. Due to the early closure, all potential revenues and all investment into upgrades were lost. The units no longer contribute to the decommissioning and radioactive waste management funds and as a result these funds would remain inadequate. Units 5-6 would bear the severe financial burden of repaying all remaining costs related to upgrades, nuclear waste disposal, spent fuel storage, and decommissioning. It is feared that these additional costs would undermine the competitiveness of the NPP and would ultimately cause its bankruptcy. Some supporters of the NPP have ominously argued that the end of units 1-4 means the end of Bulgaria’s nuclear energy and the financial collapse of most of the energy sector

⁹⁴ This representation has been accepted by the general public. Popular protests against the units’ closure have featured slogans such as “Poor – Poorer – Without a NPP – Without a state” and “With the NPP – energy center; Without the NPP – center of misery” (*Trud* 28.1.2002, 5; *24 Chasa* 29.1.2002, 3).

⁹⁵ Assessments of losses have differed widely. As a rule, Bulgarian forecasts have been much graver than independent evaluations (see for example Foratom 2007, 2; Kostadinov, quoted in *Sega* 3.6.2004; *Trud* 13.4.2002,16).

(quoted in *Sega* 12.4.2002, 21.6.2003, 29.3.2002, 16.10.2003, 19.6.2003; in *Trud* 13.4.2002, 16; Kutsarov 2002). The units' closure is expected to disrupt the country's trade balance due to lost revenues from electricity exports and to have grave social consequences, as jobs would be lost in a region with high unemployment. The replacement of closed emission-free nuclear capacities with thermal power generation is expected to increase greenhouse gas emissions and to make it more difficult for Bulgaria to comply with Kyoto requirements and with other international agreements (Foratom 2007, 3; Ivanov, interview for *Standart* 23.1.2006).

The Belene NPP, too, is held to be indispensable for Bulgaria's future economic development. It is expected to minimize the losses Bulgaria would incur as a result of its inability to export electricity after the closure of the Kozloduy units. Contrary to critics, who argue that it is too early to build another large nuclear capacity, the project's supporters argue that it is actually already too late to build the new NPP in time to prevent the loss of export capacity and potential revenues (e.g. see Dilov 2006; Genov, quoted in *Sega* 21.1.2008). The CCRCB has calculated that failure to launch the new NPP would translate into USD 2 billion in annual losses from unrealized electricity exports (quoted in *Sega* 13.4.2002). The method of calculation has not been publicized. The construction of the new NPP was also justified by the desire to prevent the dissipation of the resources already invested in the partially-built equipment conserved on the Belene site (*Ibid.*; Kovachev, quoted in *Mediapool* 7.4.2002; Ovcharov, interview for Nova TV 2006a). The possibility that the Belene project could end up throwing good money after bad money was apparently discarded without prior analysis of the extent to which the almost 15-year old equipment could be used and how much, if at all, it would lower construction costs. The conserved facilities were held to guarantee the price competitiveness of the new NPP until the bidders' offers made it clear that the assumption was unsubstantiated (MEER 2004b, 31).

The Belene NPP is held to be indispensable for the stability of energy supply. Without it, existing power generating capacities would allegedly be insufficient to meet Bulgaria's growing energy demand for any significant period of time. An analysis by the MEER (2004b), based on forecasts made by the NEK (2004), uses three scenarios about gross energy consumption in order to determine the need for new units. While in all three

scenarios the first new 1000-MW unit is necessary already in 2010, a second 1000-MW unit is necessary only in the medium and maximal scenarios. Only the maximal scenario justifies launching a second unit already in 2013 (MEER 2004b, 26). In the minimal scenario (which is also the scenario with minimal exports), a second unit is not necessary at least till the end of the studied period (i.e. 2020) (*Ibid.*, 26). Yet, the options of giving up or at least postponing the construction of a second unit were apparently discarded prior to any policy or public debates. Also rejected prior to debate was the possibility of opting out of electricity exports and choosing a less energy extensive developmental path.

Environmental arguments have been readily invoked in support of the Belene NPP. Under the Kyoto agreement, by 2008-2012 Bulgaria has to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 8% compared to the basis year (1988). Due to industrial restructuring in the early years of transition, by the mid 2000s Bulgaria's greenhouse gas emissions dropped to some 50 % of the basis year level (*Bulgaria Greenhouse Gas Inventory Report 2007*, 8). Although meeting international benchmarks on greenhouse gas emissions has not been an issue in Bulgaria, the government has maintained that from 2011 onwards this would be impossible without a new nuclear facility (MEER 2004a, 12; MEER 2004b, 25-8; Ovcharov and Kovachev, quoted in *Mediapool* 12.3.2007; Stanishev, quoted in *Mediapool* 25.5.2007). Such arguments have been strengthened by the EU's toughened policy on fighting climate change that led the EC to reduce Bulgaria's 2008-2012 emission quota.

Energy as a Key Export Sector

The Kozloduy and Belene debates have been locked into one particular interpretation of the relationship between energy production and economic development. Bulgaria's ability to export electricity has been represented as economic strength, while the expected loss of export potential in the post-Kozloduy period has been interpreted as an economic disaster (e.g. see Ovcharov, interview for *Standart* 2006). This interpretation

has been at the heart of the argument that the defense of the units is part and parcel of the defense of the national interest.

Despite the obvious irrelevance of the Belene project in the period immediately after the closure of the Kozloduy units, the need to prevent the loss of export capacity after the closure has been an important argument justifying the construction of the Belene NPP (Ovcharov, quoted in *Sega* 12.11.2005; Harsev 2008). The feasibility studies of the Belene NPP assert Bulgaria's potential as an exporter of electricity (MEER 2004a, 2005, 2004b). The optimistic forecasts are based on expectations of a major electricity deficit in the Balkans after 2010 and are believed to be additionally substantiated by Bulgaria's strategic geographic location between the centers of electricity consumption and the key energy supplies (MEER 2004b, 16-9).

The public has not been hard to sway. To the average Bulgarian, the energy sector is one of the few economic sectors capable of earning 'hard currency' through export. Electricity imports – an otherwise standard and not necessarily losing alternative for any open economy – have been intuitively rejected as a policy option. They have fallen victim to the romantic representation of the energy sector as a symbol of national sovereignty, self-esteem, and economic strength. Typically associated with higher prices and low living standards, electricity imports are regarded as a catastrophe of national proportions and perceived as a sign of economic impotence.

Foreign Economic Interests

The persuasive power of nuclear nationalism has been built up through a host of hostile representations of foreign economic and financial interests ruthlessly competing against the Bulgarian energy sector. The nuclear energy lobby, the nationalist political forces, and some popular newspapers have eagerly taken on the specter of unsympathetic foreign competition in the attempt to expose Bulgarian politicians' shameful timidity

and inability to defend the national economy against rival economic interests⁹⁶. The story of external pressure against the Bulgarian NPPs has been actively upheld by the ruling elite itself in attempts to retain or regain public trust by directing the rage of embittered citizens towards foreign wrongdoers (Rajchev 2002). It is intended, and in fact has largely managed, to discipline public attitudes, stifle internal dissent, and delegitimize dissenting views on the Kozloduy and Belene issues. It renounces such views as acts of national betrayal and virtually bans them from the policy debate on the grounds that they contravene the putative national interest.

The narrative is shallow but effective. Foreign producers of electricity trying to take up the Balkan energy market are depicted as ganging up against the rival nuclear energy sector in Bulgaria. Four broad groups of rival interests have been identified. One is the camp of competitors, namely European investors and the Canadian nuclear energy industry, which is involved in the construction of the Romanian Chernavoda NPP. This camp is allegedly interested in seeing its biggest competitor – the Bulgarian nuclear energy industry – leave the SEE market. The other perceived enemy are the environmental movements opposed to nuclear energy, whose anti-nuclear stance is said to be not just (and not even predominantly) a matter of principle but also of links to rival industries, such as the coal industry. A third group of rivals is allegedly formed by those who, in the scramble for new energy markets, lobby against Soviet technology (*Sega* 27.7.2002). A fourth camp of adversaries is said to bring together investors in non-nuclear power generating facilities in Bulgaria, for whom the prospective diminution of the nuclear energy sector would guarantee high return on investments (e.g. see Harsev 2004). Like most public scares, the narrative has an intuitively appealing logic that makes evidence irrelevant.

The narrative of a conspiracy against the Bulgarian nuclear energy has proved to be an efficient element of the representational toolkit employed by the pro-nuclear coalition. It draws mass appeal from the economic hardship and the decline of major economic sectors during transition and it benefits from, and in turn nurtures, the public's devotion

⁹⁶ See Karakachanov 2002, interview for *Trud* 12.4.2002, 31; Harsev 2004; *Sega* 27.7.2002, 22.2.2002; Kutsarov 2002; Siderov, statement on the BNA website; Karamfilov 2007; Nikolov, interview for *Telegraf* 18.1.2006, 13; *24 Chasa* 11.4.2002, 10, 9.4.2002, 9, 20.11.2002, 11; *Trud* 11.4.2002, 12.

to nuclear energy and determination to resist foreign encroachment upon the nation's economic power. It has been deployed to counter challenges to the nuclear energy industry and to the nuclear nationalist discourse: the downsides of nuclear energy are blended with the sore problem of foreign pressure against Bulgaria's industrial power, until it becomes illegitimate to criticize the 'national' nuclear energy sector. This strategy helped to avoid public outcry after an incident at Kozloduy unit 5 in 2006⁹⁷ and during a corruption scandal in 2008⁹⁸. This strategy worked well as a public relations campaign in the initial phases of the Belene project, too. The supporters of the new NPP advertised it as a barrier against attempts to impose foreign-made plans upon the national energy sector and readily called the specter of the embattled Kozloduy NPP to their defense (e.g. see Saxkoburgotski, quoted in *Mediapool* 6/8.4.2002, in *24 Chasa* 7.4.2002, 1; Tsigularov 2002c).

Leadership Position on the Balkan Energy Market

Leadership position on the Balkan energy market is regarded to be a central element of Bulgaria's national interest and nuclear energy is regarded to be the condition of possibility for Bulgaria's ability to preserve this position. The national energy policy is predicated upon the assumption that Bulgaria is and should remain the energy center of the Balkans. This role is perceived as a reason for national pride, as proof of economic power and good statesmanship, and as a praiseworthy contribution to the stability of the

⁹⁷ The authorities first kept the incident under wraps and then downplayed its significance. In turn, they were accused by outraged critics and environmentalists of withholding information from the citizens and from the IAEA for the sake of preserving the Kozloduy NPP's image of a 'safe' NPP (Kaschiev 2006a; 'No to the Belene NPP' campaign website). The pro-nuclear coalition, however, successfully avoided a public outcry. It branded critics' arguments as attempts to demonize Bulgaria's nuclear energy and represented the Kozloduy NPP as a victim of Western obsessions with the dangers of nuclear energy. They interpreted the commotion around the incident as an attempt by ('certain' unspecified) economic and financial circles to hold back the 'nuclear Renaissance', to tarnish the image of Bulgaria's nuclear energy and to obstruct the construction of a new competitive nuclear capacity in Bulgaria. They renounced local opponents of the NPP as servile cheerleaders of the Westerners (Dilov, quoted in *Mediapool* 26.4.2006; Ovcharov, interviews for BTV 2006a, for Nova TV 2006b, for BNR 2006c, for *Duma* 2006).

⁹⁸ A former Kozloduy NPP employee argued that as a result of an illicit deal the NPP has been burning recycled nuclear fuel instead of fresh one and has thus compromised nuclear safety. During the controversy the government counter-argued that these statements were part of a purposeful campaign directed against the development of nuclear energy in Bulgaria (see *Mediapool* 17.7.2008).

region⁹⁹ (e.g. see Parvanov 2002a, 2008b, 2006a; MEER 2002, 30). By demonstrating resolve to maintain Bulgaria's status of a Balkan energy leader, the ruling elite has intended to tickle Bulgarians' national pride and to stabilize its wobbly position in domestic politics.

Given that Bulgaria does not possess primary energy resources, the national strategy for the development of the energy sector has two major tenets. Firstly, the country's advantages are assumed to lie in its strategic geographic location in the center of the energy transmission routes crossing the Balkans. The strategic position is believed to increase the competitiveness of the energy industry and to provide opportunities for the diversification of energy resources (MEER 2002, 4; Government 2004, 1-2; Ovcharov, interviews for Darik Radio 2006, for *Dnevnik* 2006, for Nova TV 2006b; for BNT 2006b, for BNR 2006d; Parvanov 2008b; Stanishev, quoted in *Mediapool* 21.1.2008). Secondly, Bulgaria's leadership position on the regional market is held to depend on its ability to export electricity, which in turn is held to necessitate the development of nuclear energy. The purported causal relationship has been a major element of the interpretive framework that has equated the Kozloduy and the Belene NPPs with the national interest. It is especially crucial in the presentation of the Belene NPP, which is expected to compensate for the closure of the Kozloduy units, preserve the sector's competitiveness, and enable Bulgaria to remain a leading exporter of electricity for another 25 years (Saxkoburggotski, quoted in *Sega* 21.9.2004, 4.5.2004; in *Mediapool* 6/7.4.2002, 29.11.2002, in *Government News* 4.9.2006; Kovachev, quoted in *Mediapool* 3.5.2004; Bliznakov, quoted in *Mediapool* 7.4.2002, 13.11.2003). Since 2003, the construction of new nuclear capacities has been officially included in the list of Bulgaria's developmental priorities (Saxkoburggotski, quoted in *Mediapool* 15.1.2003; *Pact on Bulgaria's Economic and Social Development* 2006, 9).

For international consumption, Bulgarian nuclear energy has been represented as a key prerequisite for Balkan stability. This representation employs images of potential

⁹⁹ For example, Bulgaria's application for hosting a SEE energy center envisaged by a project in the framework of the SP was supported with reference to the country's strategic geographic position, well-developed energy infrastructure, well performing energy sector, highly qualified labor and ability to cover substantial parts of the electricity deficit in SEE (Kasidova, quoted in *Mediapool* 21.6.2002; Filipov, quoted in *Mediapool* 9.9.2002).

regional tensions and instability associated with the closure of units 3-4, and contrasts these images with the potentially stabilizing role of a strong Bulgarian energy industry (Ovcharov, quoted in *Government News* 1.11.2006; Ivanov 2005, interview for *Standart* 23.1.2006; Foratom 2007, 2-3). The evocation of Bulgaria's stabilizing mission in the region is intended to boost the country's international reputation of "a reliable partner, an important transit country, and a leading regional supplier of electric power" (Parvanov 2007c). It is expected to improve international attitudes towards the Kozloduy and Belene NPPs and to affirm Bulgaria's image of a EU member-state playing a constructive role in the development of the common energy policy of the EU (Stanishev, quoted in *Government News* 25.5.2007). In line with this representation, Bulgaria's energy policy has been articulated less as a policy and more as a mission to prevent future energy crises in the Balkans. The leadership has declared that Bulgaria is determined to build all the facilities it takes to guarantee the security of energy supply in the entire SEE region, irrespective of the fate of the Kozloduy units (Marin 2007). Due to its strategic geopolitical location, Bulgaria is held to be particularly capable of playing the missionary role (e.g. see Stanishev, quoted in *Government News* 25.5.2007). The economic feasibility of such a policy and its economic and environmental consequences are apparently considered irrelevant.

The specter of Balkan instability and the theme of 'stabilizing the Balkans' have figured prominently in the defense of units 3-4 at international forums, where they have apparently been expected to change the minds of EU officials and to secure the support of Balkan leaders:

[The units'] closure has already negatively affected the security of energy supplies in the whole of SEE, and especially in the Western Balkans... [It has created a] problem that goes beyond Bulgaria's narrow national interests. (Marin 2007)

Europe has been accused of maintaining double standards: throughout the period of regional instability it appreciated Bulgaria's role of a 'factor of stability' in the Balkans but now, as ethnic conflicts have subsided, it fails to admit that Bulgaria still contributes to political and economic stability in the Balkans by covering the electricity deficit in the region (*Ibid.*). This representational tactic has aimed at delegitimizing the EU's unyielding stance against units 3-4.

The Belene project, too, has been represented as a potential guarantee for the security of energy supply in the Balkans and as crucial for regional stability and development¹⁰⁰. This representational strategy relies upon a combination of advertisement and moral pressure intended to stir any guilty conscience the EU might have over the closure of nuclear units that were both safe and vital for Balkan economic stability. Its aim has been to secure the EU's blessing and financial support for the new NPP and, at the same time, to strengthen the domestic campaign in its favor.

The portrayal of Bulgaria as an energy leader altruistically struggling to save the Balkans from looming energy troubles has been a poorly concealed attempt to reenact the same representational strategy that the ODS employed successfully during by the Kosovo crisis. Like the ostensibly morality-driven Kosovo policy, the current missionary energy policy is intended to distinguish Bulgaria as a guarantor of Balkan security and stability. This time round, the ultimate goal of the strategy relates much more explicitly to economic benefits and much less to the country's international image. This goal has been threefold – to press the EU into accepting Kozloduy's units 3-4, to preempt and prevent potential EU opposition to the Belene project, and to secure European financing for the Belene NPP.

Nuclear Energy and Social Welfare

At the core of the discursive framework deployed by the pro-Kozloduy forces has been the representation of the units' closure as a danger to citizens' welfare: a danger of electricity shortages and a danger of a rapid increase of the price of electric power.

The pro-Kozloduy coalition has systematically nurtured the 'welfare' elements of the campaign in defense of the Kozloduy NPP. The 'rising prices' scare characteristic of the peak periods of the Kozloduy crisis was based on the assumption that the cost price of electricity produced by the small Kozloduy units was exceptionally low because the initial capital investments had largely been paid off. A sharp price increase was said to

¹⁰⁰ See Ovcharov's official letter to the EC, quoted in *Government News* 1.11.2006; Kovachev 2005; Bliznakov, interview for *Mediapool* 8.4.2002; Ovcharov, interview for Nova TV 2006a; Stanishev, quoted in *Government News* 25.5.2007; Parvanov 2008a; Hinkovski, quoted in *Mediapool* 24.4.2003.

be unavoidable if the units were to be replaced by alternative capacities producing at a higher cost. Both the NEK and the State Energy and Water Regulatory Commission (SEWRC) suggested upward price adjustment of 20% to 30%; none of them presented calculations to substantiate the demands (Kaschiev 2006b). Forecasts by the nuclear energy lobby were close to apocalyptic¹⁰¹. The management of the Kozloduy NPP suggested that the price of electricity would double after the closure of units 3-4 and warned of electricity shortages in case of technical problems in the remaining two units at Kozloduy¹⁰² (Ivanov, interview for *Standart* 23.1.2006; Genov, quoted in BIRN 2006). The blackouts panic was encouraged by foreign ‘experts’ (e.g. the president of the WCNW, see *Mediapool* 2.5.2004), who could only with great difficulty hide their relationship to the Bulgarian nuclear energy lobby.

Nationalist political forces used a simple black-and-white framework of representations closely related to the campaign of the nuclear energy lobby. Its basic tenets were warnings about rising poverty, imminent bankruptcy of the Kozloduy NPP and massive financial losses that could not be compensated by EU funds. The relatively moderate VMRO presented the closure as a heavy blow to the economy, a trigger for a sharp increase of the price of electricity and for across-the-board rise in consumer prices, an impediment to economic development and export growth, a forfeit of potential export profits, etc. At a mass rally in support of the NPP, the VMRO characteristically presented the choice for or against preserving the units as a choice between economic development and expensive imported electricity (quoted in *Mediapool* 11.4.2002; see also Karakachanov, interview for *Trud* 12.4.2002, 31). Western pressure to close the four perfectly safe units was interpreted as a flagrant assault on the wellbeing of the nation (Kutsarov 2002).

¹⁰¹ Bulatom members argued that the cost of electricity produced by units 1-2 was three to four times lower than that of the power produced in thermal power plants. Characteristically, they failed to specify the price components included in the calculation (quoted in *Mediapool* 2.12.2002). The BNS warned that the price of electricity would rise by 200% if Bulgaria closed the units prematurely (quoted in *Sega* 28.1.2002). The lobby’s civic outgrowth – the CCDK – concluded that the 100% increase in the price of electricity during the 2001-2006 period was the result of the closure of units 1-2, predicted an additional 100% increase, and warned of potential blackouts (quoted in *Sega* 25.4.2005, 15.4.2005; Semov 2006).

¹⁰² Later on, the NPP management came up with a more moderate calculation, namely a 40% increase of production costs following the closure of units 3-4 (Nikolov, quoted in *Expert.bg* 2.2.2007).

Routine political competition and mainstream media coverage accentuated the ‘welfare’ elements of the discourse of nuclear nationalism. The opposition parties found the Kozloduy narrative of impending economic collapse and declining living standards instrumental in securing a larger share of the vote. The rightwing opposition suggested that early closure of the units would make electricity prices “unaffordable” (SDS, quoted in *Sega* 30.1.2002). The BSP and the President predicted considerable upward adjustment of the price of electricity, too¹⁰³ (e.g. see Ovcharov 2004, interview for BTV 2005; Parvanov, quoted in *Mediapool* 20.11.2002). The specter of blackout schedules occasionally appeared in mainstream political debates, though warnings were typically unsupported by data¹⁰⁴ (e.g. see KNSB, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 4.11.1999; Labor Confederation ‘Podkrepa’, quoted in *Sega* 3.10.2002; Borisov, quoted in *Mediapool* 3.11.2006). Important political figures warned that the shortage of power generating capacities would lead to an energy crisis and were outraged by the prospect of Bulgaria’s transformation from a regional energy center into an importer of electricity¹⁰⁵. High-circulation media took up the story of impending welfare disaster and, on occasion, prophesized a complete collapse of the power supply system and a bleak future with expensive imported electricity (e.g. see *24 Chasa* 11.4.2002, 10).

The impact of the pro-Kozloduy campaign appears to have been augmented, rather than damaged, by the (probably unintended) contradictions in the forecasts and argumentation on which it has relied. Forecasts regarding prices and alleged capacity shortages varied widely across sources, even within the pro-Kozloduy circles themselves. Forecasts by the same source often varied in time as a result of staff changes within institutions or changes in the institutional positions held by key political figures. Dramatic predictions were typically publicized vaguely and sensationally. Oftentimes, it was not even clear which price, price element, or period of time the forecasts referred to. To make matters worse, lack of clarity on key issues made the Kozloduy case a prime target for sensational media coverage. As a result, ordinary Bulgarians dependent on

¹⁰³ Once in government, the BSP called off the shocking estimates (Ovcharov, interview for BNR 2006c).

¹⁰⁴ Workers’ unions argued incredibly that even if only one of the units were shut down, Bulgaria’s power generating capacities would be insufficient even for the summer period (‘Podkrepa’, quoted in *Sega* 3.10.2002).

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, Nikolov, quoted in *Mediapool* 26.4.2004; Kornezov, quoted in *Mediapool* 1.12.2006; Borisov, quoted in *Mediapool* 3.12.2006; an MP, quoted in *Sega* 15.6.2004.

information from the mainstream media could hardly get a clear, let alone a truthful, picture of the probable impact of the units' closure on the economy or on their own lives. The effects on public opinion were dramatic, as it was difficult to find convincing arguments against exaggerated pessimistic scenarios and next to impossible to successfully propagate a more realistic outlook.

The campaign in support of the Belene project, too, has relied heavily on the distressing narrative that welfare disaster is imminent unless Bulgaria continues to develop its nuclear energy. The Belene NPP is represented as an indispensable investment into Bulgaria's future that would provide abundant and affordable energy at a significantly lower price than any other energy source in the Balkans and that would help avoid power shortages and expensive power imports following the loss of units 3-4 (*Government News* 29.11.2006; officials, quoted in *Mediapool* 30.9.2003). It is expected to boost general economic development¹⁰⁶ and has been advertised as especially beneficial for the economic development of Bulgaria's northwestern region which is relatively poor and has a high unemployment rate¹⁰⁷ (e.g. see *Government News* 29.11.2006; Sevlievski 2005; Kovachev, quoted in *Mediapool* 7.4.2002).

The 'welfare' elements of the nuclear nationalist interpretive framework have fitted well the pre-existing structure of attitudes and beliefs in Bulgarian society. In turn, they have been remarkably successful in shaping this underlying structure in accordance with the nuclear nationalism discourse. In a period of low living standards and increasing poverty, the public has been easily persuaded by threats of rising prices and promises of affordable prices. The price of electricity has been an overly sensitive issue for ordinary Bulgarians. During most of the transition period, wages in Bulgaria were much lower than in the EU, while the price of electricity was only around half the EU average and has tended to steadily go up. With gasification virtually nonexistent, Bulgarian households have been dependent on electricity for heating. During winter months, electricity bills have often exceeded monthly incomes. In addition, the Kozloduy NPP has traditionally been regarded as a national economic asset that contributes to citizens'

¹⁰⁶ The main supplier is obliged to allocate to local subcontractors 30% of the project-related activities and this share should represent at least 20% of the project costs.

¹⁰⁷ The new NPP is expected to lead to a 50% drop in regional unemployment and to increase wage levels.

welfare by providing cheap electricity (Nikolov, interview for *Telegraf* 18.1.2006, 13). Since ordinary Bulgarians perceive the Belene NPP as a substitute for the allegedly cheapest source of Bulgarian electricity – the Kozloduy NPP – it, too, is expected to guarantee a low consumer price of electricity.

Warnings about imminent electricity shortages following the closure of units 1-4 were also effective in winning over Bulgarians, especially those who remembered the distressing blackout schedules of 1991. Back in 1991, Bulgaria had surplus generation capacity and could in theory produce roughly as much electricity as in the 2000s (OSF Project Team 2004). At the time, the problems with electricity supply were inefficient operation, repeated technical failures at the Kozloduy NPP¹⁰⁸ and the general ineffectiveness of the megalomaniac Soviet-design system (*Ibid.*). Yet, very few of the people bombarded by warnings of looming electricity supply cutoffs knew the reasons for the 1991 energy crisis. Most were easily persuaded that the loss of capacity at the NPP would cause the system to collapse again.

The impact of the ‘welfare’ elements of the pro-Kozloduy campaign has been boosted by discursive tactics designed to relate the dangers posed by the loss of the units directly to the prosperity of each individual. The pro-Kozloduy forces have shocked and scared Bulgarians into getting more actively involved in defending the country’s nuclear energy sector by relating “the closure of the units to their families, to the fact that they would have to pay more for electricity, that their living standards would deteriorate and their business would be damaged” (Ivanov, interview for *Standart* 23.1.2006; see also VMRO, quoted in *Sega* 5.4.2002; Karakachanov 2002).

Summary

The discourse of nuclear nationalism has provided the dominant interpretive framework through which policymakers have approached the Kozloduy and Belene issues. Nuclear energy has been widely regarded as the only sector of the economy that is competitive enough to improve the country’s political and economic standing. Its development has

¹⁰⁸ The 1991 crisis followed after extensive turbine damage caused unit 5 to be shut down for several months.

been identified as a vital national interest. The nuclear energy question has been framed as one directly related to citizens' welfare, which has led to the emergence of markedly pro-nuclear public attitudes. In contrast, the previously dominant Europeanization paradigm has failed to provide an influential interpretive framework for policymaking in this sphere.

Chapter 5

Understanding the Decline of the Europeanization Paradigm during the Kozloduy Crisis

This chapter identifies and analyzes the factors that account for the power of the nuclear nationalist discourse and for the concomitant failure of the Europeanization approach to influence policymaking on the Kozloduy and Belene issues.

Is Nuclear Energy a Vital National Interest?

One possible explanation of why nuclear nationalism won the Kozloduy debate would be that its claims about the ‘national’ significance of nuclear energy are substantiated and that nuclear energy is indeed a vital national interest. Below, I evaluate this proposition.

Nuclear Energy and National Security

The discourse of nuclear nationalism makes a great deal of the alleged ability of nuclear energy to reduce energy dependency and boost national security. However, during the 2000s, the governments involved in the Kozloduy crisis and in the resurrection of the Belene NPP – especially the BSP-led government – have demonstrated a rather relaxed attitude towards the problem of Bulgaria’s extreme dependency on Russian primary energy imports. According to the BSP, Bulgaria simply *is* dependent on Russian energy and should therefore secure a harmonious relationship with Russia before it starts searching for ways to diversify energy sources. The obvious pitfalls of such a strategy have been toned down by the argument that Bulgaria need not worry much about energy dependency because its energy independence is naturally boosted by the country’s strategic location at the crossing point of various energy flows between Europe and Asia (Ovcharov, interviews for Darik Radio 2006, for *Dnevnik* 2006, for Nova TV 2006b, for

BNT 2006b, for BNR 2006d). Two peculiarities of Bulgarian politics account for the tacit acceptance of Russian dominance over the energy sector. One is the traditionally pro-Russian stance of the BSP that has in recent years mostly focused on ideologically neutral economic cooperation between the two countries. The other is the political influence of the Bulgarian energy industry which is tightly connected to its Russian counterpart. These two peculiarities combine to make the Bulgarian energy sector a decidedly Russia-friendly environment.

The Belene project has been a prime target for critics of the ‘security’ element of nuclear nationalism. The controversy has been heightened by the political nature of the choice of Russian nuclear technology and of a Russian main supplier for the new NPP. Critics have claimed that the Belene project poses a threat to national security by reinforcing Bulgaria’s energy dependency on Russia and by facilitating continuing Russian interference in the national energy sector. In their view, the government’s energy policy undermines national sovereignty by serving the economic interests of the Russian energy business, its local counterpart, and the beneficiaries of ‘energy money’ among the political elite¹⁰⁹ (e.g. see Dimov 2007). The Belene NPP is held to be both a product and a tool of Russian dominance in the Bulgarian energy sector that would further boost Russia’s ‘energy’ power by allowing Russian firms entry into the nuclear energy market of the EU. Critics fear that the massive financial resources concentrated in the project could be used to influence and manipulate political circles in Bulgaria, much like gas supplies were used by Gazprom in its attempts to interfere in Bulgarian politics back in 1995¹¹⁰. Such fears have been accentuated by Russia’s demonstrated willingness to use its leverage in the sphere of energy to achieve its political goals. In addition, environmental organizations have argued that the government’s exclusive preference for

¹⁰⁹ Critics renounce the tender procedure for the NPP’s main supplier as manipulative (discussion B; Kaschiev 2006d, 2006c). In addition, Russia’s offer to fully finance the project has prompted fears that Bulgaria would be forced to build the NPP in any event and that the project might be transformed from a market venture into an interstate contract.

¹¹⁰ In 1994, the company Topenergy was established to mediate Russian gas supplies to the Bulgarian market. Russian ownership was only 50% but through the Bulgarian co-owner – Multigroup – Gazprom managed to control Topenergy, use it as a tool to promote its interests in the Balkan energy markets, and influence the Bulgarian political sphere. Topenergy became the bone of contention between Prime Minister Videnov of the BSP government and BSP member, former Prime Minister, and member of Topenergy’s executive board Lukanov. It is associated with Lukanov’s mysterious murder in 1996 and with the murder of Multigroup’s chief in 2003. Topenergy’s influence was put in check by the ODS government after 1997.

nuclear energy sidelines those policy options that guarantee complete, rather than partial, energy independence, namely hydro energy and other renewables¹¹¹.

Economic Significance of the Nuclear Energy Sector

Claims about the great significance of the nuclear energy sector for the national economy have sparked another debate. According to critics, such claims are not supported by actual data (Stanchev and Bogdanov 2002). The NEK's profit has largely resulted from the extraction of a monopoly rent by way of preventing competition-driven price adjustments and maintaining high prices for big industrial consumers. Profit in the energy industry has thus been achieved at the price of burdening other industries with high costs of energy. In addition, the sector has swallowed taxpayers' money for the upgrade and construction of power generating capacities (*Ibid.*).

The representation of the Kozloduy NPP as a vital economic asset whose partial closure would have disastrous economic consequences is disputable. Before its small units were shut down, the Kozloduy NPP was typically operated at less than 60% of its capacity, compared to a global average rate of capacity use as high as 84% (Kaschiev, quoted in *Mediapool* 17.11.2002). Due to the excess of power generating capacities in Bulgaria, most of the non-nuclear facilities, including major thermal power plants (TPPs), had to be operated at very low capacity in order to guarantee a decent production share for the NPP. Some of the TPPs were virtually unused. According to critics, the deliberate underutilization of non-nuclear capacities was a major lobbying tactics that made the closure of the old units at Kozloduy look like an economic disaster and dramatized the need for substituting nuclear units. In reality, overcapacity and its underutilization, coupled with slow market liberalization, have made electricity production cost-ineffective (*Ibid.*; Ganev, quoted in OSF Project Team 2004, in *TOL* 18.4.2007; Chorbadjijski 2007; BIRN 2006). As for the decommissioning and nuclear waste management funds, the root of the problem is not the loss of the old units' contributions

¹¹¹ On the 'security' debate, see DSB 2006a; IME 2002, 5; Stanchev and Dimitrov 2002, 6; Stanchev and Bogdanov 2002; Kaschiev 2004, 2006d; K. Dimitrov, interviews for BTV 2007, for Radio Fokus 2007; Kostov, interview for *24 Chasa* 2007; M. Dimitrov 2007a; Panajotova 2007; Toshev 2007; Minchev 2006; Grigorov 2006a; Stanchev 2006a; *Protest Declaration* 2005; CCEEPSR 2005; Varbanov 2004.

but the authorities' irresponsible policy towards these funds. Although the NPP has been operational since the 1970s, the funds were launched only in 2000¹¹².

The economic feasibility of the Belene NPP has been subject to bitter debates. The construction of a new NPP, as one journalist has aptly put it, is by itself neither good news nor bad news, unless one is related to the nuclear energy industry or is a hard-line environmentalist (*Mediapool* 8.4.2002). The rest of the society has the right to be adequately informed and to partake in debates on the economic feasibility of an investment of such magnitude, as well as on possible alternatives to it. In this respect, however, the government's handling of the Belene project has not been even remotely satisfactory.

In the early stages of the Belene project there was no public debate on the new NPP worthy of the name. Critics were not provided with official channels to voice their concerns¹¹³. The decision about resuming construction was taken by a single company – the NEK – without approval from Parliament or prior discussions in the Consultative Council on National Security. The NDSV government justified the lack of public debate prior to the decision by arguing that the debate had started ten years ago and there was practically nothing to add to it (Vasilev, quoted in Dimitrov and Bogdanov 2002, 2). This was a bizarre position given that the project had been abandoned amidst protests and doubts about its economic feasibility and had subsequently ceased to be a topic of public discussion. Feasibility studies conducted by Bulgarian experts in the early 1990s and later in 1997 (quoted in *For the Earth* 2004; Stanchev 2004a) suggested that the Belene project compromised nuclear safety¹¹⁴ and was economically unfeasible because of the high initial capital investments with a lengthy payback period and the high cost price of production. They disputed the argument that new capacities were necessary at all. The history of discouraging feasibility studies apparently necessitated that plans to resurrect the project be preceded by a vigorous economic justification and a vigorous public debate.

¹¹² Although the funds are still nearly empty, the Kozloduy NPP's contribution was reduced by a half as of 2007 (Kaschiev 2006b).

¹¹³ The first public discussion of the project's environmental impact, for example, was held in 2005. Until that date substantial resources had already been invested into procuring an EIA and selecting an architect engineer.

¹¹⁴ Among other problems, regional seismic conditions were found to endanger the NPP's safe operation.

Yet, economic calculations have not taken center stage in the process of making decisions regarding the Belene NPP. The project was resumed before any attempt had been made to prove its economic feasibility. The public presentation of the new venture featured statements such as: “We shall build the Belene NPP, because it is important and is a priority” (N. Vasilev, quoted in Stanchev 2006a); “It is proven that the most appropriate location for a new NPP is at Belene” (Saxkoburgotski, quoted in *Sega* 6.5.2004). It was not specified who, how, and when had proven such claims and set the presumably incontestable priorities. The non-transparent decision to resurrect the project was legitimized by invoking the 2002 *Energy Strategy of Bulgaria*, which was issued a few weeks prior to this decision and later approved by Parliament, and which did indeed bless the construction of new power generating capacities in case NEK forecasts proved the need for such capacities (MEER 2002, 32). On the whole, however, this document promotes an altogether different approach to energy policy and it is far from clear if it lends legitimacy to the government’s Belene policy. It focuses on Bulgaria’s worrying dependency on primary energy imports and stresses countermeasures such as reduction of energy intensity, development of renewable energy sources, market liberalization, public-private partnerships, and discontinuation of long-term agreements for the purchase of electric power. It makes no reference to a new nuclear facility. In fact, it states that

due to the dynamically changing electricity market and the unreliability of long-term projections of demand, the government shall strive to defer large-scale projects, and at the same time preserve Bulgaria’s key role in the region through a policy that does not require big investments (*Ibid.*, 32)

It is difficult to imagine how the mammoth Belene project (which would even require a long-term agreement for the purchase of electric power) could square with these priorities.

Critics have harshly criticized the government for its failure to prove that a new NPP is necessary at all and to present a reliable analysis of the project’s economic feasibility and basic parameters, such as the ultimate cost of construction, the financing scheme, the form of state participation, and the scale of state guarantees¹¹⁵. These basic

¹¹⁵ See IME 2004, 1-2, 2002; Stanchev and Dimitrov 2002; Dimitrov and Angelov 2005, 11; M. Dimitrov 2007a, 2005b, 11; Panajotova 2007; Bozhkov 2007; *Protest Declaration* 2005; *Sega* 6.5.2004, 1.3.2004;

parameters remain unclear. According to critics, official information tends to underestimate the costs involved. The actual price of the NPP is likely to exceed the officially announced contract price as it would include additional costs such as those pertaining to financing, construction of adjacent infrastructure and linkages to the electricity grid, future decommissioning, environmental protection, nuclear waste and spent fuel storage, consultant services, etc. Critics' predictions of the final price range between EUR 5 billion and EUR 9 billion. The additional costs would also raise the cost price of electricity generated at the new NPP¹¹⁶ (Kaschiev 2007, 3-4; Ganev 2008; CEE Bankwatch Network 2007, 7; M. Dimitrov 2007a, 2005b, 12; Mihajlova 2007; Ekoglasnost, quoted in *news.bg* 20.6.2007; V. Dimitrov 2007, 2; Vasilkov 2007).

The lack of accountability and of a thorough analysis of the NPP's economic viability are doubly problematic in light of the enormous scale and cost of the project relative to the size of the national economy¹¹⁷ and the lengthy payback period of the initial investments. The NPP would increase foreign debt and put a huge strain on Bulgaria's feeble economy¹¹⁸. At the same time, liberal economists argue that it would distort the energy market and fail to improve Bulgaria's economic competitiveness¹¹⁹ (Stanchev and Dimitrov 2002, 6).

The new feasibility studies of the Belene NPP appeared two years after the project had been re-launched. Even as a post-factum justification, they fail to persuade. Instead of analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of different energy options, these studies presume that nuclear energy is the only option that serves Bulgaria's national interests. Potential alternatives – such as flexible and easier to optimize mixes of new renewable-energy facilities, other small new capacities, measures for improving energy efficiency

Brunwasser 2004; Stanchev 2006b, 2; Minchev 2006; CCEPSR 2005, 2; I. Vasilev and Kashamov, quoted in *Mediapool* 7.11.2006; Maneva, quoted in *news.bg* 7.1.2005; Grigorov 2006b.

¹¹⁶ According to local critics, as well as IMF and WB estimates, the realistic cost price of Belene-produced electricity is between 5.3 and 6 eurocents per KWh (Kaschiev 2007, 4).

¹¹⁷ In 2004 the EUR 4-billion project equaled 20% of GDP and 31% of gross foreign debt. In 2006, the ratios were 16% and 20% respectively (my calculation, based on statistics by the Bulgarian National Bank).

¹¹⁸ See Angelov 2006, 2005, 2; Dimitrov and Angelov 2005, 12-3; Kaschiev 2004; V. Dimitrov 2007, 2; I. Vasilev, quoted in *Mediapool* 7.11.2006; Stanchev 2002; 'No to the Belene NPP' campaign website.

¹¹⁹ According to liberal economists, the low price of electricity would primarily serve to subsidize the least competitive industries, not to prop up the competitiveness of Bulgarian business (IME 2002, 5-6). In addition, a long-term contract for the purchase of the electricity produced by the Belene NPP at fixed prices would damage free competition (Dimitrov and Angelov 2005, 13; Angelov 2005, 2).

and rehabilitation of existing capacities – are not considered¹²⁰. The feasibility studies do not compare the NPP option to the option of certain amount of electricity imports either, which reflects the altogether misplaced understanding that export is necessarily profitable whereas import is necessarily disadvantageous (Stanchev 2004a; Dimitrov and Angelov 2005, 11; M. Dimitrov 2005a, 2005b, 11-2). This approach to alternative energy options is indicative of the overall approach to the Belene project – one dismissive of economic calculations, largely uninterested in the actual priorities in the sphere of energy, and driven by a bigger-is-better logic.

The feasibility studies of the Belene project fail to prove that additional nuclear capacities are needed at all. Critics argue that NEK's forecasts of a rapidly increasing domestic demand for electricity do not adequately account for several trends that slow down demand growth, such as increasing energy efficiency of the economy, increasing investment into energy saving measures by big consumers of electricity, declining share of energy intensive sectors (e.g. heavy industry) in GDP in favor of less energy intensive ones (e.g. services, tourism, agriculture), decreasing consumption due to liberalization of the energy market and related price adjustments, reduction of Bulgaria's electric power reserve following inclusion into the European energy system, efforts by the new private owners of the transmission network to limit energy loss during transmission, and steady population decline (Stanchev and Bogdanov 2002; Stanchev 2006a, 2004a; Ganev, quoted in *TOL* 18.4.2007; M. Dimitrov 2005b, 11-2; Kaschiev 2004, 2006d; *Sega* 12.5.2005). Indeed, statistics suggest that GDP growth in Bulgaria need not lead to a substantial increase in final electricity consumption (see Table 2). At the same time, electricity supply could be increased by measures other than the construction of a new NPP, namely rehabilitation, upgrade, and more optimal utilization of existing facilities,

¹²⁰ Although building the new units at the existing Kozloduy site rather than at Belene would be cheaper and faster because it would necessitate neither the construction of adjacent infrastructure and linkages to the grid, nor the provision of insurance against eventual damages in case of an incident (Kaschiev 2004), this option is not considered in the feasibility studies of the Belene NPP. This could be explained by the elite's desire to discourage perceptions that the new construction is linked to the liquidation of the old Kozloduy units, the desire to utilize the symbolic power of the Belene project as a manifestation of the new spirit of construction taking over the old spirit of economic devastation, the nuclear energy lobby's interests in securing more rather than less business opportunities, and, probably, hopes of reopening the Kozloduy units. The nuclear energy lobby has characteristically concluded that since each additional power generating capacity is beneficial for the economy, new Kozloduy units should be built anyway and should not be perceived as an alternative to the Belene NPP or to the reopening of units 3-4 (Genov, quoted in Radio Bulgaria 29.1.2008).

as well as development of renewable energy sources in line with EU requirements¹²¹ (Kaschiev 2004; Stanchev 2006a). The feasibility studies of the Belene NPP fail to adequately analyze such measures.

Alternative demand forecasts suggest that the rush to build two new 1000-MW units is unsubstantiated. A World Bank (WB) analysis from 2001 suggests that NEK's minimal-scenario demand forecasts are likely to be the realistic forecasts¹²². According to NEK's minimal scenario, you will remember, a second new unit is unnecessary at least until 2020. The WB analysis argues that rehabilitation of existing facilities and carrying out priority sectoral reforms should be preferred to costly investment into large new capacities and that the latter could be postponed even further by the introduction of measures to improve energy efficiency and to cut down on energy waste. The energy section of the *2007 Strategy for the Dynamic Development of Bulgaria* (BAS Institute of Economics 2007) written by a team of experts from the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS), suggests that the economy's low energy efficiency and heavy dependency on imported energy resources call for policy priorities that are different from those pursued by consecutive Bulgarian governments. The recommendation is to abandon the policy of extensive energy sector development and to focus on improving energy efficiency. BAS's energy consumption forecasts are even lower than the NEK's minimal scenario and suggest that rehabilitation and upgrade of existing facilities, construction of already planned TPPs, and full utilization of hydropower, would be sufficient to meet the country's energy demand, including a limited amount of export, until as late as 2020 (*Ibid.*, 101-2).

Finally, the feasibility studies of the Belene NPP exploit environmental arguments but provide no justification of the NPP's indispensability for keeping greenhouse gas emissions in check. They provide no details about the methodology and the growth scenarios they use, about the evaluated policy options, or about the amount of electricity

¹²¹ The government has envisaged reaching a 9% share of renewable sources in overall energy production by 2015 (MEE and EEA 2005, 5). The EU's policy aims at increasing this share to 20% by 2020.

¹²² If we correct the realistic growth rate of overall energy consumption envisaged by the WB report to account for the NEK's more optimistic GDP growth assumption, the realistic scenario in the WB report becomes almost identical to the NEK's minimal scenario (WB 2001, 36; MEER 2004b, 15).

exports factored in the forecasts¹²³ (MEER 2004a, 12, 2004b, 25-8). The link between environmental problems and maximal exports has never been discussed by the MEER or other responsible officials.

Bulgaria's high greenhouse gas intensity (more than 2.5 times the EU average) is indeed a reason for concern (European Environment Agency 2006, 29). However, so far it has been high despite the high share of nuclear energy in overall energy production, and so would not be reduced simply by preserving or increasing this share. A new NPP would overtake some of the power generating capacities that emit large amounts of greenhouse gases but would not address the main causes of high greenhouse gas intensity, namely Bulgaria's low energy efficiency and the failure of many power generating facilities to meet environmental standards. The official presentation of the Belene project sidelines discussion on these long-term problems. In addition, the EC's decision to substantially reduce Bulgaria's quotas on greenhouse gas emissions has all but invalidated the pro-nuclear groups' claims that nuclear energy would allow Bulgaria to cash its relatively clean Kyoto record by selling emission quotas. At the same time, the overall environmental impact of the Belene NPP is subject to bitter controversy and the project has been accompanied by continuous protests by Bulgarian and international environmental NGOs¹²⁴.

Nuclear Energy and Electricity Exports

The pro-nuclear coalition's proposition that the energy sector is the country's key export sector is disputable. In the 2001-2006 period, which was especially successful for electricity exports, average annual revenues from electricity exports were more than 6

¹²³ The 2001 WB analysis, which does not consider a nuclear facility at all, forecasts problems with keeping greenhouse gas emissions within limits only in the scenario with maximal exports (WB 2001, 53). The options with no electricity exports and with electricity imports, however, are not evaluated in the feasibility studies of the Belene NPP. It is also unclear if and how prospective improvements in energy efficiency are factored in.

¹²⁴ The project is criticized for posing environmental threats related to the area's seismic and hydrogeological characteristics, for being insufficiently protected against terrorist attacks, and for failing to address the problem of the long-term storage of nuclear waste and spent nuclear fuel. Environmental groups fought a prolonged yet ultimately unsuccessful legal battle against the project (No to the Belene NPP campaign website; Haverkamp 2005; Varbanov 2004; Kaschiev 2004; CCEPSR 2005; Maneva 2007; *EIA Report on the Belene NPP* 2004, 127-8; Dimitrov and Angelov 2005, 11; discussion B).

times lower than those from apparel and shoes exports, 1.5 times lower than those from food exports, and only slightly higher than revenues from the export of medicines and cosmetics. Among the mentioned sectors, only the energy sector has been treated as a 'priority' sector. The average share of electricity export revenues in total export revenues during this period was only 3% (MEE *Foreign Trade Statistics* 2001 through 2006; see also Stanchev and Bogdanov 2002).

In a regional market that is fully liberalized and integrated into the European market, neither strategic geographic location nor a prospective electricity deficit in the region could alone guarantee Bulgaria's future position as a leading exporter of electricity. It is the competitiveness of Bulgarian electricity on the European market that would be crucial. The feasibility studies of the Belene NPP assert the long-term competitiveness of Bulgarian electricity production and argue that Bulgaria would preserve its regional market position if it developed capacity for electricity exports. The marginal costs of Bulgarian electricity production, which are currently close to the region's average, are expected to stagnate after 2010, while the marginal costs of other Balkan exporters of electricity are expected to increase (MEER 2004a, 24-5, 2004b, 30). These studies, however, rely on unrevealed methodology and data. They provide no explanation either of Bulgaria's professed ability to rein in marginal costs or of the competitors' deteriorating market position. This makes them impervious to criticism but also very unconvincing. It is not specified if the forecasts account for the construction costs of the new NPP itself but, given that these costs were unknown at the time of publication, they could not have been fully factored in (IME 2004, 1-2). The costs and inherent problems of nuclear waste management are neglected (MEER 2005, 11).

NEK's demand forecasts for the Balkan electricity market are not persuasive either. They neglect factors that threaten Bulgaria's export potential, such as the liberalization of the regional market, its inclusion into the European energy system, and increasing interconnectivity (Angelov 2003). If the intense price competition typical for a liberalized market does not crowd out Bulgarian exports altogether, it would probably further squeeze the anyway unimpressive profit margin. Future regional demand for Bulgarian electricity could also be adversely affected by the construction of competitive power generating capacities across the region and by neighboring countries' efforts to

stabilize their own energy supply¹²⁵. The example of the failed bilateral agreement for the export of Bulgarian electricity to Turkey demonstrates the central importance of pricing, the fragility of Bulgaria's export potential, and the limits of NEK's forecasting capabilities. The only legacy of this particular Bulgarian attempt to become a regional energy hub is the wholly redundant EUR 27-million second transmission line to Turkey built by the Bulgarian side¹²⁶. These problems are particularly important in the case of the Belene NPP. NPP construction involves high initial capital investments, while returns are only gradual. During the lengthy payback period of the investments regional supply and demand could change radically (Kaschiev 2004). The construction of two inflexible high-capacity nuclear units¹²⁷ based primarily on plans to export large amounts of electricity is a very risky investment.

Finally, what would Bulgaria gain by sustaining high levels of nuclear energy production and electricity exports for 'the next 25 years'? According to critics, electricity exports have been driven not by the competitiveness of Bulgarian electricity production but by the need to maximally exploit the otherwise superfluous capacities and to (partially) resolve the problem with their sub-optimal utilization. In this way, exports have been stabilizing the energy sector and have prevented a rise of unemployment in sensitive sub-sectors such as coalmining (Kaschiev 2004, quoted in *Mediapool* 17.11.2002; BAS Institute of Economics 2007, 103). Bulgaria's expansive energy policy, however, is the outgrowth of a policy vision that reverses this logic and treats the export of electricity as an end in itself. This vision assumes that it is necessary to build many power generating facilities in order to make it possible to sustain high levels of electricity exports and to become an energy hub (Angelov 2003).

¹²⁵ By the time the Belene NPP goes online, the Romanian Cernavoda NPP would probably have five units. Turkey may resume its longstanding plans for NPP construction. Greece aims at stabilizing its energy supply with the help of large-scale energy interconnection projects in the Balkans (Ganev 2008).

¹²⁶ In 2003, Turkey one-sidedly terminated the agreement halfway into the 10-year term. The official justification was Bulgaria's failure to fulfill its part of the agreement concerning the participation of Turkish firms in infrastructure projects in Bulgaria. However, pricing appeared to be the most important reason for calling the agreement off. The NEK admitted that the import price set in the agreement was higher than the average selling price in the region (quoted in *Mediapool* 9.3.2004). The case did not prompt reconsideration of Bulgaria's expansive energy policy. On the occasion both the Right and the Left criticized the government precisely for its inability to turn the country into a regional energy hub (e.g. see SDS, quoted in *Mediapool* 23.4.2003).

¹²⁷ Two 1000-MW units could lead to underutilization of other capacities, which would reduce the effectiveness of electricity production (Vasilkov 2007; BAS, Institute of Economics 2007, 103).

At the same time, there is no publicly available data that could make it possible to calculate the real benefits of electricity exports for the national economy. According to critics, attempts to associate the export of energy with the putative national interest are preposterous because such export primarily benefits private interests. In 2004 and 2005, for example, although the NEK enjoyed a monopoly over electricity exports, respectively 80% and 90% of these exports were realized by external intermediary traders (NEK 2004, 12; *Combating Corruption Committee* 2006). One prominent critic calculated that in 2005 external traders had stripped the NEK of EUR 35 million in profit, i.e. more than the NEK's declared annual profit¹²⁸ (Kaschiev 2006c). Critics alleged that the external traders were related to the biggest private firms in the sector and branded the practice as tunneling of public resources to private hands (Ekoglasnost 2006; Brunwasser 2004; Kaschiev 2006c; Pashev, Djulgerov and Kaschiev 2006, 51). The issue provoked a major controversy, further fueled by the perceived lack of transparency in the dealings of the energy industry in general. Apart from that, the NEK's inability to market its electricity without the use of external traders raises doubts about the prospective marketability of Belene-produced power. The Belene project, too, has had its share of controversy as regards transparency¹²⁹. Throughout 2006 and 2007, it was developing amidst corruption scandals in the energy sector and the related political establishment that critics saw as indicative of the illicit business going on in the industry and of the vicious struggle between key players scrambling for lucrative contracts (Kaschiev 2006c; Ekoglasnost 2006; *Standart* 11.5.2007; Brunwasser 2004;

¹²⁸ The NEK counter-argued that intermediaries helped sell the excess quantities of electricity generated during certain months and that the importing countries themselves preferred to trade with intermediaries (quoted in *Mediapool* 27.7.2006, in Kaschiev 2006c).

¹²⁹ There were no bidding procedures for selecting the NPP's architect engineer and for awarding the contract for the conduct of an EIA. These lucrative contracts were won by two of the most powerful private companies in the nuclear energy sector – Parsons and Risk Engineering (*Kapital* November 2006; Kaschiev 2004; Kovatchev 2005). The EIA itself was branded by many experts as completely useless. It was carried out without prior specification of the type of reactor about to be installed and there were suspicions that it was not based on any on-the-ground study of the construction site and the adjacent region (*Mediapool* 5.6.2007). Environmentalists alleged that the procedures for holding public hearings on the EIA were manipulated. This was partly because there were no clear rules regarding such procedures (Kaschiev 2004). The NEK and the main supplier for the Belene NPP have been exempt from the obligation to carry out public tenders when selecting subcontractors. Subcontractors are approved by the architect engineer (*Kapital* 10.11.2006). Such a setup is unlikely to alter the routines of closed-door business deals within the narrow circle of major players in the nuclear energy industry.

Minchev 2006; Maznev, quoted in Brunwasser 2004; Varbanov 2004; CCEEPSR 2005, 1).

Energy Center vs. Energy Colony

The assumption that maintaining a leadership position on the Balkan energy market is one of Bulgaria's vital national interests is altogether groundless. Bulgaria imports between 70% and 80% of its primary energy resources, as well as all equipment and spare parts. Nuclear energy is totally dependent on Russia for technology, nuclear fuel, and nuclear waste disposal. Bulgaria could therefore only specialize in processing primary energy for the purpose of producing electricity.

Such a specialization, however, makes little economic sense. The country ends up exporting a small portion of its total energy production at competitive prices that, due to the relatively high cost price of production, bring only a tiny profit¹³⁰. In addition, electricity is not a product of high technological sophistication and does nothing to tackle the problem of the low value-added of Bulgaria's industrial production and exports (Chorbadjijski 2007; Angelov 2007; Ganev 2008). Despite their success in swaying the public, professions to the effect that the development of nuclear energy promotes the development of high technologies are rather misplaced. Massive investments in nuclear energy might have some positive impact in this respect but they should be made for altogether different reasons and certainly do not qualify as a meaningful strategy for the promotion of the high-tech sector. In addition, electricity production is an environmental and health hazard. Reflecting on these pitfalls of Bulgaria's expansive nuclear energy policy, environmental groups have wryly branded this policy as an instrument for turning the country into an "energy colony" rather than an energy center ('No to the Belene NPP' campaign website; see also Kaschiev 2006d).

Claims that Bulgarian electricity exports have had a stabilizing impact upon the Balkans have also been contested. Environmental organizations have argued that the abundant

¹³⁰ See Kaschiev 2004, quoted in *Mediapool* 17.11.2002; BAS Institute of Economics 2007, 103; Bachvarov, quoted in Valchev 2006; OSF Project Team 2004; Bogdanov, quoted in *Mediapool* 6.12.2002; Dimitrov and Angelov 2005, 11.

inexpensive Bulgarian electricity available for import has partly contributed to the energy problems that it is now allegedly solving by discouraging importers of electricity from investing in their own power generating facilities, from upgrading their electricity grids and from improving energy efficiency (CEE Bankwatch Network 2007, 7-8; *The Region* January 2007, 5; Angelov 2003).

Nuclear Energy and Social Welfare

Critics have argued that the panic about imminent power shortages and skyrocketing electricity prices has been created artificially in order to garner public support for the nuclear energy industry and to justify the construction of the Belene NPP (Kaschiev, quoted in *Mediapool* 3.11.2006; Ganev, quoted in BIRN 2006). The actual effects of the units' closure upon the electricity supply system have affirmed this interpretation. After the closure of units 1-2, all dire scenarios proved groundless. Import of electricity was not necessary. By 2005, electricity production and exports surpassed 2002 levels (see Table 3). Pricing followed an adjustment schedule intended to bring regulated electricity prices in line with market values. This schedule was the outcome of EU conditionality regarding energy prices and consultations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and was unrelated to the fate of the Kozloduy NPP. Bulgaria's position of a net exporter of electricity has not suffered significantly even after the closure of units 3-4. In 2007, the export of electricity was halved but continued. By more fully utilizing the remaining capacity, the Kozloduy NPP retained a high level of production (production dropped by 25% compared to the very successful 2006) (Kozloduy NPP website 'News' section). These developments support critics' claims that even with units 3-4 shut down and annual electricity consumption up by as much as 2%, Bulgaria would still retain ample reserve capacity (study commissioned by the EC, quoted in *Mediapool* 6.10.2006; Kaschiev, quoted in *Mediapool* 3.11.2006; BIRN 2006).

Critics have countered the pro-nuclear coalition's argument that the expected drop in electricity exports necessitates a rise in the price of electricity. Prior to the closure of units 3-4, NEK did demand upward adjustment of the price on the local market in order to make up for the imminent loss of export profit. It claimed that it had been selling

electricity on the local market at a loss that had been compensated by export profits. Such an argument could be justified only on condition that the share of export revenues in NEK's overall revenues significantly exceeded the share of export sales in NEK's overall sales. This condition was not met¹³¹. Critics counter-argued that the units' closure justified a price increase no higher than 3% (Kaschiev 2006b; Stanchev 2004b).

Claims that the cost price of Kozloduy-produced electricity was much lower than that of electricity produced at TPPs are disputable, too. According to critics, the calculation of this price does not account for a number of costs, i.e. those of construction and decommissioning, upgrades, spent fuel storage and nuclear waste disposal, insurance against incidents and damage, and construction of emergency power generating capacities to regulate electricity supply during peak periods of consumption. If these costs were factored in the price, the myth of cheap nuclear energy would collapse¹³² (see Varbanov 2005; Lakov 2002; Stanchev and Bogdanov 2002; on occasion, officials admitted the problem, e.g. Georgiev, quoted in *Mediapool* 9.3.2004; Iordanov, interview for *Sega* 9.5.2002).

The popular argument that new nuclear energy capacities would keep prices of electric power low is far from incontestable, too. Large-scale investments in new capacities are normally factored in the cost price of electricity and drive the consumer price up. In addition, even in an unregulated market there is no direct relationship between the consumer price of electricity and the cost price of its production or the source of its supply (import or local production). The point is demonstrated in the case of the Czech Republic, where the controversial construction of a second NPP at Temelin led to abundance of power generating capacities. Czech electricity exports to neighboring

¹³¹ Referring to NEK's 2004 and 2005 financial reports, Kaschiev has argued that export sales accounted for 17% of total electricity sales and brought 18% of the company's revenues (2006b). NEK's demand for a 30% price increase was also deemed indefensible inasmuch as units 3-4 accounted for only 12-14% of total electricity production. The announced high maintenance costs of the closed units, which allegedly put additional pressure on the price of electricity, have been contested, too (*Ibid.*)

¹³² The myth is a legacy of the socialist past, when the energy sector was intended to fulfill social functions. The Bulgarian 'secret' of producing cheap nuclear energy was the special agreement with the Soviet Union on the supply of nuclear fuel at non-market prices and on the shipment of spent fuel back to the Soviet Union for reprocessing (*Nucleon* consulting agency, quoted in *Active Elements* 2004). The price of Kozloduy-produced electricity was set artificially during transition, too. Under the 'single buyer' model applied in the regulated energy market, the quantities and price of electricity produced at the Kozloduy NPP were determined by the single buyer (i.e. the NEK) rather than by the commodity's market value.

countries with electricity deficit increased (the similarities with the Bulgarian situation are obvious). However, as the increased demand raised the selling price of Czech electricity on the regional market, the Czech utility company (CEZ) introduced the high price rates on the local market, too. In a liberalized market, there is nothing to prevent the CEZ from doing this. Thus, instead of benefiting from the abundance of electric power, Czech consumers end up paying the same price as consumers in countries importing electricity, while bearing the environmental risks associated with electricity production.

Finally, despite claims to the opposite, massive investments into nuclear energy do not contribute much to the general task of promoting economic development at the local level. The tendency to emphasize the social and welfare effects of investments like the Belene NPP has had a lot to do with the need to legitimize the prioritization of such investments when setting economic priorities and much less to do with social policy. Social policy should ideally pursue sustainable developmental projects across many regions with high unemployment rate, and should ideally focus on spheres such as small business development, public health and education. Not only does a single mammoth NPP project sit uneasily with such a policy, but it also diverts public finances away from it. In fact, critics argue that the NPP might just as well harm the economic development of adjacent regions by damaging traditional sectors, such as agriculture, food and wine production, and tourism (*Protest Declaration 2005*).

During the course of the NPP's construction, the project is likely to have a short-term positive impact because local workforce would be engaged in construction work. But the long-term social and welfare effects of the Belene NPP upon northwestern Bulgaria are dubious. As critics have noted, if many years of operating the Kozloduy NPP have not led to higher living standards and social cohesion in northwestern Bulgaria¹³³, it is unclear why the Belene NPP should be expected to have a miraculous social impact. As few nuclear specialists are likely to emerge out of the group of the socially disadvantaged and unemployed, the prospect of high-qualification job openings cannot be interpreted as a prospective drop in the rate of regional unemployment. If we

¹³³ In the last decade, even in the Kozloduy county itself unemployment levels have been higher than the national average (National Employment Agency statistics).

optimistically assume that there would be 2000 permanent job openings for non-nuclear specialists, the impact is still unimpressive for a EUR 5-billion investment.

Nuclear Energy vs. Other Priorities

Critics have argued that the struggle to let units 3-4 work for a couple of years longer and the construction of a second NPP are not vital for economic competitiveness and are not among the energy sector's most pressing needs. Together with the IMF, they have warned that the Belene NPP would crowd out more beneficial projects and gulp down financial resources that could be invested more efficiently in other economic spheres, especially in light of Bulgaria's already overstretched investment program¹³⁴ (IMF 2004, 15; Stanchev 2004b; I. Vasilev 2006; Stanchev and Dimitrov 2002, 5; Dimitrov, interviews for BTV 2007, for Radio Fokus 2007; Ganev 2007; Botev 2007; CEE Bankwatch Network 2007; 'No to the Belene NPP' campaign website). The 'Energy' section of the government's *National Strategy for the Integrated Development of Bulgaria's Infrastructure* specifies the construction of the Belene NPP as a priority, next to other priorities such as streamlining energy efficiency and utilizing renewable sources of energy (*Government News* 4.9.2006). Listing a number of desired outcomes as policy priorities is easy but in reality, due to the scarcity of resources, such priorities tend to compete with each other and some of them are invariably prioritized over others. According to critics, the Belene NPP should not be on top of the list. The 'nuclear energy' priority has overshadowed fundamental problems such as the notorious energy inefficiency of the economy, the massive loss of energy during production, transmission and distribution, and the lack of sustainable solutions for spent fuel and nuclear waste storage (e.g. see Lakov 2002; Dimitrov and Angelov 2005, 11; Tsigularov 2002a; Sevlievski, interview for *24 Chasa* 21.4.2005, 13).

Bulgaria has been one of the most energy intensive economies in Europe, surpassed only by Ukraine (WB 2001, 19). Between 1991 and 2005, the country's energy consumption

¹³⁴ As of 2008, projects underway in the energy sector (including the Belene NPP) are worth over EUR 7,2 billion, i.e. 65% of the cost of all infrastructure projects underway in Bulgaria (*Government News* 25.2.2008).

per GDP unit was between 12 and 8.5 times higher than the EU-15 average. It was on average 4.5 times higher than in Croatia, 3 times higher than in Hungary, 2 times higher than in the Czech Republic, and 1.3 times higher than in Romania (see Table 4; see also MEER 2002, 13; Stanchev and Bogdanov 2002). The most patent priority in the energy sector is therefore the development of a vigorous policy aimed at increasing energy efficiency and discouraging energy waste. It would reduce the country's excessive dependency on imported energy resources, improve the current account deficit, significantly boost the economy's overall competitiveness, and for a significant period of time allow Bulgaria to meet its energy demand without the old Kozloduy units and without new Belene units (Lakov 2002; Ganey, quoted in *Active Elements* 2004, in *TOL* 18.4.2007; BIRN 2006). Yet, in comparison to the massive investments into the nuclear energy sector, the resources invested into measures aimed at increasing energy efficiency have been meager (e.g. see CEE Bankwatch Network 2007, 7). Legislation pertaining to energy efficiency has been adopted as part of EU conditionality, but financial resources and administrative capacity have been insufficient to ensure satisfactory implementation (EC 2005, 51-2, 2006a, 29).

Another priority in the energy sector is the rehabilitation and upgrade of the power generating facilities. It could compensate for the drop in capacity caused by the closure of the Kozloduy units and curb energy loss during production and transmission. Due to thefts and the decrepit physical condition of the old and poorly maintained transmission grid, the efficiency of Bulgaria's power supply system was decreasing, instead of increasing, throughout the 1990s. According to official estimates, in the early 2000s the percentage of electric power lost during distribution was more than twice as high as in the 15 EU member states and higher than in the other CEECs¹³⁵ (see Table 5). In the past years the bulk of investment has gone into the construction of new capacities rather than into energy-saving measures (Angelov 2007), although distribution losses have been comparable to the electricity produced by Kozloduy's units 3-4. While governments were being preoccupied with the Kozloduy and Belene NPPs, the physical condition and the environmental standards of many thermal and hydro power plants, still

¹³⁵ According to critics, actual distribution losses have been twice higher than officially announced (Kaschiev 2004; Angelov 2007; Dimitrov 2005b, 11).

operating with Soviet-produced equipment, remained poor. Many district heating utilities were rundown. Although the recent privatization of the power transmission network would limit thefts and energy loss, and despite continuous efforts to bring the sector in line with EU requirements, the situation is still far from pleasing.

Yet another neglected priority of Bulgaria's energy sector is the development of power generating capacities using renewable sources of energy, which would preserve the environment and decrease energy dependency. Although Bulgaria has had to follow the EU's policy line on renewable energy sources, on the whole the option has been sidelined in favor of nuclear energy. In this respect, Bulgaria is part of a general policy trend common to SEE countries. In contradiction to the global tendency to limit dependency on fossil fuels, most of the energy infrastructure projects underway in SEE involve fossil-fuel infrastructure such as oil pipelines. The only alternative that appears to be equally popular with the SEE elite is nuclear energy. Both of these infrastructure types remove incentives to invest into renewable energy and energy saving measures, and drain the financial resources available for such investments¹³⁶ (CEE Bankwatch Network 2006, 8-9).

In sum, the discourse of nuclear nationalism is based on, and in turn reinforces, the conviction that expansive development of the nuclear energy sector is crucial for Bulgaria's economic development and social welfare. Yet, evidence about the economic feasibility of Bulgaria's electricity exports and of the country's specialization in electricity generation is insufficient and questionable. The welfare impact of nuclear energy is dubious. Nuclear nationalism is both contested and contestable.

Nuclear Nationalism vs. Europeanization: Ideological Power

Numerous criticisms of the nuclear nationalist position, however, have failed to instigate a wide social debate or to encourage the public to adopt a more critical attitude towards nuclear energy. The power of nuclear nationalism as an ideological discourse has been

¹³⁶ According to the EBRD Renewable Development Initiative, Bulgaria is well positioned to develop wind and biomass energy (Black & Veatch Corporation 2003, Table 1-4).

sufficient to obscure its weakness as a policy discourse. At the same time, the Europeanization discourse, which had managed to subdue the emergent nuclear nationalism back in 1999, has been all but driven out of the debate on nuclear energy. The section below identifies the key factors that have contributed to this ideological shift.

Decline of Balkanism

The early 2000s brought political stabilization in the Balkans and visible progress in Bulgaria's Euro-Atlantic integration. The end of ethnic conflicts prompted a change in the policy approaches that guided Western involvement in the Balkans. The approach focused on ethnic conflicts and their legacies was gradually overwhelmed by the Europeanization approach. The European and Western discourse on the Balkans grew less exclusionary and was less dependent on overt symbolic separation between Europe and the Balkans. The success of Bulgaria's own strategy of differentiation from the Balkans made the exclusionary discourse even less relevant for Bulgaria than for the rest of the region. Balkanism was losing ground.

It was losing ground in Bulgaria, too. The post-ODS leadership was more self-confident in asserting Bulgaria's civilizational identity of a European, rather than a Balkan, country. It represented Bulgarian culture as "one of the pillars of European culture" (Parvanov 2005a, see also 2006a; Pasi 2002e). Proving this identity was becoming increasingly redundant. The Bulgarian leadership even started to defy the imputed un-Europeaness of the Balkans as a whole:

The Balkans... are not the other Europe. They are not Europe's periphery, neither from the point of view of historical developments, nor from the point of view of current processes... They are part of the European cultural space. (Parvanov 2006c, see also 2005a, 2005b, 2006a, 2006b)

While this political and discursive change did not completely eliminate Bulgaria's anxiety over its place on the symbolic map of Europe, it certainly took the edge off the 'identity' elements of the Europeanization discourse, making them increasingly irrelevant for the interpretive frameworks that guided policymaking. However, as its

‘identity’ element was growing weaker, the Europeanization paradigm was growing less effective in enabling political mobilization, appeasing voters, dampening political controversies and legitimizing policy choices.

Nevertheless, apparently eager to motivate the West to remain involved with the region’s problems and needs, the Bulgarian elite has continued to represent the Balkans as unstable and dangerously vacillating between two alternative courses of development – European integration and destructive disintegration (Parvanov 2006c, 2006b, 2005b). It has suggested that only engagement of the EU and the international community, and, above all, europeanization of the region, could permanently neutralize the disintegrative tendencies and prevent future conflicts (e.g. see Parvanov 2006c, 2006b, 2005b; Pasi 2004, 2005b).

The basic elements of the doctrine of dissociation from the Balkans have therefore stayed put throughout the 2000s. The stress, however, has no longer been on proving Bulgaria’s difference from the Western Balkans in terms of identity, but on asserting Bulgaria’s self-appointed function of a generator and exporter of stability to the rest of Southeast Europe and specifically of its function of “one of the engines of regional development that could haul Balkan countries, and especially the Western Balkans, towards the EU” (Parvanov 2006b, see also 2006a, 2006c; Pasi 2005b, 2002d). The doctrine of differentiation from the Balkans appears to have moved away from issues of identity towards issues of development and security.

Underlying Structure of Ideas and Attitudes in Bulgarian Society

Emergence of Euroskepticism

In the course of the Kozloduy crisis, the broad and unconditional public support for europeanization characteristic of the ‘civilization choice’ period of the late 1990s was on the decline. Since the early 2000s, Bulgarian society’s relationship to ‘Europe’ has evolved under the influence of several important developments in the process of EU integration. One of them was Bulgaria’s tortuous effort to secure the lifting of visa

restrictions to the Schengen zone which, though ultimately successfully, left Bulgarian society acutely aware of the country's unequal position vis-à-vis the EU (Dimitrova 2004-2006). Another important development has been the massive legal and illegal labor emigration to affluent EU member states. The experiences of returning labor immigrants burdened public euro-attitudes with disillusionment and grudge towards the social injustice of the affluent European societies (*Ibid.*). A third key development has been the Kozloduy controversy itself. In the late 1990s, the first signs of public furor over the loss of the Kozloduy units were stifled by the ODS's strong Europeanization rhetoric, by the bargain struck between the government and the EC, and by the tangible rewards that Bulgaria received (invitation to start accession negotiations). Yet, together with immigrant experiences and the visa issue, the Kozloduy crisis brought an end to the idyllic stage of Bulgarian society's relationship to 'Europe' (*Ibid.*). They ushered in a phase, which I would suggest to call the 'apprehension stage'.

The new phase has been marked by acute perceptions of inequality and growing fears that Bulgaria would not be treated on a par with the rest of Europe but would at best become a second-rate EU member¹³⁷. Bulgaria's confidence about its status in Europe has always been frail. During the 'apprehension' stage it has been perceptibly undermined even further by the continuing economic deprivation and continuously falling living standards. Perceptions of inequality have also been an outgrowth of social anxiety about Bulgaria's place in European culture and of the awareness that belonging to the Balkans complicates Bulgaria's claims to a European identity (*MBMD* 2005, 11). The impact of these social attitudes, however, has perceptibly changed in the 2000s. Whereas during the idyllic stage of Bulgaria's relationship to Europe awareness of Bulgaria's inferior position and anxiety about not being fully accepted by Europe bred euro-enthusiasm and provoked self-criticism, during the apprehension stage they have bred euroskepticism and have frequently provoked calls for defending national dignity against unjust treatment by the wealthy and powerful EU (Dimitrova 2004-2006; see also Novkov 2002).

¹³⁷ According to opinion polls, in 2005 the percentage of Bulgarians who did not believe that Bulgaria would be treated as equal to other EU member states was 43%, as opposed to 41% who were optimistic (*MBMD* 2005, 11)

At the abstract level, support for European integration has remained high during the apprehension stage (Dimitrova 2004-2006). When decoupled from the Kozloduy dilemma, public attitudes towards Europeanization were very positive even during the peak of the Kozloduy crisis. Although a large share of Bulgarians stated in opinion polls that Kozloduy's units should be preserved even at the cost of EU integration, an even larger share (80 to 88%) supported EU accession in general (*ENS* 2004; *Bulgarian Eurobulletin* 2003; Alpha Research 2002, 2004, 40, 2005). In 2005, for example, 52% of Bulgarians expressed firm support for EU membership and 30% expressed moderate support. The fears expressed by the latter group primarily concerned the economic effects of EU membership (Alpha Research 2005)

What is the place of the Kozloduy dilemma in this seemingly schizophrenic attitude towards europeanization? To understand why it has been the nuclear energy issue, rather than any other issue in the EU accession process, that has provoked public upheaval, one has to look at the discursive practices and the political mobilization strategies through which the pro-nuclear coalition singled out the Kozloduy NPP among other problems of europeanization and marked it down as the most significant political controversy in the EU accession process. Once it became a tool for political mobilization, the Kozloduy problem also became the focus of citizens' reluctance to tolerate concrete problems brought about by the economic effects of EU conditionality (Alpha Research 2005). Sharpened by anxiety about Bulgaria's place in the EU and by a related anxiety about the economic problems of transition, popular opposition to 'Kozloduy' conditionality has been rooted in fears that the units' loss would further undermine the ability of the national economy to withstand the competition of powerful EU economies and would ruin the country's status among other EU members (MBMD 2005, 11).

The question whether or not to keep Kozloduy's units operational has been interpreted as a question about whether Bulgaria would enter the EU as a country with a developed industry or as a source of cheap labor (Rajcheva 2002). It has been interpreted much more as a question of dignity than as a question of utilitarian calculation. In fact, sociological studies of public attitudes during heated moments of the crisis reveal that despite the stunning degree of public involvement with the Kozloduy case, the average

Bulgarian knew little about the real costs and benefits involved in the Kozloduy dilemma¹³⁸.

Decline of Environmentalism

The environmentalists' campaign, which could have potentially boosted the Europeanization discourse and countered nuclear nationalism, has been conducted in inauspicious ideological environment. Throughout the 1990s, environmentalism was steadily losing ground in Bulgarian society. In the first years of transition, environmental issues were high on the political agenda. The public was wary of nuclear energy in general and of the Kozloduy and Belene NPPs in particular. Memories of the Chernobyl disaster and of its disastrous handling by the Bulgarian communist regime, the environmentalist agenda of the newly emerged anti-communist political forces, and Bulgaria's grave environmental problems caused by the communist regime's emphasis on the development of the heavy industry, were the main factors that accounted for the early short-lived strength of the anti-nuclear discourse. The anti-nuclear mood of this

¹³⁸ In 2002, 75% of respondents in a study of public opinion admitted that they did not know how much financial support Bulgaria would receive from the EU after accession; ultimately, less than 2% indicated the correct amount. More than 78% of respondents said they did not know what the annual profit from the operation of Kozloduy's units was; only less than 4% indicated the correct amount. Only 8% of respondents believed that if Bulgaria closed the units at the end of 2006 and joined the EU in 2007, the benefits of EU membership would outweigh the costs of early closure (opinion poll commissioned by the government, quoted in *Mediapool* 27.11.2002). Most of the respondents in another poll did not know what the EU nuclear safety conditionality was, how much electricity was produced at the Kozloduy NPP, or what were the environmental consequences of the use of nuclear energy (Gallup, quoted in Rajcheva 2002). Interestingly, 42% of the citizens and 67% of business considered the national economy to be energy inefficient and called for measures to increase energy efficiency (Alpha Research 2002). Thus, most of them apparently saw no contradiction between their stance on energy efficiency and their support for a policy of expansive development of the energy sector.

The Belene project has set in motion its own virtuous circle (or a vicious one, depending on one's perspective) of public attitudes. Through promises of economic development and warnings of an imminent welfare disaster in a hypothetical nuclear-free Bulgaria, the pro-Belene campaign has assiduously strengthened public support for nuclear energy. Between 70% and 80% of Bulgarians are in favor of nuclear energy. According to the MEER, 72% of Bulgarians support the construction of the Belene NPP – as opposed to only 5% who oppose it – and most of them believe that it would prop up economic development (78%) and the development of the high-tech industry (71%) (opinion poll, quoted in *MEER* 2004a, 38). This overwhelming public support is then invoked to justify top-down decisions in favor of nuclear energy development as a response to the expressed wishes of the Bulgarian nation (e.g. see Parvanov, quoted in *Mediapool* 10.12.2002; Kovachev, quoted in *Mediapool* 7.4.2002). In turn, large-scale investments, complemented by images of social cohesion around the 'national' cause of nuclear energy and promises of remaining a regional energy center, further buttress public opinion.

period contributed to the initial acceptance of IAEA's demands to close the small Kozloduy units. Environmentally-motivated mass resistance contributed to the decision to abandon the construction of the second NPP at Belene (Kovatchev 2005; Lakov 2002). Ultimately, however, no strong 'green' party emerged on the political scene. Environmental issues were missing in the policy agendas of the major parties (Lakov 2002). With the collapse of the heavy industry and the drop in overall energy consumption during transition, environmental problems decreased in importance. Green politics became mostly the domain of small, typically foreign-funded, NGOs.

As the anti-nuclear discourse was declining, the nuclear energy lobby was trying hard to turn public opinion in favor of the industry. In fact, the anti-nuclear outlook of Bulgarian society in the early years of transition contributed to the future success of the lobby. Faced with gloomy prospects in a society traumatized by Chernobyl memories, the industry was compelled to secure its future survival by consistent long-term image management. Unlike the anti-nuclear campaigns that mostly addressed the already environmentally-conscious sections of society, the lobby's pro-nuclear campaign was specifically designed to influence the broad public (*Active Elements* 2004). For some ten years or so, the lobby thoroughly transformed the image of the Kozloduy NPP and "managed to turn a national catastrophe into a national treasure" (Bozhkov, quoted in *Ibid.*). It had completed one of the most successful public relations campaigns in the post-socialist history of Bulgaria.

The Rise of Transition Nationalism

Economic decline and the related erosion of social cohesion during transition have redefined the ideological landscape in Bulgarian society. They have nurtured a particular form of nationalism that I would describe as non-violent 'transition nationalism'. It is not overtly directed against other nations but rather reflects the society's painful awareness of the collapse of vital social structures and the downfall of the national economy. Being both an outgrowth of, and a response to, a thoroughgoing socio-economic transformation and a pervasive crisis in virtually every social sphere, it blurs

the distinction among different social spheres and rejects the separation between the realm of socio-economic conditions and the realm of national identity. In the earlier phases of transition, the concentration on the misfortunes of the Bulgarian nation was predominantly self-critical and was auspicious for the influence of the Europeanization paradigm.

Yet, the continuing economic deprivation and fraying of the social fabric were breeding and gradually bringing out rather different social attitudes. Passive disillusionment was more and more often transformed into active discontent and desire to bring about change. The new attitudes were cumulating but found no political expression until 2005, when the far-right political party Ataka – an atypical phenomenon in Bulgarian politics – scored a spectacular electoral success. Ataka did not explicitly reject EU integration, but pledged to cancel Bulgaria’s NATO membership, to end Bulgaria’s dependence on the IMF and the WB, to reopen the closed EU accession negotiation chapters with a view of negotiating better conditions, to cancel the agreement on the closure of Kozloduy’s units, and to achieve other similar goals, including putting ‘traitors of the nation’ on trial (*The Twenty Tasks of Ataka*, see the party’s website). Ataka capitalized on the deep crisis of democratic representation and mobilized the electorate’s ‘negative vote’, i.e. the vote against the mainstream political forces. The vote for the far right was a vote of active discontent. Unlike those who passively expressed their disillusionment with politics by abstaining from elections, most of those who voted for Ataka wanted political and social change (Georgiev 2005, 10). These novel social attitudes have coalesced into a discourse on national identity that is no longer focused on self-criticism. Instead, it wags a finger at those responsible for Bulgaria’s downfall. The latter include local politicians, who allegedly serve the interests of foreign protectors, betray the nation and trample the people’s dignity, as well as Western institutions (EU, IMF, WB, etc.) that impose policies and set conditions inimical to Bulgaria’s economic and social development:

A treacherous Mechanism of looting, masked as governance, has been imported from the outside and implanted into our fatherland. [It] is a form of political and economic violence, concealed behind righteous incantations like “rule of law”, “IMF requirements” and “EU

standards”, that turns us - the occupants of the leftovers of Bulgaria - into walking talking calculators, desperately struggling for bare physical survival. (Kutsarov 2002)

The new nationalist discourse blends criticism of the political and economic developments in Bulgaria with invocations of national self-esteem and sovereignty. The separation of social spheres is rejected. Economic misfortunes are seen as spilling over to social relations, causing social erosion and killing the spirit of the people. The problem of economic decline is rearticulated as a problem of losing national dignity.

The Kozloduy NPP has been an emblematic case for the discourse of transition nationalism. The prominent rightwing nationalist ‘members’ of the pro-Kozloduy coalition (VMRO and the Gergjovden movement) have actively tried to place the nuclear energy issue within the sphere of national pride and dignity and to ignite the public’s desire for active participation in the making of decisions vital for the nation. The embattled Kozloduy NPP has been represented as a minimized version of embattled Bulgaria. As one critic has aptly described it, “in the public mind, shutting down Kozloduy has come to mean shutting down Bulgaria” (Ganev, quoted in *Active Elements* 2004).

The social discontent that has nurtured the new nationalist discourse has also provoked a matching, if subtle, change in the platforms of most of the major political actors. The basic tenets of transition nationalism, albeit in significantly milder versions, have made their way into mainstream politics and public debates. Like the new nationalism, the nationalist elements of mainstream political discourse, too, have colluded with the discourse of nuclear nationalism. They have turned the Kozloduy NPP into a symbol and cast the Kozloduy debate in ideological and populist, as opposed to economic or expert, frames.

The success of the pro-nuclear coalition has largely been rooted in its ability to structure its campaign around the same salient issues that have been at the base of the nationalist elements in Bulgarian politics – loss of sovereignty over economic policy, dominance of foreign economic interests, deindustrialization and declining standards of living. The concurrence in argumentation has served all sides well. It has lent expert authority to nationalist invocations of the sovereign rights and interests of the Bulgarian people. It has lent moral authority to the nuclear energy lobby’s pursuit of its particular economic

interests by making these interests appear identical to the interests of the nation. It has lent legitimacy to the political forces that have utilized the Kozloduy issue in political competition by allowing them to represent themselves as defenders of the public interest.

Legitimacy Deficit of EU Conditionality

While the emergent transition nationalism has propped up nuclear nationalism, EU conditionality has undermined the Europeanization discourse. The strength of Europeanization has been curtailed by the perceived illegitimacy of EU demands for early closure of the Kozloduy units.

The pro-Kozloduy coalition has dismissed EU nuclear safety conditionality as politically and economically motivated and as lacking grounding in objective safety problems. It has argued that while the safety of the old units might have caused concern in the early 1990s, subsequent upgrades have removed all technical and safety deficiencies that EU demands could legitimately refer to. It has admonished the EU for being stuck in the rigid and outdated presumption that older Soviet VVER units are inherently unsafe and cannot be upgraded at a reasonable cost, although they have little in common with the problematic Chernobyl reactor type (Adam 2002). The supporters of the Kozloduy NPP have been outraged by the resilience of this presumption in the face of respectful expert analyses, including safety reviews by the IAEA and the World Association of Nuclear Operators, that allegedly argue to the contrary and prove the safety of the Kozloduy units (e.g. see Ovcharov, quoted in *Sega* 31.5.2002, 2004; Parvanov, quoted in *Sega* 9.6.2004, 2007a; NRA, quoted in *Sega* 11.5.2004; Semov 2002b, 9). The Kozloduy NPP has been depicted as a victim of a general European phobia about Soviet-built nuclear reactors. The EU's decision to use enlargement conditionality as a tool for the elimination of older units across Eastern Europe has been attributed to Europeans' fear of a repetition of the Chernobyl disaster and to the anti-nuclear attitudes in some European states, rather than to real safety concerns (Parvanov, interview for *Sega* 4.10.2002; Iordanov, interview for *Sega* 9.5.2002; Ovcharov, interview for BNR 2006b; Siderov, statement on the BNA website). The arguments of the pro-Kozloduy coalition

ring true on some counts but are rather problematic on others¹³⁹. For domestic consumption, however, they have worked perfectly well.

The challenges against EU conditionality were steadily escalating in the course of the Kozloduy crisis. Initially, supporters of the NPP maintained a non-conflictual and largely pro-European stance. It was presumed that EU demands were a matter of miscommunication on the part of Bulgaria and misconception on the part of the EU (e.g. see Semov 2002, 9; *Sega* 28.1.2002). The pointless peer review, however, convinced Kozloduy's supporters that the EU simply wanted the units shut down with little regard for the real safety conditions. After the peer review, EU conditionality started to be regarded as intrusive and illegitimate, and EU officials as arrogant and patronizing in their "suspicious tendency to already now preach about how much electricity Bulgaria would need and what it should do with it" (*24 Chasa* 4.6.2002, 10; see also *Sega* 19.11.2003).

The challenge against EU nuclear safety conditionality has been grounded in the argument that demands for closure of units 3-4 are a plain case of discrimination against Bulgaria. These demands are held to contravene the principle of equal treatment of candidate states. The crux of the argument is that Bulgaria was the only accession country that had to close nuclear units before EU accession (Ovcharov, interviews for *Standart* 2006, for *Darik Radio* 2006; Mihajlova, quoted in *Sega* 3.10.2002; Kovachev, quoted in *Sega* 10.7.2002; Bliznakov, quoted in *Sega* 10.5.2005; *Sega* 30.3.2004, 12.12.2002; *Nova Zora* 2003; *24 Chasa* 4.6.2002, 10). The examples of Slovakia and Lithuania, whose problematic units had to be shut down only after accession, have been a major source of frustration.

¹³⁹ The G-7 strategy towards non-upgradeable reactors – i.e. assistance for low-cost short-term safety enhancements and a concomitant pressure for premature closure – was indeed intended to reserve large-scale financing for the upgradeable units and was chosen largely due to financial constraints. However, the reviews cited as proof of the Kozloduy NPP's high safety standards could not be interpreted as making claims regarding the units' long-term exploitation. They concerned the IAEA's initial demands for emergency upgrades, which were intended to make the units safe for exploitation during the transition period before their premature closure, but not to make them eligible for long-term exploitation (IAEA Expert Mission 2002, 1). Moreover, while operational safety was found to be satisfactory (*Ibid.*, 3), the deficiencies inbuilt in the basic design of the units – i.e. the primary reason for the EU's opposition to their continued operation – remained.

EU conditionality is also held to contravene the principle of equal treatment of member states. The public relations campaign of the pro-Kozloduy coalition has exploited the sore issue of Bulgaria's second-rate status in Europe by pointing out that no similar pressure has been put on EU member states to shut down units whose safety characteristics are not superior to those of Kozloduy's units (Ivanov 2005; Karakachanov 2002; *Sega* 23.12.2003; Semov 2002a, 10; Siderov, statement on the BNA website). A frequently cited example has been Finland. Finland is said to safely operate Soviet-built units similar to those at Kozloduy. The Finnish units had their licenses prolonged beyond their design lifespan at the same time as the EU demanded premature closure of Bulgaria's units (Ivanov 2005; Adam 2002). The argument that the Finnish case demonstrates positive discrimination in favor of West European nuclear reactors is misleading¹⁴⁰, although the fact that the Finnish Soviet-built reactors boast remarkable safety standards does demonstrate the general arbitrariness of the division between 'upgradeable' and 'non-upgradeable' units. Interestingly, other, more relevant, examples of running West European reactors with dubious safety characteristics and a history of safety problems have received scant attention in Bulgaria¹⁴¹. For the purposes of the pro-Kozloduy campaign, however, complaints about double EU standards have proved effective and persuasive even without persuasive argumentation.

The pro-Kozloduy coalition has boosted the persuasive power of its campaign by arguing that the alleged discriminatory treatment against Bulgaria contributes to the declining welfare of average Bulgarians. EU nuclear safety conditionality has been blamed for the destruction of one of the few economic assets that have not been lost or ruined during transition. It has been blamed for depriving Bulgaria and the Balkans of a source of cheap electric power at a time when nuclear energy is being rediscovered

¹⁴⁰ In fact, the Finnish reactors are not VVER 440-230s, but are similar to the "upgradeable" VVER 440-213s that are in operation in Eastern Europe (Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia). Importantly, unlike the Kozloduy units, the Finnish units are by design complete with traditional western-style reactor containment (Rippon 1999).

¹⁴¹ Examples include Biblis-A in Germany (an old PWR with a history of safety problems, including one major incident), whose closure has been successfully resisted; Mühleberg in Switzerland (an even older Boiling Water Reactor, the first such reactor to report cracking of the core shroud); and the Magnox reactors at Oldbury and Wylfa in Britain (the world's oldest operating reactors, with a history of safety problems) that are running well past their original design lifespan and are due to be closed by 2009 and 2011) (Uranium Information Center 2007; Greenpeace website; *First Swiss Report: Convention on Nuclear Safety* 1998, 58; *Sega* 13.3.2002; Wikipedia).

across Europe as a solution to the impending energy crisis. It has been blamed for widening the economic gap between the EU and Bulgaria. It has even been blamed for turning the Balkans into Europe's periphery by stifling sectors conducive to robust economic development and confining the region to agriculture and tourism (e.g. see Semov 2006; *Sega* 22.2.2002).

Following Bulgaria's accession to the EU, the repertoire of legitimacy arguments has been widened to include the basic principles on which internal relations within the EU are based, as well as the prerogatives of the SEE region, which Bulgaria now claims to have the duty, rather than just the right, to assert. Pointing out the difficulties with power supply experienced in the Balkans after the closure of units 3-4, the Bulgarian side has argued that closure has breached the founding principles of the Treaty establishing the Energy Community signed between the EU and SEE, namely solidarity, security of energy supply, and effective functioning of the SEE electricity market (Ovcharov, quoted in *Government News* 11.4.2007).

EU nuclear safety conditionality has also been contested on account of its perceived undemocratic character. Some commentators have attacked its underlying presumption that nuclear safety standards and regulatory procedures in Eastern Europe are inferior to those in the EU (Adam 2002). Others have retorted that while the EU takes pride in the democratic polities of its member-states, its officials enjoy unchecked power vis-à-vis the Bulgarian people and are free to impose decisions against their will. Yet others have complained that negotiations between the EU and candidate states have been stripped down to crude bargaining or to "straightforward and rather brutal hand twisting" (Minchev, quoted in *OMDA Press Review* 29.11.1999). They have warned that undemocratic conditionality breeds anti-European sentiments and impedes Bulgaria's genuine europeanization (e.g. see *24 Chasa* 1.11.2002, 11; Stanishev, quoted in *Mediapool* 18.7.2002; *Sega* 19.11.2003, 23.12.2003, 5.6.2002). President Parvanov has contested the democratic legitimacy of the very linkage between nuclear energy issues and the accession process. In his view, it has been immoral and illegitimate to trade Bulgaria's acquiescence in the units' early closure for the EU's toleration of Bulgaria's

failures in other spheres¹⁴² (interview for *Sega* 4.10.2002). The CCDK has declared the demands for closure illegal as they have allegedly added another criterion to the Maastricht and Copenhagen enlargement criteria without proper legal endorsement (Semov 2002a, 10).

The EU has had its share of responsibility for the legitimacy deficit of its conditionality. In the heat of the Kozloduy crisis, the EC appeared unconcerned with the problem and preferred to stress Bulgaria's unequal bargaining position (see for example Ferheugen, quoted in *Sega* 9.6.2004). This stance did clarify the state of affairs, but it also encouraged local resistance and intensified public perceptions that Bulgaria was being forced into a corner. Coupled with anxiety about the uncertain prospects of membership, these perceptions fueled anti-europeanization moods. The observation that Bulgaria was required to commit itself to a definitive closure date, while the EU did not commit itself to a definitive enlargement date, was taken to demonstrate the inequality of the relationship between the rich men's club and the needy candidate. Due to such perceptions, the majority of Bulgarians came to favor policies with a short-term focus on economic development and energy self-sufficiency – both of which were allegedly threatened by the units' closure – over the dim prospects of EU membership.

Finally, the legitimacy of EU conditionality has been undermined by the lack of common EU standards on nuclear safety that could legally justify demands against the Kozloduy units (*Mediapool* 20.11.2002; *Sega* 1.6.2002; Semov 2002b, 9, 2002a, 10). There is little agreement among EU member states on basic issues related to nuclear energy. Most states with NPPs consider regulation of the nuclear energy sector to be a matter of national sovereignty and are opposed to supranational interference. In contrast, there has been remarkable international concord when it comes to dealing with East European 'non-upgradeable' reactors (Adam 2002; *Sega* 12.12.2002). To opponents of the units' closure, tough EU nuclear safety conditionality amounts to denying East European states the same sovereign rights of control over nuclear energy that West European states vigilantly guard for themselves.

¹⁴² When faced with a prospective delay of Bulgaria's accession, the NPP's supporters pointed nuclear safety conditionality back at the EU. The President thus twisted his earlier moral arguments and suggested that just as Bulgaria had made sacrifices in the face of "unjust" European demands, so the EU now had to make special efforts to integrate Bulgaria (Parvanov, quoted in *Sega* 24.9.2006; see also *Sega* 7.5.2005).

All in all, in the course of the Kozloduy crisis Bulgaria's relationship to 'Europe' has grown increasingly unromantic and has been marked by strong resistance against EU nuclear safety conditionality. The discourse of nuclear nationalism has been strengthened by its high degree of synchronization with the altered structure of social attitudes. In contrast, the Europeanization discourse and the potentially pro-Europeanization environmentalist perspective have grappled with increasingly inauspicious ideological environment.

Impact of Political Mobilization

The ideological shifts described above did not necessarily have to strip the Europeanization discourse of its potential power and political expediency. The existence of rigid EU conditionality could allow the ruling elite to offload responsibility for unpopular policy decisions upon the EU and to thus minimize political costs and voters' discontent. In the Kozloduy case, the Bulgarian leadership was in extremely good position to use a 'tied-hands' argumentation because in reality it had very limited, if any, room for maneuver. A refusal to close the Energy chapter of the accession negotiations, for example, would have left the country's prospects for EU membership bleak, while the prospects for renegotiating the Kozloduy deal were anyway negligible. With the critical Copenhagen Summit of the EU approaching, Bulgaria's bargaining position was especially weak given the country's desire to secure a place in the forthcoming enlargement wave.

Through a tied-hands strategy, the Europeanization discourse could be deployed to tone down the political controversy. It was not. Occasionally, the leadership warned that if Bulgaria toughened its stance on the Kozloduy problem the EU could delay the accession process, and that a slowdown of EU integration would bring financial losses (e.g. see Pasi, quoted in *Sega* 7.10.2002; Draganov, quoted in *Mediapool* 18.11.2002). However, all things considered, it opted out of a tied-hands strategy and opted instead for two quite different strategies for lowering the high political costs involved in its Kozloduy policy: indeterminacy and promotion of the Belene NPP.

Inconsistency

Both governments involved in the Kozloduy crisis since the early 2000s attempted to maneuver between EU pressure and their precarious domestic political situation by maintaining indeterminate and open-ended policy on the problem and by keeping the discursive framing of their Kozloduy policies ambivalent and incoherent. This allowed them to succumb to EU conditionality in the name of EU membership and, at the same time, avoid, or at least postpone, paying in full measure the high political costs of unpopular decisions.

In the first phase of the crisis, the NDSV government was inconsistent in its Kozloduy policy. Statements of its intentions were often contradictory; its policy goals were ambiguous. While it typically demonstrated firm determination to prevent the loss of the treasured units, at times it gave the impression that it was only trying – unsuccessfully – to use the closure commitments as a bargaining chip in negotiations with the EU (e.g. see Bliznakov and Valchev, quoted in *Sega* 31.5.2002). Public attention was directed towards the forthcoming peer review, which made it possible to advertise the government's Kozloduy policy as one that defended the national interest: the chapter would be temporarily closed and subsequently reopened to negotiate new - 'objective' - closure dates on the basis of the technical conclusions of the safety review¹⁴³ (officials, quoted in *Sega* 25.9.2002, 3.10.2002, 3.12.2003; in *24 Chasa* 25.9.2002, 4; in *Mediapool* 18/19.11.2002). In the second phase of the crisis (i.e. following the notorious peer review), the official Kozloduy policy continued to be represented as open-ended and reversible even though Bulgaria had closed the Energy chapter of the accession negotiations and had conceded to EU demands. In this phase, hopes were invested in the possibility of renegotiating the issue after Bulgaria's EU accession (see previous chapter; Pasi, quoted in *Sega* 8.6.2004; Ovcharov, interview for BNT 2006a).

¹⁴³ Local and EU officials warned that the peer review's mandate was to inspect Bulgaria's progress in fulfilling the closure agreements, not to revise or renegotiate these agreements (Parvanov, quoted in *Sega* 20.11.2002; NRA, quoted in *Mediapool* 19.5.2003, 15.7.2003). The government, however, argued that the peer review provided an unprecedented opportunity to negotiate an even longer operational life for the units than Bulgaria had initially hoped for at the 1999 negotiations (officials, quoted in *Sega* 26.9.2002, 20.11.2002).

Faced with markedly pro-Kozloduy attitudes among the general public, the leadership refrained from overtly rejecting the nuclear nationalist discourse of the NPP's supporters and from upholding an alternative interpretation of the Kozloduy dilemma. It did attempt to counter the welfare element of the nuclear nationalism discourse, which had an immediate strong impact upon voters and, in light of the decision to concede to EU conditionality, could undermine public support for the government. Predictions about drastic price increases and collapse of the power supply system were often dismissed as attempts at earning populist dividends¹⁴⁴ (Kovachev, quoted in *Mediapool* 11.2.2002, 23.9.2002, 29.2.2004; Ovcharov, quoted in *Mediapool* 7.4.2006, interview for Nova TV 2006b; SEWRC, quoted in *Mediapool* 14.6.2006). Yet, the persuasive power of the official interpretation of the welfare effects of the units' closure was undermined by the characteristic inconsistency of the government's discursive framing of the Kozloduy problem. Statements from the authorities regarding the expected effects of the closure upon the price of electricity varied in time and were non-transparent. Officials' occasional slippage into pro-nuclear argumentation blurred the lines between the different positions in the debate and strengthened the perceived moral authority of the pro-nuclear coalition.

While formally upholding the official policy and communication line, the relevant authorities systematically solidified the nuclear nationalist position by representing the closure of the units as a grave economic setback. By failing to provide access to information on the financial situation of the Kozloduy NPP, as well as unbiased analysis on the future functioning of the energy sector in a liberalized market, the authorities made it difficult for the public and the media to judge the likely economic impact of the units' early closure and facilitated the circulation of biased, exaggerated or altogether manipulative interpretations that thrived upon public fears and discontent.

According to data that the government floated in the media in 2002, the annual profit from the operation of units 3-4 was EUR 50 to 70 million (*Mediapool* 18/27.11.2002). Critics argued that the figure was even lower (Kaschiev, quoted in *Mediapool* 17.11.2002). Even if we assume that it was correct, the units could still not be regarded

¹⁴⁴ It was stressed that even with all Kozloduy units in operation, the price of electricity would rise according to a preset schedule (Dogan, quoted in *Mediapool* 19.11.2002)

as an indispensable economic asset, let alone as a decent economic alternative to EU membership. In 2002, annual pre-accession aid from the EU was EUR 300 million. Completion of the accession negotiations brought additional EUR 150 million per year. The EU has committed EUR 4.6 billion through 2009 for improvements in Bulgaria's infrastructure and economy – the highest per capita accession funding ever (Brunwasser 2006). And then pre-accession and accession aid is dwarfed by the overall economic benefits of EU integration, both before and after membership (e.g. increase in foreign investment). At the same time, it was unclear what goals were being pursued by defending the units. The pro-Kozloduy coalition gave the impression that the struggle was about keeping units 3-4 operational and profit-making for a relatively long period after 2006. According to the government's official position in negotiations with the EU, however, the whole clamor was about allowing the units operate respectively for 2 and 4 years longer. In the latter case, it made no economic sense to risk a delay in accession negotiations and deprive the country of the EUR 150-million increase in annual pre-accession aid. It made no sense whatsoever to risk EU membership. These simple economic calculations could have been a basis for a successful public relations campaign to convince Bulgarians that EU integration should be prioritized over the Kozloduy units. Yet, both governments involved in the Kozloduy crisis failed to make full use of the opportunity. They seemed to believe that they have another ace in the hole – the Belene NPP.

The Belene Project

The construction of the Belene NPP was the ruling elite's other major strategy employed to dampen public and political furor over the surrender of the Kozloduy units. The idea was to focus public attention on the presumably bright long-term prospects of the nuclear energy industry (e.g. see Todorov, quoted in *Mediapool* 20.11.2002, 4.10.2002). The project was well suited to restore some of the national dignity that was lost together with the Kozloduy units, to restore public trust in state institutions, to stabilize the leadership's political position, and to appease the embittered public that, over the course

of transition, was growing increasingly anxious with the steady decline of virtually all economic sectors.

The NDSV's aggressive promotion of the project was in line with its election-winning strategy of overwhelming the public with over-ambitious plans and promises of fast economic recovery. To those embittered by the spirit of economic destruction, the symbolically important Belene project offered the long-awaited vision of reconstruction:

Fifteen year ago, the Belene project was a symbol of economic wastefulness. Today, it unites us in the ambition to preserve Bulgaria as a 'nuclear energy' state and utilize the qualification and intellectual potential of the thousands of people who have worked in the Kozloduy NPP. (Sevlievski, interview for *24 Chasa* 21.4.2005, 13)

To those troubled by the erosion of the social fabric that accompanied the economic downfall during transition, the Belene project offered an ambitious goal capable of rejuvenating the unity and creative energy of the nation: “[The Belene NPP is one of] the big projects that will mobilize the whole country” (Saxkoburgotski, interview for *24 Chasa* 8.4.2002, 9). Finally, those who perceived the closure of the Kozloduy units as a heavy blow on the national economy were offered the consolation that with the Belene NPP the Bulgarian energy sector would stay strong and reliable. The lulling vision of a new modern nuclear giant taking over from the Kozloduy NPP, preserving Bulgaria's economic strength in the energy sphere, and reaffirming Bulgaria's role of a regional energy center, was expected to demonstrate that the government did not intend to abandon Bulgaria's nuclear energy but to actually strengthen it (Saxkoburgotski, quoted in *Mediapool* 21.12.2003, 12.12.2003).

The Belene project, however, failed to dampen the Kozloduy controversy. To most domestic stakeholders, plans to build a new NPP signaled a defeatist position on the Kozloduy front. Thus, instead of boosting the ruling elite's popularity, they were initially interpreted as a badly concealed attempt to manipulate public opinion and substitute the abstract idea of a new NPP for the urgent struggle to keep the Kozloduy units (e.g. see *Sega* 6.5.2004; Tsigularov 2002c; Tafrov and Chobanov 2002; Minchev, quoted in *Mediapool* 9.4.2006; articles in *Mediapool* 11.4.2002). The mainstream rightwing opposition summarily dismissed the initiative as contravening the national interest (Mihajlova, quoted in *Mediapool* 9.4.2002; Maznev, quoted in *Mediapool*

9.3.2004). The rightwing nationalist political forces retorted that without the Kozloduy units Bulgaria would have lost its position on the electricity market by the time the new NPP was launched and branded the Belene project as a trick intended “to cover up the leadership’s act of betrayal” (Karakachanov, interview for *Trud* 12.4.2002, 31; see also *24 Chasa* 11.4.2002,10). While in opposition, the BSP, joined by President Parvanov, embraced the project in principle but labeled the idea to launch it in the midst of the Kozloduy crisis “a populist bubble” and “a pre-election trick” intended to diffuse public dissatisfaction with the leadership’s inability to defend the Kozloduy NPP (Ovcharov, quoted in *Sega* 10.6.2004; see also Stanishev, quoted in *Mediapool* 8.6.2002). It was only after the BSP had taken power that its energy lobby put up with the closure of the Kozloduy units, embraced the Belene idea, and took up the public relations campaign in its favor (see Ovcharov, interview for Nova TV 2006a).

The ability of the pro-Belene campaign to dampen public discontent with the closure of the Kozloduy units has been undermined by its dependency on the same discourse of nuclear nationalism that has enframed the pro-Kozloduy campaign. The Belene NPP is supposed to serve the same functions as the Kozloduy NPP, i.e. to provide abundant cheap electricity and to preserve Bulgaria’s position of a leading electricity exporter in the Balkans. The pro-Belene campaign has only added another layer of representations that swaps the Belene NPP for the Kozloduy NPP as the means towards achieving these goals.

The swap has not been particularly successful. Apart from the mainstream rightwing parties and a relatively small camp of other critics, almost everyone else in Bulgaria has always wanted both NPPs. As nuclear energy is associated with economic power, the presumption is that the more ‘nuclear’ Bulgaria becomes, the better. The pro-Kozloduy forces have insisted that moving on with the Belene project should neither serve as an excuse for giving up the Kozloduy units nor be related to their fate (e.g. Parvanov 2002b, quoted in *Sega* 23.4.2004, in *Trud* 10.4.2002, 3). Keen to avoid admitting the inevitability of the Kozloduy units’ closure and to demonstrate its commitment to Bulgaria’s nuclear energy, the ruling elite itself concurred. At a seminar organized by the energy lobby in 2003, Energy Minister Kovachev and chairman of the Parliamentary Energy Committee (PEC) Bliznakov announced that the Belene NPP would be built

regardless of the fate of the Kozloduy units (quoted in *Mediapool* 30.9.2003; see also Bliznakov, quoted in *Mediapool* 13.11.2003). The same assumption has been at the base of the government's post-EU-accession campaign for reopening units 3-4.

The pro-Kozloduy campaign and the pro-Belene campaign have worked together to solidify the argument that nuclear energy is central to Bulgaria's economic prosperity and have thus ultimately boosted, rather than stifled, popular support for the Kozloduy NPP. The ultimate effect of the pro-Belene campaign has been to strengthen nuclear nationalism in general and to all but remove the political expediency of taking up alternative interpretive frameworks such as Europeanization.

The Anti-nuclear and Anti-Belene Campaigns

Yet, in the course of the debates on the Belene NPP, the Europeanization discourse has regained some of the ground it lost during the Kozloduy crisis. The idea of 'europeanizing' Bulgaria's energy policy has been taken up by the two mainstream rightwing parties formed as a result of the internal split in the SDS/ODS – the (successor) SDS and the Democrats for Strong Bulgaria (DSB). The Belene project, next to other unfortunate policy decisions in the field of energy, is said to demonstrate the elite's unpardonable tolerance towards Russian dictates, the subordination of Bulgaria's foreign and energy policy to Russian energy interests, and the government's inability to tackle the problem of energy dependency. Although neither the SDS nor the DSB have abandoned the national interest rhetoric, they have perceptibly changed it. First, nuclear energy is conceived as a regular sub-sector of the energy sector, rather than as a special case calling for lofty feelings of national pride. Second, the relationship between (nuclear) energy and the national interest is redefined. The pro-nuclear position understands this relationship primarily as an economic one: the nuclear energy sector is held to be one of the most competitive sectors of the economy, whose development is set to boost overall economic development. The rightwing opposition has redefined this relationship as one of national security. In this alternative conception, (nuclear) energy

matters for the national interest by virtue of its capacity or incapacity to guarantee national security (e.g. see I. Vasilev 2007).

Through the re-articulation of the relationship between energy and the national interest, the Europeanization project is coupled with the ‘national’ projects of security and some of its ‘identity’ elements are brought to bear on policy. The rightwing opposition has pitted the Europeanization project against the insecurity associated with Russian energy dominance. The Russian threat is conceived both as a threat to Bulgaria’s national security and as a threat to Bulgaria’s identity. Russia is represented as a powerful menacing actor that should not be allowed to interfere with the Bulgarian energy industry. On this view, Russian designs could only be kept in check by europeanization: the only way for Bulgaria to defend its national interest, guarantee its national security, and increase its leverage in dealings with Russia, is to attach itself to the EU, follow the common EU energy policy and present a united front with Europe in the battle against Russian energy dominance¹⁴⁵. But Russian interference in the national energy sector is also held to have a strong symbolic dimension. It is represented as a threat to Bulgaria’s Europeanization/civilization choice. In the words of DSB co-founder Agov (2007), Bulgaria has made its choice: it has joined the EU and has become “part of the free world. Russia is not part of the free world”.

Despite their partial success in reviving the Europeanization paradigm, the rightwing opposition SDS and DSB have been incoherent in their stance vis-à-vis nuclear nationalism. They have demonstrated vehement opposition to the Belene NPP, conveyed in the expert-dominated language of liberal economics. At the same time, they have demonstrated firm support for the Kozloduy NPP, conveyed in the language of popular, if not populist, political arguments. These ‘double standards’ have compromised the persuasiveness of the Right’s anti-Belene campaign and have restricted the scope of its potentially influential coalition with environmental groups. The Europeanization discourse itself occupies an auxiliary position within the interpretive framework adopted by the DSB and the SDS. Its primary role has been to accentuate the parties’ broader anti-Russian political stance, not to provide a full-fledged policy alternative.

¹⁴⁵ See M. Dimitrov 2007a; Toshev 2007; Stoyanov 2007b, 2007a; DSB 2006a, 2006b; K. Dimitrov, interviews for Info Radio 2007, for BTV 2007; Kostov, interview for *24 Chasa* 2007.

Inasmuch as EU demands for early closure of the Kozloduy units have been framed as a nuclear safety issue, one would have expected that environmental groups would rely on the Europeanization discourse. This has not happened. The anti-nuclear campaigns launched by environmental NGOs have selectively utilized Europeanization arguments but have predominantly relied upon environmentalist argumentation. They have thus only been able to reach specific already environmentally-conscious sections of society and have had a limited impact upon the general debates on nuclear energy. In addition, unlike in the energetic anti-Belene campaign, there has been relatively little sense of urgency in the environmentalist campaign against the Kozloduy units. Due to the sheer effectiveness of EU conditionality, environmentalists have apparently felt little pressure to influence policy themselves, which probably explains their failure to deploy the ideological power of the Europeanization discourse in order to occupy a more visible position in the Kozloduy controversy.

The Pro-Kozloduy Campaign

While the ruling elite and the pro-Europeanization camp in the Kozloduy debate have maintained low-key and ambivalent ideological positions, the pro-Kozloduy coalition has not only upheld a coherent nuclear nationalist discourse but has also followed a consistent long-term political mobilization strategy, complete with a skillful media campaign. The success of its campaign is rooted in its simple but effective argumentation designed to exploit the subjective fears and beliefs of ordinary Bulgarians, as well as in its skillful handling of the challenges posed by the Europeanization discourse.

The campaign in defense of the Kozloduy units has urged defiance of EU conditionality and has rejected Europeanization as a policy doctrine. While in opposition, the BSP, for example, promoted the popular Kozloduy cause without much concern for the European integration process and did not seem to have qualms about sending ‘disturbing’ signals to Europe, including demands to postpone ratification of Bulgaria’s Treaty of Accession and schedule a referendum on EU membership (Ovcharov, quoted in *Sega* 22.4.2005).

President Parvanov – otherwise a moderate pro-Europeanization figure – did not shun from taking an anti-Europeanization stance, too, when it came to the Kozloduy NPP. Such stances rejected the link between European integration and the ‘national interest’. Parvanov made the ideological U-turn explicit by arguing that Bulgaria should not let the “EU strike down its most competitive economic sector” and back down under pressure from European institutions, because the interests of these institutions ran against Bulgaria’s interests (quoted in *Mediapool* 9.4.2002). The radical stance of the pro-Kozloduy coalition was largely the result of pre-election populism but its effects were not less profound for that. It contributed to the growth of popular euroskepticism and turned the Kozloduy problem into a major obstacle to Bulgaria’s EU integration.

Although they have rejected Europeanization as a political and policy doctrine, the pro-nuclear groups have avoided being openly associated with anti-Europeanism in general. The defense of the Kozloduy NPP has rarely advocated euroskepticism explicitly; to the contrary, it has stressed that the ‘battle for Kozloduy’ is not a battle against EU integration. President Parvanov has been a key figure committed to pulling the two phenomena apart. In one of several attempts to define for Bulgarian society what constituted desirable and permitted debate and what not, the President stated that accusations of anti-Europeanism needed to be completely taken off the Kozloduy debate because there were no anti-European parties in Bulgaria (at the time anyway) (quoted in *24 Chasa* 3.12.2002, 4). Restrictions on freedom of debate were legitimized by the danger that if Bulgaria’s stance on the problem were tainted by anti-Europeanism, (unidentified) anti-Kozloduy forces would take advantage of the situation (*Ibid.*, 7). In a similar vein, the CCDK and the VMRO declared that the unofficial citizens’ referendum on the closure of units 3-4 was not a referendum against EU membership or against ratification of Bulgaria’s Treaty of Accession to the EU (quoted in *Sega* 25.4.2005), although in reality ratification would have had to be postponed if negative referendum results were to be respected by the government. Even the far-right Ataka has branded as propaganda all allegations that it is an anti-European party and has declared that it would support EU membership on condition that the Kozloduy units were preserved (quoted in *Mediapool* 17.5.2006).

In fact, the pro-Kozloduy coalition has attempted to engulf the Europeanization discourse by presenting the nuclear nationalist approach as a better way towards actual europeanization. To this end, it has applied two key techniques of discursive framing: invocation of national pride and exploitation of the widespread fears that Bulgaria is being relegated to the position of a second-rate member of the European community. The pro-Kozloduy coalition has asserted that the policy of protecting Bulgaria's nuclear energy poses no danger to EU integration and, by assisting national economic development, actually improves Bulgaria's prospects in the EU. The SDS, the BSP (while in opposition), and the nuclear energy lobby, have argued that there is no reason why Bulgaria should be forced to choose between its nuclear energy industry and the EU (SDS, quoted in *Mediapool* 3.12.2002; Ovcharov 2004). The defense of the units has been represented as defense of Bulgaria's dignity and equal status in the EU (Ovcharov 2004; citizens' referendum organizers, quoted in *Sega* 15.4.2005). In the words of Bulatom's secretary, saving units 3-4 is about "entering the EU with our head up and preserving the greatest wealth of our country – its people, their skills and their dignity" (Georgiev, letter to *Sega* 15.11.2003; see also Nikolov, interview for *Telegraf* 18.1.2006, 13). The ruling elite has affirmed the 'dignity' argument by employing it to advertise its own pro-Kozloduy policy. The reopening of the Kozloduy question after EU accession, for instance, was represented as defense of national dignity and refusal to "keep our head down" (Ovcharov, quoted in *Mediapool* 15.2.2007).

As discussed above, when decoupled from the Kozloduy dilemma, public opinion in Bulgaria remains generally pro-European. The ability of the pro-nuclear coalition to dissociate itself from anti-Europeanism has thus greatly contributed to the success of its campaign because it has sheltered it from the vestiges of the Europeanization paradigm. By claiming to provide a purportedly superior path towards europeanization, the campaign has actually been able to capitalize both on the pro-European and on the euroskeptic attitudes amongst the public.

Socio-economic and Political Position of the Pro-nuclear Forces

One of the factors contributing to the dominance of the nuclear nationalist discourse is the political and economic power of the nuclear energy lobby. The lobby's ability to shape the Kozloduy debates has derived from its economic strength and its close links with the political elite, and has been additionally boosted by its perceived expert authority, by the political expediency of its arguments, and by the weak public awareness of lobbyism in Bulgaria.

The energy sector stands out for its economic strength. Unlike other important economic sectors in Bulgaria (e.g. textiles, tourism, or food production), it is highly centralized and controlled by a small number of powerful companies¹⁴⁶. The Kozloduy NPP itself is one of the biggest enterprises in Bulgaria. On account of the large amounts of capital that circulate through it in the form of revenues, public contracts, project financing, expenditures for production and maintenance, and investment into upgrades, it has been labeled the 'the holy cow' of the Bulgarian energy industry (Brunwasser 2004). In light of the size of the Bulgarian economy, the Belene project, too, involves mammoth investments. The massive capital flows in the energy sector as a whole have been coupled with a high degree of state involvement, large investment projects, lack of competition, ongoing privatization, deficiencies in anti-corruption policies, and flaws in the system of inspections (Pashev, Djulgerov and Kaschiev 2006, 36). Democratic control has been undermined by the tendency to limit access to information about the sector's functioning and to prevent independent evaluation by external experts on grounds of national security (*Ibid.*, 40-1; Stanchev and Dimitrov 2002, 5). The privileged position of nuclear energy in political discourse and public opinion has further delegitimized and held back criticism. On top of it all is the energy sector's dependency on monopolized primary energy imports, which has opened it up to outside political influence and has encouraged the formation of politico-economic circles related to the Russian energy business (Pashev, Djulgerov and Kaschiev 2006, 38-9). In

¹⁴⁶ Among the Bulgarian firms with the highest turnover, at least half are energy companies. As a rule, the NEK is on the very top of the list and the Kozloduy NPP is in the top five. Private firms with a record of winning public contracts in the sector typically rank very high in the profit charts (Pashev, Djulgerov and Kaschiev 2006, 35-6).

combination, these characteristics make the energy industry susceptible to lobbying, closed-door deals and policymaking unfettered by democratic checks and balances.

The industry's centralized structure has facilitated the development of an effective network of ties between private companies and the political establishment, while its economic strength, coupled with the perceived moral power of the pro-Kozloduy position, has made it difficult for the state to resist the political pressure exerted by the sectoral lobby. The BSP's deputy leader Ovcharov – Minister of Economy and Energy between 2005 and 2007¹⁴⁷ – was one of the most vocal opponents of the units' closure and was much more often referred to as Minister of Energy than as Minister of the Economy. He is a nuclear physicist educated at a Russian university and a former employee of the Kozloduy NPP and the NEK, and has not tried to deny his connection to the nuclear energy industry. Critics have argued that Ovcharov, as well as key officials from the ranks of the NDSV – e.g. the NDSV government's Energy Minister Kovachev and the chairman of the PEC Bliznakov – have kept close contacts with the leading private companies in the energy sector (Nenova 2007; *Mediapool* 10.7.2003; Brunwasser 2004). Prior to becoming chairman of the PEC, Bliznakov was chairman of the BNS. President Parvanov has openly backed the nuclear energy lobby through participation in conferences and forums, through visits and supportive speeches at the NPP, and through meetings with representatives of international organizations related to the nuclear energy lobby (*Sega* 3.6.2004, 19.6.2003; *Mediapool* 9.4.2002). At forums organized by lobby groups, other key political figures, too, have spoken in favor of nuclear energy and have supported the lobby's arguments and demands (e.g. see *Mediapool* 30.9.2003).

The political influence of the nuclear energy industry has been strengthened by the congruence between the lobby's stance on the Kozloduy problem and the strategies of major political actors. In many cases, the lobby's position has not simply concurred with the way the issue has been rendered in the political sphere, but has altogether determined it. The Kozloduy drama has been central to the efforts of several, otherwise very dissimilar, political actors (e.g. the BSP, GERB, the VMRO, the Gergjovden Movement,

¹⁴⁷ Following corruption scandals in the energy sector, Ovcharov resigned his post in 2007.

President Parvanov, and Ataka) to build a reputation of political actors that put the national interests above all else. These efforts have typically entailed taking a firm 'national' stance on the Kozloduy problem without having any technical knowledge to uphold the legitimacy of such a stance. The lobby's clear, simple and effective 'expert' argumentation has been handy for providing the necessary technical underpinning of such 'national' positions. It has been widely utilized to this effect. The symbiosis has benefited both sides. It has boosted the importance of the Kozloduy problem in Bulgarian politics and the popularity of the political forces that have stood in defense of the perceived national interest. At the same time, it has affirmed the 'national' legitimacy and moral power of the nuclear energy lobby.

The lobby's political clout has also been strengthened by its ostensible monopoly over expert knowledge and by the lack of legal framework for the regulation of lobbying in Bulgaria. The vast majority of nuclear energy experts in Bulgaria are professionally involved with the industry either through employment or through research and development funding (Pashev, Djulgerov and Kaschiev 2006, 41-2). This has nurtured the belief that the lobby's interpretation reflects the objective views of the whole expert community and has severely limited public debate. Alternative views have been disqualified for allegedly lacking the necessary expert authority and/or for reflecting foreign interests. The participation of other civil society groups in decision making in the sphere of energy has been limited and mostly confined to environmental issues. The lack of legal framework regulating lobbying has contributed to a general lack of awareness of this phenomenon amongst the broad public. The public has thus found it difficult or altogether impossible to identify particular economic and political interests behind the activities of pro-nuclear groups (*Active Elements* 2004). The media has often referred to 'the nuclear energy lobby' and has on occasion exposed its harmonious relationship with the political establishment, but this has been insufficient to diminish the appeal of the lobby's firm stance in defense of the Kozloduy NPP or to prompt ordinary Bulgarians to regard pro-nuclear activities more critically. The persuasive power of the nuclear nationalism discourse has to a significant degree been rooted in the ability of the industrial lobby to operate as a lobby without being recognized as such.

Socio-economic and Political Position of the Anti-Belene and Anti-nuclear Forces

At the other side of the debate, the relatively weak political and socio-economic position of the critics of nuclear nationalism has curbed the impact of the Europeanization discourse and of other alternative views on the nuclear energy dilemma. The relatively weak electoral position of the SDS and the DSB has curbed their ability to put the Europeanization paradigm back on the policy agenda related to the Belene NPP. The two parties have been increasingly marginalized as many conservative voters opt either for the center-right GERB or for the far-right Ataka. GERB in particular has boosted its appeal by repeated attention-grabbing media-friendly demonstrations of support for the Kozloduy NPP, effectively performed by the party's popular leader. GERB's populist stance on the problem has thus sidelined the SDS's and the DSB's ambiguous position on the nuclear energy question. The two parties' political standing has been additionally undermined by their failure to present a united front against the other rightwing alternatives. As for environmental groups, due to their limited financial resources they have relied on the rather restricted official channels for providing input into policymaking in the sphere of energy. They have been unable to compete with the powerful energy industry when it comes to public relations and information campaigns, and even less so when it comes to exerting influence over the media and the political elite.

Summary

Although the nuclear nationalist discourse has been both disputed and disputable as a policy-making framework, during the 2000s it has defeated the Europeanization discourse in the policy debate on nuclear energy in general and on the Kozloduy dilemma in particular. Unlike Europeanization, it has been strengthened by the changing external ideological environment and by the changing ideological outlook of Bulgarian society which has been gradually discovering the unromantic sides of Euro-Atlantic integration.

It has also won out in the process of political mobilization instigated by the Kozloduy crisis. The ruling elite has swayed back and forth between counterproductively reproducing the discourse of nuclear nationalism and picking up elements of the Europeanization discourse to defend particular policy choices. Although the performative and ideological inconsistency of the official Kozloduy policy has been intended to lower the political costs involved in the crisis, it has achieved the opposite. It has contributed to the dramatic atmosphere of the debates and has raised the political stakes even higher. The anti-nuclear forces have retained a low-key ideological position and have not efficiently deployed the Europeanization discourse either. The Europeanization perspective on the Kozloduy dilemma has thus been outperformed by the coherent and effective pro-nuclear campaign that has been backed up by the political power and the perceived moral authority of the nuclear energy lobby.

Chapter 6

Conclusions: Another Story of Bulgaria's Europeanization

This chapter attempts to join together and reconsider the empirical material provided by the two case studies in order to outline a more general mechanism of the impact of the Europeanization policy paradigm on policymaking in Bulgaria. First, however, I pose to consider the theoretical issues at stake in this analysis. The empirical material suggests that in order to understand europeanization in Bulgaria, it is necessary to consider the interaction between material constraints and opportunities and ideational factors such as the relevant policy discourses and interpretive frameworks. The basic theoretical questions would then be: Do we need the ideational factors at all? Do they account for the behavior and outcomes observed in the case studies and, if yes, how and to what extent?

Explanatory Power of Ideas

Rival Views on the Explanatory Power of Ideas

The explanatory power of ideational factors such as policy approaches and identity has been subject to long-standing and extensive theoretical debate. Before I move on to identify the main issues that emerge out of this debate and to rethink on that basis the empirical material provided by the two case studies, I briefly review the debate itself as it evolved in the fields of International Relations and comparative politics.

Realism and Neorealism

For Realism and Neorealism – the perspectives that dominated the field of International Relations during the Cold War – international anarchy, state power, and state interest are the key factors explaining state action, and hence, outcomes in international relations.

Early realist scholars such as Morgenthau and Carr did take issue with ideational factors such as ideologies, norms, and normative and ethical discourses, especially those that claimed universal validity, but only to suggest that the relationship between moral discourses and international politics was tainted by power and that the use of universal moral claims could only be motivated by desire to legitimate and advance the particular interests of powerful states. Mixing ideology with politics was deemed to be not only “morally indefensible” but also potentially detrimental to international peace and stability (Morgenthau [1948] 1985, 13). Neorealism posits that in the context of anarchy the primary interest of states is survival, the essential pattern of states’ behavior is self-help, and the main determinants of international politics are the changes in the distribution of relative capabilities among states (Waltz 1979). Ideational, social, and institutional factors are not considered to be independent explanatory factors. Rather, they are derived from, and serve, power and interest. The international system in which states act is believed to have no ideational content¹⁴⁸. It influences policy directly without affecting states’ interests and identity (Katzenstein 1996b, 25). Realism, rational choice and game theoretic approaches in foreign policy analysis are rationalist approaches. They assume that actors are either rational or behave *as if* they were rational; either way actors pursue their self-interest and act so as to maximize their expected utility (Goldstein and Keohane 1993, 4). Ideational factors are allowed no explanatory power. The incentives for behavior are provided by material structures and actors would at best employ ideational or cultural factors strategically in the pursuit of their self-interest (Katzenstein 1996b, 17).

According to liberal alternatives to Realist theorizing – namely the theory of complex interdependence developed in the late 1970s (Keohane and Nye 2001), neoliberal institutionalism (e.g. Keohane 1989) and liberalist approaches to regime theory (e.g. Krasner 1982a, 1982b; Keohane 1982) – the effects of anarchy can be mitigated by regimes and international institutions (and the rules, norms and procedures that they embody) (Keohane 1989, 2-7; Katzenstein 1996b, 19). Regimes and institutions are deemed to be relatively independent of, and not reducible to, the underlying distribution

¹⁴⁸ World-systems analysis, too, conceptualizes the international system in purely materialist terms (e.g. see Wallerstein 1996; Skocpol 1977).

of power and material capabilities among states. Yet, liberal theories preserve the rationalist view of international relations as the domain of sovereign self-interested states pursuing utility maximization. They treat states' identities and interests as given and fixed and usually treat ideational factors as intervening variables between the basic causal factors (power and interests) and policy outcomes (Krasner 1982a; Keohane 1982; Katzenstein 1996b, 25). The focus is on the regulatory effects of norms and institutions: norms and institutions change the incentives (constraints and opportunities) that states face, even as states define their interests autonomously (Keohane 1989, 6).

The New Institutionalisms

There are two basic approaches to the study of ideas in the field of political economy and comparative politics: a historical approach and a rationalist approach (Blyth 2002, 18). The historical approach took shape in the framework of historical institutionalism as it developed in the early 1990s. The rationalist approach evolved in the same period as part of the 'ideational turn' in rational choice institutionalism and rational choice theory (*Ibid.*, 18).

Rationalism adopts the basic assumptions of microeconomics: actors are self-interested and maximize their expected utility, subject to constraints. Their preferences and causal beliefs are exogenously defined and given a priori¹⁴⁹, so research focuses on variation in the constraints that actors face (Goldstein and Keohane 1993, 4). Rationalist institutionalism introduces ideas into its research program, while preserving these basic assumptions of rationality. In an influential application of rationalist institutionalism to the study of foreign policy, Goldstein and Keohane argue that ideas – primarily principled and causal beliefs held by individuals – help to explain policy outcomes even as individuals behave rationally (*Ibid.*, 3-5). First, ideas can provide roadmaps that enable actors to define their own preferences or to understand the causal relationships between their goals and alternative strategies of achieving them in conditions of

¹⁴⁹ It is assumed that preference formation precedes and is independent of the process of decision-making and interaction (March and Olsen 1984, 737).

uncertainty¹⁵⁰. This causal mechanism does not specify how the ideas in question are selected; it focuses only on the ability of selected ideas to constrain behavior by limiting the number of conceivable alternatives for action or by providing compelling ethical motivations for action (*Ibid.*, 13-6). Second, ideas can alleviate problems related to coordination, collective action, and incomplete contracting. When there are several outcomes superior to the status quo and no established criteria on the basis of which actors could choose among them, ideas contribute to outcomes by providing focal points that define cooperative solutions, facilitate coalition building or promote group cohesion (*Ibid.*, 17-20). Finally, if ideas become institutionalized in the form of rules and norms, they can constrain policy long after the underlying configurations of interests and power have changed (*Ibid.*, 20-1).

Historical institutionalism, at the other side of the debate, derives from sociology. It treats actors' interests and preferences as something that has to be analyzed, rather than presumed, because they are neither fixed nor exogenous to interaction, political experience and political institutions (March and Olsen 1984, 739). It maintains that assumptions about self-interested utility-maximizing behavior are empty without consideration of the context in which decisions are made and without a historically based analysis that could allow the researcher to understand what utility actors are trying to maximize and why they prioritize certain goals over others (Thelen and Steinmo 1992, 9).

Historical institutionalism stresses the path-dependent character of policymaking and maintains that although institutions (both formal institutions and informal rules and procedures) are not the only causal factors that explain policy outcomes, they leave their own imprint on political outcomes by constraining policy, by shaping actors' definition of their interests, and by structuring the distribution of political power among actors (*Ibid.*, 2-9). Concerning the study of ideas, historical institutionalism is interested in the relationship between policy ideas and the institutional configuration that mediates between them and actual policy outcomes. It traces the processes through which certain

¹⁵⁰ In conditions of uncertainty, rational actors act on the basis of the *expected* consequences of their action. Under such conditions, expectations about the likely consequences of certain behavior are shaped by causal ideas or by institutional arrangements (Goldstein and Keohane 1993, 13).

ideas win over others and come to dominate political discourse, the way in which the structure of domestic institutions, the institutional setup or the institutional dynamics in a given polity facilitate or impede the introduction and the institutionalization of new ideas, and the way in which the content of new policy ideas can be altered as they are translated to better fit the policymaking process or particular institutional structures (*Ibid.*, 23-6).

Social Constructivism

The end of the Cold War challenged the dominant materialist and rationalist perspectives in International Relations, too. The changing intellectual environment in the field encouraged a rethinking of the role of ideas, norms, ideology, morality and ethics in world politics and prompted some International Relations scholars to turn to sociology in search of alternative theoretical frameworks. The result was a growing body of scholarship, which can be broadly designated as constructivism¹⁵¹ despite substantial theoretical differences between its conventional version (which remains faithful to positivist scientific methods) and its radical version (which utilizes poststructuralism/postmodernism as a methodological tool for analysis, without necessarily subscribing to postmodernism as a philosophical doctrine).

Constructivism relies on an ideational (as opposed to materialist) ontology; it departs from the proposition that ideational factors are more pertinent to explaining human interaction and behavior than are material ones (Wendt 1999). Actors are conceived as embedded in structures of inter-subjective ideas, knowledge and norms, and as constituted through interaction. For example, a constructivist account of national security policies sees states as situated in international and domestic cultural-institutional environments – formal institutions, rules and norms of international law, transnational political discourses, patterns of friendship and enmity, etc. – that determine national security policies (Katzenstein 1996b, 1996a; Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein 1996, 33-4).

¹⁵¹ For general overviews of constructivism see, for example, Finnemore and Sikkink 2001; Hopf 1998.

The Impact of Ideas on Policy: Key Theoretical Issues

Material Factors vs. Ideational Factors

According to materialist approaches, the world is explainable by material factors; ideational factors are reducible to material developments and have no explanatory power. In contrast, approaches adopting an ideational ontology posit that since ‘real’ situations are in fact always interpreted, ideologies and the collective (inter-subjective) understandings that they become part of are not reducible to material developments and can have substantial ‘real’ and independent effects (Adler 1987). Ideology is thus conceived neither as justification nor as an explanation of outcomes, but rather as collective understanding that changes collective beliefs, traditions and concepts and thus offers a ‘blueprint for action’ (*Ibid.*, 16-7). Constructivist (sociological) approaches do not discard material factors and causes; they only argue that the effects of material factors on behavior are always mediated by the meanings that actors attach to them and by actors’ interpretations of particular situations and policy problems (Katzenstein 1996b, 2; Wendt 1999, 24). Ideas thus *constitute* ostensibly material causes such as power and interest.

How Do Ideas Influence Policy Outcomes?

The rationalist view on ideas is instrumentalist and ‘thin’: ideas are instrumental products that serve actors who try to maximize their expected utility (Blyth 1997, 239). Ideas are reducible to the preferences of individuals. They matter because they are ‘held’ by individuals and do not constitute a wider structure into which individuals are embedded and which can shape individuals’ interests and identities (*Ibid.*, 239; Goldstein and Keohane 1993, 3). Ideas are treated as causal or intervening variables, i.e. rationalism recognizes only the *causal*, regulative, and constraining impact of ideational factors, and only to the extent that they account for outcomes that cannot be accounted

for by power, interest, and institutions (Goldstein and Keohane 1993, 3-11; Wendt 1999, 93).

In contrast, the constructivist perspective emphasizes the *constitutive* effects of ideational factors upon ostensibly material factors such as power, interests, and institutions¹⁵² (Wendt 1999, chapter 3). When actors' identities are already constituted, ideational factors (especially norms and rules) can *regulate* behavior by generating expectations about the proper behavior for the given identity. But ideational factors can also influence behavior indirectly by constituting actors' 'properties', i.e. their identities and interests (*Ibid.*, 20-1; Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein 1996, 34-5; Katzenstein 1996b, 22-5).

In the view of constructivists, ideational factors (such as representations, discourses and knowledge) are productive, i.e. they have social effects. First, they enframe reality and structure interpretation by defining the boundaries of accepted knowledge and common sense: they establish certain concepts and causal arguments as dominant and they marginalize others (Weldes *et al.* 1999, 17). For example, analyzing the emergence and consolidation of the discourse of development, Escobar (1995) argues that this discourse establishes a field of knowledge by promoting particular developmental theories and prescriptions rather than others (*Ibid.*, 10). Escobar's analysis shows "how certain representations become dominant and shape indelibly the ways in which reality is imagined and acted upon" and how "a certain order of discourse produces permissible modes of being and thinking while disqualifying and even making others impossible" (*Ibid.*, 5).

Second, by constituting identities and interests, ideational factors affect behavior. Identities, interests, insecurities, etc., all emerge out of a process of representation, construction of narratives and reproduction of collective memories, through which the state administration, the elite and the society define situations, objects, subjects, and relations (Weldes *et al.* 1999, 14). These constructions (identities, interests, etc.) then enable actors to act in a situation and at the same time constrain their behavior by

¹⁵² For example, constructivism would suggest that although a number of potential dangers exist, whether a phenomenon or an actor would be designated as dangerous is contingent and entirely dependent on interpretation (D. Campbell 1998, 1-2; Weldes *et al.* 1999, 12-3).

delimiting the range of acceptable and legitimate actions, and by designating actions that fall outside this range as illogical or illegitimate (*Ibid.*, 17; Doty 1996, 4-5). Although constructivism suggests that successful social constructions (e.g. of the 'national interest') fix and legitimize a particular interpretation, the stabilizing effect need not be permanent. Since each interpretation is contingent and arbitrary, it is open to contestation. The possibility of contestation necessitates that particular constructions of interests, identities, insecurities, etc., as well as the representations, discourses and causal arguments on which they are based, be continuously reproduced. It also means that any construction can be defied and ultimately discarded (Weldes 1996, 285; Weldes *et al.* 1999, 16; Doty 1996, 6-9).

Identities (of states, governments and other relevant actors) are a crucial link between the ideational (cultural) environments in which actors are embedded and policy outcomes. The discourse of development in Escobar's analysis, for example, 'works' by 'convincing' actors to recognize themselves as developed or underdeveloped (1995, 10). Identity determines policy primarily by generating and shaping actors' interests. States could develop an interest in sustaining and affirming particular identities, which reinforces adherence to certain norms or patterns of behavior. Tannenwald (1999), for example, shows that the international norm prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons has effectively regulated states' behavior largely due to its constitutive effects upon states' identities. Adherence and commitment to the norm have been strong because the nuclear taboo has become part of the broader discourse defining the identity of 'civilized' members of the international community (*Ibid.*, 437; see also Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein 1996, 60; Price and Tannenwald 1996). Elites could also attempt to lock the state into a certain identity by willingly binding its behavior through membership into institutions and organizations (Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein 1996, 61). Policies can also directly follow from, or enact, identity politics (*Ibid.*, 61).

Constructing the National Interest

If identity influences outcomes by generating or reconstructing actors' interests, then social constructivism obviously cannot treat interests in the rationalist manner - as objective, exogenously defined and fixed categories that utility-maximizing actors need to simply 'discover'. It has to treat interests as constituted in the process of social interaction.

Constructivist approaches need not – and usually do not – reject the usefulness of the concept of the national interest for understanding how states act in the world arena. To the contrary, Weldes argues that the concept is the very basis of state action because it is through it that policymakers define and understand the policies that the state should pursue. In addition, it functions as a rhetorical device that elites use to legitimize their foreign policy choices and garner public support (1996, 276). Where constructivism parts with materialist theoretical perspectives is in the conceptualization of the national interest. Whereas Realism, for example, infers the national interest from the anarchic self-help character of international politics¹⁵³, constructivists argue that the national interest is a socially constructed category (*Ibid.*, 277).

The social construct designated as 'the national interest' (as well as related social constructs such as security threats or threats to the national interest) is a matter of interpretation, and thus a response to ideational and cultural factors; most notably, it is a response to actors' identity (Katzenstein 1996b, 2). The construct of the national interest emerges in a process whereby state elites and policymakers interpret particular situations, define the policy problems, and interpret and evaluate the policy options they have at their disposal in order to respond to these situations (Weldes 1996, 276-9). Notwithstanding certain 'reality constraints', situations are always open to a more or less wide range of interpretations.

In the process of constructing the national interest, state officials employ representations that attach particular identities (e.g. global leader, regional leader, pariah state, rich

¹⁵³ Hence, the national interest is survival and security, and, by implication, the pursuit of military and economic power as the means of ensuring survival (Weldes 1996, 278).

men's club, alliance of democratic states) to relevant actors, such as the state itself, other states, international organizations, or non-state actors. Policymakers then depict the relations between these subjects by advancing causal or semi-causal arguments¹⁵⁴. The role of such arguments is not to correctly represent reality or to predict future developments. Their role is to make particular descriptions of the situation and particular policy responses appear more reasonable, persuasive, justified, moral or legitimate, while questioning, delegitimizing, or disqualifying others. They also designate certain subjects or phenomena as worthy of protection, while designating others as threats (*Ibid.*, 282). If a situation has been represented and interpreted, if actors' identities have been defined, and if the key causal arguments on which policies should be based have been identified, then the state's national interest has been defined (*Ibid.*, 282). The repeated articulation of the different elements that make up this construction, if successful, would make these elements appear naturally and unquestionably connected, and the content of the 'national interest' incontestable and objectively valid (*Ibid.*, 285). Finally, an indispensable part of the process of constructing the national interest is the identification of subject positions and the interpellation of certain individuals (or groups) into these positions (*Ibid.*, 287).

Representations, Discourses, and (Soft) Power

The ability of a discourse to enframe reality and structure its interpretation is both a function and a source of power. Sociological perspectives such as constructivism and historical institutionalism share the view that discourses and power imply each other. Constructivism (especially its more radical versions) stresses the inherent link between power and discourse: power always involves the constitution of a field of knowledge and discourses, and knowledge and discourses always create power relations (Foucault 1981; Weldes *et al.* 1999, 17). Escobar's analysis, for example, underscores the (soft) power of academic institutions and key developmental institutions like the WB, the IMF or the US Agency for International Development which exercise power not only by controlling

¹⁵⁴ Examples of semi-causal arguments are historical analogies and metaphors, such as the Munich analogy, the Vietnam analogy, the powder keg metaphor, etc.

financial resources, but also by creating dominant ideas, theories and representations (Peet with Hartwick 1999, 146). Institutional power contributes to the strength of a discourse. Discourses upheld by the institutions of the state are likely to be powerful not because they offer a better representation of reality than do alternative discourses, but because they are represented and usually perceived as reflecting the authority of the individuals entrusted to speak on behalf of the state/nation (Weldes *et al.* 1999, 17-8). Whilst ideas need political/institutional authority to dominate political discourse and shape the framework of policymaking, political power is hollow unless it includes authority over policy ideas and political discourse.

The Role of Policy Ideas in Periods of Crisis

Different theoretical approaches that recognize the impact of ideas upon policy agree that periods characterized by institutional and political destabilization and conspicuous policy failures are conducive to ideational change. Hall argues that shifts in policy paradigms can be a response to accumulating policy failures (1993, 280). Ikenberry (1992, 1993) has analyzed the role of policy ideas inspired by Keynesianism and promoted by a transatlantic group of economists and monetary policy experts, in overcoming the political stalemate between Britain and the US and in thus enabling the construction of the open world economic order in the aftermath of World War II. This analysis suggests that to a large extent it was the uncertainty and fluidity characteristic of the postwar situation that provided experts with the opportunity to influence debates on such complex policy issues and to shape the US and British governments' perceptions of their national interests (Ikenberry 1993, 59-60). In a constructivist account of the evolution of US foreign policy ideas on America's role in world politics, Legro argues that ideational change is much more likely when the consequences of actual events deviate from social expectations, when these consequences are very undesirable, and when a socially viable alternative idea exists (2000, 254).

Due to their role of interpretive frameworks, ideas are believed to be important explanatory factors during periods of crisis because they reduce uncertainty by

narrowing down the possible interpretations of the crisis and the viable policy responses (Blyth 2002, 37). In such periods, ideas provide actors with alternative narratives through which to interpret the uncertain environment. They also induce actors to redefine their interests and their perceptions of desirable policy goals. Thus, by reducing uncertainty, reconstituting interests, or bridging political divisions, ideas narrow the barriers to collective action and enable coalition building (*Ibid.*, 38). In Ikenberry's example above, the new monetary policy ideas defined a middle ground between the old contentious alternatives of laissez-faire and interventionism. By identifying areas of common interest, they enabled the building of new large political coalitions between and within governments (1993, 59, 1992, 315-8).

Foreign Policy and Representations of Danger

Constructivism contests the realist/rationalist understanding of foreign policy. On the realist/rationalist view, foreign policy and security policy are (usually) state-centric phenomena that involve the internally mediated and rational response of the state to an external and objective military, ideological or economic threat (D. Campbell 1998, 36; Weldes *et al.* 1999, 9-10). Both states and security threats are naturalized, their properties appear to be stable, and they are taken for granted as facts that derive from the nature of the international system (Weldes *et al.* 1999, 9-10).

In contrast, constructivism rejects the idea that the state possesses a preexisting identity that could enable a rational response to external objective threats. On this view, threats and insecurities are not external to the actor to which they present a threat; they are both implicated in, and emerge out of, the process of defining the actor's identity and interests (Weldes *et al.* 1999, 11-2). A state's identity is 'performatively' constituted through various practices of foreign policy, even though such practices have to purport to be a response to a stable and preexisting state identity, rather than the mechanism of its creation (D. Campbell 1998, 197). Weldes *et al.* (1999) describe this process as a mutual constitution of insecurities and actors as social constructions: culturally produced insecurities are implicated in the cultural production of actors' identity. The practices

that enact the performative constitution of a state's identity are intended to legitimize the state and render state control over the domestic domain indispensable (D. Campbell 1998, 50). The invocation of danger increases the cohesion of the political community that is being threatened, disciplines society, and marginalizes nonconformist identities and behavior (*Ibid.*, 73). Thus, "the constant articulation of danger through foreign policy is... not a threat to a state's identity or existence: it is its condition of possibility" (*Ibid.*, 13).

Discourses and Policy Legitimization

Discourses are powerful tools for legitimizing policy. In an analysis of the discursive strategies employed to justify military action against Iraq during the Gulf War, Campbell (1993) argues that the dominant representation of the war as moral and just – as an instance of "selflessly confronting evil for the sake of good in a land so far away" (US President Bush, quoted in Campbell 1993, 21) – constructed a positive moral identity for the US and a concomitant negative identity for Iraq, and thus legitimized military action. Paris (2002) traces how through proper discursive framing the US administration and its congressional supporters and opponents justified both intervention and non-intervention in the Kosovo conflict. Analyzing four cases of colonization and counterinsurgency, Doty (1996) argues that the way the developed world represented the Third World legitimized the exercise of political, military and economic power on the part of the West, including practices of domination and suppression that would have otherwise been considered illegitimate. Discursive framing has also legitimized development aid, democracy promotion, and human rights promotion (Escobar 1995; Doty 1996, chapter 6). Representations of the colonial or developing world as irrational, immature (infantile), susceptible to ideology, gripped by chaos and disorder, etc., construct different kinds of actors with different degrees of agency in global politics (Doty 1996, 42-6). Developed countries are designated as fully sovereign and are given the authority to define and make decisions about important policies such as development or human rights. Developing countries are constructed as actors having only limited (negative)

sovereignty that should have these policies designed for them and that should be guided in the process of implementing them (*Ibid.*, especially chapters 6,7; Escobar 1995, 30).

Norms, Conditionality, and Compliance

To understand the mechanism through which ideas, norms, and external policy models are diffused internationally and implemented and internalized domestically, and to understand europeanization and compliance with EU accession conditionality in particular, one would again need to consider two stories – a rationalist one based on interests and a sociological (constructivist) one based on ideas. Recent research on europeanization in Central and Eastern European countries in the context of the EU’s eastern enlargement has linked these two stories to two alternative “logics” of europeanization – the logic of consequences and the logic of appropriateness (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005, 9).

The logic of consequences reflects the rationalist understanding of compliance with international norms. It treats actors as self-interested utility-maximizers whose properties (interests, identities, preferences) are exogenously defined and fixed (Checkel 1999b, 2000). In this understanding, conditionality is a matter of international institutions creating the right incentives to induce compliance (Checkel 2000). Europeanization is driven by EU conditionality. It is more likely to occur when EU rules come in the form of determinate, substantial, and quickly disbursed conditions for rewards; if conditionality is sufficiently credible and consistent; if ‘veto players’ (i.e. domestic stakeholders that incur welfare or power losses due to compliance with EU conditionality) are few, and if adoption costs are small (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005, 10-7).

The logic of appropriateness depicts the constructivist (sociological) understanding of compliance, which focuses on the social structures in which actors are embedded and treats actors’ interests, identities, and preferences as determined in the process of social interaction (Checkel 1999b). Compliance with conditionality is conceptualized as a process of ‘socialization’. It is not the outcome of political pressure but of social

interaction and argumentative persuasion that lead actors to redefine their interests and identities in accordance with the external norms (*Ibid.*). The model is expected to work best when the norm-taker is in an uncertain environment, when the promoter of the norm is a member of a group to which the norm-taker aspires to belong, when there is a sense of dialogue and equality rather than imposition; and when the process of norm adoption is not very politicized (Checkel 1999b). In this understanding, Europeanization is conceptualized as internalization of European identities, values and norms, and comes about as a result of persuasion, compliance with behavior that is perceived as appropriate, and adoption of norms that are perceived as legitimate (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005, 9-20). It is more likely to occur when EU rules and norms are perceived as legitimate and when the elites and society of the europeanizing state have a strong pro-European identification (*Ibid.*, 18-20). The social learning model also depends on domestic factors that can be summarized as a ‘cultural match’. A cultural match is present when domestic norms, values and traditional practices are missing (e.g. delegitimized) or are congruent with the norms that have to be internalized (Checkel 1999a, 85-7; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2005, 20).

Ideological Environments, Domestic Politics, and Political Mobilization

There are two key factors that influence the strength of policy discourses and condition their impact on policy outcomes: the broad ideological environment in which policy discourses operate and the dynamics of political mobilization.

Sociological approaches suggest that ideas are more likely to be influential if they are compatible with the existing ideological environment, with existing state institutions and policy instruments, and with existing predispositions and attitudes resulting from the country’s historical experience (Sikkink 1991, 25-41; Blyth 2002, 19; J. Campbell 1998, 379-80). Existing institutions and policy legacies filter through new policy ideas (Blyth 2002, 20). In an analysis of the divergent reception of developmentalist policies in Brazil and Argentina, Sikkink (1991) argues that although developmental models are products of a material matrix of constraints and opportunities, their adoption, implementation and

consolidation are best explained by the ideas that social groups hold about developmental strategies and by the interpretive frameworks that structure policymakers' understanding of what is desirable and possible. The power of developmentalism thus depended on the existing ideological conditions and on the manner in which the new ideas were introduced and institutionalized (*Ibid.*, 22-5). Similarly, Ikenberry (1992) argues that post-World War II economic 'new' thinking was received so favorably largely because it was compatible with mainstream public views about the proper role of the government in the national economy and about the proper goals of foreign policy (*Ibid.*, 292).

Some historical institutionalist analyses assume that bureaucratic and political elites are insulated from society and, when analyzed, need not be viewed in relation to it. Some constructivist accounts even conceptualize states in the international arena in the way they are conceptualized by realists – as unitary actors with a single identity and a single set of interests (for an illustration, see Wendt 1999). Studying the 'elite' story or treating the state as a 'black box', however, tells us little about the process of political mobilization, which is central for understanding how policy paradigms acquire broad acceptance in society and how policy ideas facilitate, rather than just constrain, political action (Blyth 1997, 237; J. Campbell 1998, 380). In order to trace the enabling functions of policy ideas, it is necessary to analyze the ways in which these ideas become a means of, and a guide to, collective action and political mobilization of coalitions in favor of specific policy outcomes, how discourses are implicated in institutional and political rivalries, how publics accept or resist discursive constructions, as well as the way in which elites and other actors draw on the symbolic power of ideas to frame, package, and thus legitimize, their policy agenda (Blyth 1997, 237; J. Campbell 1998, 380-1; Weldes 2003, 17).

Sociological approaches emphasize the power conflicts that underlie the emergence of dominant policy discourses and suggest that the relationship between policymaking and ideas involves two major contests – a contest over ideas and a contest over political/institutional power to ensure the dominance of particular ideas. Ideas are thus more likely to be influential if they are adopted by capable and powerful institutions (Sikkink 1991, 26). The process of ideational change, according to Hall, is a sociological

and political process, rather than a merely scientific one. Expert opinion matters for it only to the extent that it is accepted by competing factions. The process is influenced by the distribution of power and institutional authority among the competing factions, as well as on their differential access to the policymaking process (Hall 1993, 280; J. Campbell 1998, 379; Sikkink 1991, 25-7). As it is those with superior political power and authority that ultimately choose among competing expert views, paradigm change is preceded and accompanied by a contest for authority over the issues at hand (Hall 1993, 280).

The Policy Impact of Bulgaria's Europeanization Paradigm: A Constructivist Account

The analysis of the two case studies in chapters three, four, and five suggests that focusing solely on material factors, power and interests would not help us understand the dynamics of europeanization in Bulgaria and that research needs to also include analysis of the workings of the Europeanization approach that emerged as Bulgaria's dominant policy paradigm at the end of the 1990s. I argue that the dynamics of europeanization in Bulgaria are captured better by a constructivist account of the contentious deployment of the Europeanization paradigm in policymaking than by a narrow rationalist approach. I have therefore analyzed the interpretative frameworks that have structured the policymakers' approach to issues of europeanization, the rival policy discourses that have produced these interpretive frameworks, and the manner in which the symbols, representations, ideological constructions, and arguments at the base of these rival discourses have been employed in the process of political mobilization in the domestic political sphere. Although the dissertation aims primarily at analyzing the dynamics of the europeanization process in Bulgaria, it is also an application of constructivism to the study of europeanization in Southeast Europe and can thus contribute to the constructivist literature in the fields of International Relations and political economy.

In the remainder of this chapter, I re-examine the empirical material provided by the dissertation's case studies. Applying a constructivist theoretical framework, I outline the

mechanism through which the Europeanization policy approach has influenced policymaking in Bulgaria in the last decade.

The Ascent of Bulgaria's Europeanization Paradigm

The idea of Europeanization was around ever since the fall of communism and it is the dynamics of political mobilization that explain why it failed to achieve a dominant position before the late 1990s. In this initial period the two key players in Bulgarian politics – the BSP and the SDS – continued to rely on the ideological power of socialism and anti-communism to mobilize public support. This ideological rivalry emerged as a central one in the earliest stages of post-socialist transition and remained central for a relatively long period of time due to the return to power of the old communist elites and due to the desire of the democratic political forces to obtain a legitimate identity although they did not originate in a dissident movement. In addition, the BSP frequently turned to nationalism which had emerged as another salient ideology after the end of socialism.

The Europeanization paradigm ascended in the aftermath of the severe political, economic and social crisis of 1996/1997 which virtually devastated the BSP, tilted the balance of political power clearly in favor of the Right, and reshuffled the ideological setup of Bulgaria's political and public spheres. Upheld by the powerful ODS, the Europeanization idea was lent unprecedented legitimacy and support by a society that perceived the need for a new direction of development as absolutely necessary. Like most major socio-economic crises, this was an extremely ideological period that cannot be adequately understood by adopting a narrow utilitarianist approach.

In conditions of economic and political distress, the Europeanization approach was adopted as a comprehensive interpretive framework that enabled the ODS government to formulate a set of policy guidelines for Bulgaria's future economic development and political organization, to enact a dramatic break with past failed policies, and to replace the worn-out ideological rivalry between socialism and anti-communism with a more consensual political agenda. In the process, the Europeanization paradigm emerged as a

two-pronged ideological construction that joined two distinct grand projects that did not necessarily imply each other. One was the project of ‘europeanizing’ and ‘civilizing’ Bulgarian identity. The other was the project of economic development and social welfare.

Deployment and Decline of Bulgaria’s Europeanization Paradigm

Chapters three, four, and five examined the deployment of the Europeanization paradigm in two crisis situations. The first such situation was Bulgaria’s involvement in the Kosovo conflict. The domestic crisis was instigated by the ODS government’s decision to demonstrate Bulgaria’s Euro-Atlantic solidarity by providing an air corridor for NATO’s military campaign against neighboring Yugoslavia despite heightened domestic controversy. The crisis entailed potentially high political costs for the ruling elite due to the public’s strong anti-war attitude and the shrill oppositional campaign of the ODS’s main political rival – the BSP – that accused the government of compromising national security, disregarding the national interest, and trampling down national dignity. The government requested political and economic compensations in exchange for Bulgaria’s support for NATO’s military campaign. It demanded speedier EU and NATO integration and maximal economic benefits from the recovery and reconstruction aid earmarked for the Balkans, mainly through participation in major infrastructure projects. The demonstration of Euro-Atlantic solidarity during the crisis contributed to the decision of the EU to open accession negotiations with Bulgaria. As regards economic compensations, Bulgaria aggressively promoted and ultimately secured the construction of a second Danube bridge between Bulgaria and Romania.

I argue that the government’s policy during the crisis was neither a rational response to an objective security threat nor the outcome of pure cost and benefit calculations. By implication, the ideological underpinning of this policy – i.e. the government’s foreign policy doctrine – was not an ideological tool that the ODS government designed purposefully and employed strategically in order to outperform domestic opposition, to legitimize its controversial pro-NATO policy, and to minimize domestic political costs. It was indeed used to represent the government’s policy choice in as incontestable terms

as possible in order to legitimize it, but it was not designed instrumentally and specifically for this purpose.

My analysis has suggested that in the course of the Kosovo controversy the ODS fell back on the Europeanization paradigm in order to interpret and manage the crisis situation. On the basis of this paradigm it affirmed Bulgaria's European (as opposed to Balkan) identity and, with a view of this identity, determined Bulgaria's interest in the Kosovo crisis: namely to be widely recognized as a committed supporter of Euro-Atlantic values and an opponent of violent nationalism in order to be allowed to join the EU and NATO sooner rather than later. This interest delineated the range of prudent and morally defensible policy options, discarded other policy options as immoral or contradicting the national interest, and ultimately determined and justified the policy choice. In turn, the policy choice acted out Bulgaria's Euro-Atlantic identity for the Euro-Atlantic world to appreciate. The Europeanization paradigm was the dominant interpretive framework that influenced policymaking in the course of this crisis and it clearly won against its key ideological rival – the nationalist discourse focused on sovereignty.

By deploying the Europeanization paradigm and other discourses circulating in the political and public spheres the ODS constructed a coherent foreign policy doctrine that guided its Kosovo policy. Reflecting the dual identity/development structure of the Europeanization paradigm, the foreign policy doctrine had a dual identity/interest structure. The identity-centered part – the doctrine of differentiation from the Balkans – attempted to present Bulgaria as a country that was *in* the Balkans but not *of* the volatile conflict-ridden Balkans, as a country that exerted a stabilizing europeanizing influence on the region, and that was ready to take on the moral obligations entailed in its European identity (in the concrete case – to support NATO's military campaign against its neighbor). The interest-centered part of the foreign policy doctrine deployed the developmental aspects of Bulgaria's Europeanization paradigm. Linking the choice and demonstration of European identity to the pursuit of 'the national interest', it requested fast Euro-Atlantic integration and economic assistance in return for Bulgaria's europeanizing and stabilizing role in the Balkans. This two-sided foreign policy doctrine was articulated in the process of interpreting the crisis situation, not independently of it.

The key representations and arguments used in its articulation had existed before, but they were joined together into a coherent interpretive framework in the course of the decision-making process and in the context of the perceived threats and opportunities that the situation presented.

While the pursuit of economic compensations was prompted by the economic losses incurred due to the conflict, the form of compensations that the ODS government demanded can only be understood by employing a constructivist perspective. The government did not ask for direct compensations. It asked for an infrastructure project – the second bridge on the Danube – whose economic feasibility was dubious. I have argued that the prioritization of Danube Bridge-2, too, was part and parcel of the deployment of the ODS's foreign policy doctrine. Danube Bridge-2 enacted all the key imageries and causal arguments around which the doctrine was woven. It provided an alternative route to Western Europe that circumvented Yugoslavia and thus symbolically disengaged Bulgaria from the conflict zones in the Balkans. It demonstrated Bulgaria's invulnerability from Balkan crises and thus appeared to affirm its position of a stabilizing factor and a trustworthy partner of the West in the region. It strengthened Bulgaria's role of an infrastructure center and a key transport 'bridge' between continents. At the same time, it appeared to safeguard the national economic interest by preventing future encroachment upon the country's ability to reap the economic benefits of its strategic geographic location and by giving boost to the local economies in adjacent regions. The Danube Bridge-2 project was thus represented as 'strategic' in every sense of the word. It was never judged on the basis of economic feasibility.

The second crisis situation in which I have traced the deployment of the Europeanization approach was caused by Bulgaria's resistance against EU accession conditionality that required premature decommissioning of four old Soviet-built nuclear units at the Kozloduy NPP. Like the Kosovo crisis, the Kozloduy crisis entailed great political costs for the ruling elite. The EU considered the units unsafe and non-upgradeable and firmly conditioned Bulgaria's future EU membership upon their premature closure. Yet, compliance with these demands was resisted by the majority of ordinary Bulgarians, who perceived nuclear energy as one of the few competitive sectors of the economy and as a guarantee of low prices of electricity. It was resisted by the powerful and active

nuclear energy lobby, whose economic interests were at stake. And it was resisted by the political opposition which saw the issue as vital enough to serve as a basis of a sustained aggressive political campaign against the government.

Prior to the crucial EU Helsinki summit in 1999, Bulgaria agreed to the closure of units 1-2 in order to be able to start EU accession negotiations. In 2002, it also agreed to the closure of units 3-4 in order to be able to complete the negotiations in time to secure EU accession in 2007. Both decisions, however, were made under unrelenting pressure from the EU and were extremely unpopular at home. Public support for the nuclear energy industry and for the Kozloduy NPP in particular, was remarkably high. The average Bulgarian appeared intent on keeping four old nuclear units even at the cost of EU accession. The Bulgarian leadership has continuously campaigned in favor of reopening the second pair of units. It has also restarted the construction of Bulgaria's unfinished and almost forgotten second NPP at Belene with the declared intention to guarantee the future development of the nuclear energy industry.

In terms of outcomes the Kozloduy crisis differs substantially from the Kosovo crisis. During this crisis, the Europeanization approach has failed to influence the behavior of the elite and the public and has been outperformed by a coherent pro-nuclear discourse upheld by a broad informal coalition of political actors and civic organizations supportive of the Kozloduy NPP, joined by the nuclear energy lobby. This discourse, which I have labeled 'nuclear nationalism', has focused on national interests, sovereignty, national dignity, and economic development and social welfare, all of which have been equated with the nuclear energy industry.

Calculations of economic losses, domestic political costs, Bulgaria's bargaining position vis-à-vis the EU, and the interests and the activities of the nuclear energy lobby have been important factors in the Kozloduy/Belene case. Yet, a purely rationalist account focused only on such factors would fail to explain many aspects of the crisis. For example, although the early closure of Kozloduy's old units has been represented as encroachment upon Bulgaria's economic interests, the leadership has acted with the full knowledge that in reality the losses related to the units' closure were much smaller than the current and potential benefits related to EU membership; utilitarian calculations

cannot explain the apparent readiness of the Bulgarian public to sacrifice the longed-for association with Europe for the sake of a single enterprise; my empirical analysis indicates that the Bulgarian leadership did not attempt to counter, and oftentimes even nurtured, the very nuclear nationalist discourse that was responsible for the high domestic political costs involved in the crisis and disregarded possible strategies for lowering these costs (such as a ‘tied hands strategy’); the mammoth Belene NPP project was launched without a prior economic analysis of its economic feasibility and has been pursued regardless of the fact that its feasibility has been disputed.

I have argued that the resistance against EU nuclear safety conditionality and the staunch support for the nuclear energy industry in Bulgaria have been nurtured by the powerful pro-nuclear discourse that has dominated policy and public debates during the Kozloduy crisis. They have also reflected the failure of the Europeanization paradigm to provide an influential alternative interpretation of the nuclear energy issue. Under the influence of the discourse of nuclear nationalism, the key stakeholders in the Kozloduy crisis have emphasized Bulgaria’s identity of a nuclear energy power and an energy center of the Balkans and have de-emphasized its European identity. On this basis, they have articulated the national interest as an interest in economic development through extensive development of the nuclear energy sector and have designated compliance with EU nuclear safety conditionality as a policy option that contradicts this interest.

The basic question that the two case studies pose is: What accounts for the different impact of the Europeanization approach in the two crisis situations? We can break this question down into several questions: What accounts for the strong influence of the Europeanization paradigm on Bulgaria’s foreign policy and transport infrastructure policy at the end of the 1990s? Why did Europeanization subsequently fail in the debate on nuclear energy? How could nuclear nationalism win out if each of its underlying assumptions was open to dispute or simply unconvincing, if it was in open conflict with the clear and unrelenting EU nuclear safety conditionality and if it threatened to derail Bulgaria’s coveted EU accession? Below I map the factors that in my view account for the different impact of the Europeanization approach in the two crisis situations

Understanding the Power and Weakness of Bulgaria's Europeanization Paradigm

Compatibility with the Existing Ideological Environment

At the end of the 1990s, the Europeanization paradigm was embraced as a hegemonic policy paradigm by both elites and society largely because it fitted well into the existing structure of ideological predispositions and attitudes in Bulgarian society. This structure was under the influence of three main sources. There was a powerful outside discourse that represented the region as culturally and civilizationally un-European, politically unstable, and susceptible to violent ethnic conflicts. I have referred to this discourse as 'Balkanism'. It unsettled Bulgaria's self-identification as a European country and encouraged active attempts at 'europeanizing' Bulgarian identity.

The international community's Balkans policy, on the other hand, was increasingly reliant on a policy approach whose main assumption was that Balkan countries' development and security depended on their fast EU integration. It encouraged association with Europe as the best way to manage the process of transition. I have labeled this policy approach as 'Europeanization'. It, too, considered the 'europeanization' of Balkan identity and 'socialization' into European values to be a key prerequisite for Balkan countries' fast European integration, and it even preserved some of the basic assumptions of Balkanism. Yet, it focused above all on inducing political and social change in the Balkans in line with EU developmental models.

The domestic structure of shared ideas and attitudes towards Europe, too, affirmed both the cultural functions of europeanization and the importance of adopting European models of economic and social development. On the whole, in the late 1990s, all three sources encouraged Bulgaria's emergent Europeanization paradigm. They also fitted its internal structure (which had been shaped in the aftermath of the devastating 1996/1997 political and economic crisis) – namely a two-sided construction that joined the project of 'europeanizing' Bulgarian identity with the project of economic development and social welfare. Although issues of social and economic development were relevant from the very beginning, in the late 1990s the strength of Balkanism and its frequent

reproduction by the local intellectual and political elites boosted in particular the cultural and identity-transforming elements of the Europeanization paradigm.

One factor for the waning importance of the Europeanization paradigm in the Kozloduy case was its growing incompatibility with the external and domestic ideological environments. In the early 2000s political stabilization in the Balkans, Bulgaria's progress in Euro-Atlantic integration, Bulgaria's improved European credentials, the general decline of the discourse of Balkanism, and the waning relevance of the symbolic differentiation between Europe and the Balkans, combined to weaken the 'identity' elements of the Europeanization paradigm, making them increasingly irrelevant for the interpretive frameworks that guided policymaking. With its 'identity' project weakened, the paradigm grew less effective as a tool for policy legitimization and political mobilization.

Changes in the domestic structure of ideas and attitudes during the 2000s mattered, too. They were bad news for the Europeanization approach and good news for its main ideological rival during the Kozloduy crisis – the discourse of nuclear nationalism. The broad unconditional public support for europeanization characteristic of the period of the late 1990s was giving way to a growing grudge against the downsides of EU accession, to perceptions of inequality between Bulgaria and the EU, and to fears that Bulgaria would be treated as a second-rate EU member. The period was also marked by the emergence of a mild nationalist political discourse nurtured by the social and economic distress that accompanied Bulgaria's post-socialist transition. Nuclear nationalism was strengthened by its tendency to engage with issues central to this broader nationalist discourse – loss of sovereignty over economic policy, de-industrialization and declining standards of living.

Position vis-à-vis the Rival Nationalist Discourse

In the late 1990s, the Europeanization paradigm was articulated not only as a project of identity transformation but also as a project of economic development. It thus stretched over the domain of its traditional rival – the discourse of nationalism. It offered its own

vision of 'national' development, in terms of economic development, geopolitical orientation and security. Due to its preoccupation with the economy, it even tackled sensitive issues of autonomy and equality to the economically developed countries that have traditionally been the breeding ground of nationalist discourses.

Thus, the paradigm's ideological appeal and internal coherence initially rested precisely upon its articulation as a dual project of identity transformation and economic development. This dual structure was predicated upon the assumption that European integration would gradually lead to economic development. During the Kosovo crisis the Europeanization paradigm sustained this presumed causal link and convincingly presented itself as a superior vision of national development. It thus occupied the niche of the nationalist discourse.

Whereas the Europeanization paradigm's dual internal structure was an advantage during the Kosovo crisis, it became a liability during the Kozloduy crisis. Unlike the Kosovo crisis, which entailed moderate security threats that could be made tolerable by the promise and delivery of economic gains (however illusory), the Kozloduy crisis entailed substantial economic and welfare costs. EU demands seemed to be directly linked to the cost of energy and thus concerned the welfare of ordinary citizens that were already living in distress due to low living standards. The Kozloduy crisis thus introduced a fissure within the Europeanization paradigm and made its identity part seem increasingly unrelated to, and even incompatible with, its development part. The failure of the ruling elite to keep together the project of identity transformation and the project of development/prosperity left the Europeanization paradigm particularly vulnerable to contestation.

During the Kozloduy crisis, the development/prosperity project was all but decoupled from the Europeanization approach and coupled to the rival discourse of nuclear nationalism. The pro-nuclear coalition actively sought to turn the tables. It handled well the challenges posed by the Europeanization discourse. Although they rejected Europeanization as a political and policy doctrine, the pro-nuclear groups avoided being openly associated with anti-Europeanism in general and successfully avoided any 'Europeanist' challenges against their legitimacy. What is more, they presented the

nuclear nationalist approach as a better way towards actual europeanization. The nuclear nationalist discourse advanced a causal argument about the relationship between europeanization and development that was the opposite of the one advanced by the Europeanization paradigm: it suggested that it is national economic development that would lead to successful (and dignified) European integration, not the other way around. Widespread public perceptions of Bulgaria's unequal status in the EU added weight to this causal argument. To the majority of Bulgarians it appeared that the only way for Bulgaria to enter the EU as an equal partner to the other European states was to enter as an economically developed country. The defense of the Kozloduy NPP emerged as the symbol of Bulgaria's quest for a dignified EU accession. This time round, the nationalist discourse stretched over and occupied the domain of the Europeanization discourse.

Political Mobilization

In both crisis situations that I have analyzed, the policy impact of the Europeanization discourse has been mediated by the ability of political actors to effectively employ its symbolic resources as tools for political mobilization. Both crises were battles of ideological enframing and political mobilization. Four factors appear to have been especially important in these battles: the coherence of stakeholders' political mobilization strategies, the way stakeholders drew on the symbolic power of rival policy discourses to enframe issues of compliance with external demands and conditions, the stakeholders' ability to produce a hegemonic construction of the national interest in line with their favored policy discourse, and the stakeholders' perceived moral authority to 'speak' about the policy issues at stake.

During the Kosovo crisis, the Europeanization paradigm was strengthened by the success of the ODS's strategy of political mobilization that was built around a coherent foreign policy doctrine, as well as by the concomitant failure of BSP's strategy of political mobilization that let the party's anti-war discourse fall victim to the party's unattractive public image. During the Kozloduy crisis, the pro-Kozloduy coalition followed a consistent and persistent political mobilization strategy, complete with an effective media campaign. It fully utilized powerful symbols such as the narrative of

impending economic collapse and declining living standards to encourage the building of a wide pro-nuclear coalition. Popular support for the old Kozloduy units has had a lot to do with the effectiveness and persistency of the discursive practices through which the pro-nuclear coalition singled out the Kozloduy problem as an outrageous encroachment upon national sovereignty and the welfare of the people. In contrast, the ruling elite employed the Europeanization discourse incoherently, often abandoned it completely in favor of nuclear nationalism, and generally avoided taking a clear position in the debate. In addition, when it did employ the Europeanization discourse as a tool for mobilization and policy justification, the manner of its employment and the content of the discourse had little relation to identity and Euro-Atlantic values; instead, the strategy was to stress the material benefits of EU accession. By forfeiting the symbolic power of the identity aspects of the Europeanization project, the ruling elite conceded the primacy of the instrumental (as opposed to the identity-centered) approach to the Europeanization process. The political mobilization struggle between Europeanization and nuclear nationalism was thus fought on the turf of nuclear nationalism – i.e. over issues of costs and benefits.

The constructivist approach to conditionality and norm adoption emphasizes the perceived legitimacy of external conditions and norms as an important precondition for compliance. The two case studies do not support such a conclusion. During the Kozloduy crisis the perceived illegitimacy of the EU's nuclear safety conditionality contributed to the weakness of the Europeanization approach. However, during the Kosovo crisis the perception that NATO's military campaign and NATO's demands were illegitimate was shared by many ordinary Bulgarians but did not weaken the policy impact of the Europeanization paradigm. I suggest that the more important factor in both cases was the way in which political actors utilized the symbolic power of dominant policy approaches to enframe issues of compliance (rather than of conditionality) and to advance socially recognized 'identity' arguments or 'materialist' arguments in favor of compliance or non-compliance. During the Kosovo crisis, the ODS was able to draw on the strong identity elements of the Europeanization paradigm and to represent compliance as the only suitable and morally defensible policy option for a country that wanted to sustain a Euro-Atlantic identity. It further advanced the argument that

compliance would guarantee material and political benefits. In the Kozloduy case, the dominant nuclear nationalist discourse has advanced a strong 'identity' argument in favor of non-compliance (compliance would ruin Bulgaria's status as a nuclear energy power) and an even stronger materialist argument in favor of non-compliance (compliance would harm the national economic interests and the welfare of the people).

Both crises were also battles over the definition of Bulgaria's national interest. During the Kosovo crisis, the ODS government won the battle. The BSP framed its anti-NATO position as defense of the national interest, which it defined as security, sovereignty, and preserving national dignity. However, by emphasizing the direct causal link between the 'identity' part of its vision of the national interest (i.e. an interest in demonstrating Bulgaria's Euro-Atlantic identity and joining the community of 'normal' European states) and the 'interest' part of its vision of the national interest (i.e. an interest in gaining maximal political and economic benefits by demonstrating Euro-Atlantic solidarity), the ODS successfully occupied the 'national interest' niche and crowded out the BSP.

During the Kozloduy crisis the Europeanization approach was sidelined largely because the leadership failed to convincingly articulate the national interest as a dual interest in fast European integration and economic development (on the assumption that the former would lead to the latter) and to stabilize this construction by stressing the greater economic benefits of EU integration compared to the economic benefits of preserving a large nuclear energy sector. The first to fail was the ODS government in the initial stages of the crisis in 1999. It started framing the defense of the Kozloduy NPP in terms of defending Bulgaria's national economic interest. This was a good strategy of keeping in check the nationalist discourse that was promptly picked up by the opposition BSP. However, when the ODS rationalized the compromise agreement with the EU by again invoking the national interest, this time defined as 'European integration above everything else', its two-pronged construct of the national interest fell apart. If European integration did not lead to economic development but rather seemed set to stall it, then the national interest could be defined either as pursuit of European integration or as pursuit of economic development and prosperity.

The NDSV and the BSP governments often played the ‘national interest’ card. Whilst critics branded the official Kozloduy policy as flagrant betrayal of the national interest, the NDSV government itself presented it as defense of the national interest¹⁵⁵. The BSP government did not abandon the ‘national interest’ rhetoric even as it made a europeanization turn in its actual policy. But it is not the frequent resort to the ‘national interest’ that undermined the Europeanization discourse.

The discourse failed because the ambiguity of the leadership’s policy and discursive practices in effect propped up the nuclear nationalist definition of Bulgaria’s national interest as an interest in economic development through extensive development of the allegedly vital nuclear energy sector. The NDSV tried to substitute dispassionate calculation for the romantic representation of the NPP as an economic marvel and a symbol of national pride only in the face of political turmoil following the completion of the Energy chapter of the accession negotiations. It did not develop this representational strategy much further. After 2005, the BSP government justified the decision to close the units by defining the national interest as an interest in ‘European integration above everything’. Yet, it failed to stress the far greater economic benefits of EU integration compared to the economic benefits of preserving the old units and it failed to discourage perceptions that EU integration harmed economic development. Eager to accentuate their own efforts to save the NPP, both governments failed to counter the widespread perception that the loss of the units was an economic disaster. In addition, both governments avowed their commitment to preserve Bulgaria’s reputation of a Balkan energy leader, which confirmed the economic significance of the nuclear energy sector. Finally, the aggressive promotion of the Belene NPP – in defiance of economic rationale – has not only failed to dampen the Kozloduy controversy, but has also solidified the nuclear nationalist argument that nuclear energy is the key to Bulgaria’s economic prosperity and should thus be considered to be a vital national interest.

The two crisis situations that I have examined have also involved struggles over authority to formulate policy and over the authoritativeness of policy ideas. In the late 1990s, the Europeanization paradigm won this struggle without fighting. Its

¹⁵⁵ See for example Kuneva and Kovachev, quoted in MEER 2003; officials, quoted in *Sega* 3.12.2003, 25/28.9.2002, in *24 Chasa* 25.9.2002, 4, in *Mediapool* 19.11.2002.

authoritativeness was guaranteed by the unprecedented legitimacy that Bulgarian society lent to the ‘new’ policy ideas employed by the ODS to deal with the unsettling 1997 crisis and with the spectacular policy failures of the previous governments. Due to the total delegitimization of the BSP’s socialist/nationalist ideology, the Europeanization paradigm did not even face a strong rival policy discourse. The ODS, on its part, sustained the authoritativeness of the Europeanization discourse with the help of the two main techniques that it used to deploy the paradigm. One technique was to virtually flood the public sphere and the political sphere by strong (indeed often exaggerated) pro-Europeanization and civilization-choice rhetoric, which solidified the ideological power of Europeanization ideas. The other was to translate the Europeanization paradigm into policy guidelines for concrete policy areas and economic sectors (similar to the ones developed for the transport infrastructure sector that I have discussed in chapter 3). This technique institutionalized the policy paradigm and rendered it into the neutral (rather than ideological) terms of the ostensibly expert-dominated language of policymaking.

By the time the Kozloduy crisis developed, the initial legitimacy conferred upon the Europeanization paradigm had been largely exhausted. In the ensuing struggle over the right and authority to ‘speak’ about nuclear energy, the paradigm lost to the nuclear nationalist discourse. The key to the success of the nuclear nationalist discourse was the propitious collusion between political actors that identified themselves as defenders of the national interest and that took a firm ‘national’ stance on the nuclear energy problem although they had no technical knowledge to uphold the legitimacy of such a stance, and the nuclear energy lobby that pursued its particular economic interests but was not readily recognized as a lobby and could present its views as the objective views of the whole expert community because it had an ostensible monopoly over expert knowledge. The symbiosis between the ‘national’ and the ‘expert’ parts of the pro-Kozloduy coalition provided expert backing for the ‘national’ position and conferred ‘national’ legitimacy and moral power to the views of the nuclear energy lobby. The nuclear nationalist discourse thus emerged backed up by widespread perceptions that it had the moral authority to ‘speak’ about the national nuclear energy sector.

Combating Marginalization

One of the key functions of any policy paradigm intended to guide Bulgarian development has been to improve the country's status in world politics and to recover some sense of collective purpose. This is because throughout the period of post-socialist transition Bulgarians' sense of collective self-esteem has been trampled both by prolonged and severe domestic socio-economic crisis and by marginalization in the international arena. The domestic crisis brought poverty, undignified living standards, erosion of the social order, mass emigration and displacement, and a pervasive sense of personal insecurity. Its devastating effects were compounded by the fact that Bulgaria was marginalized internationally.

In the late 1990s, when the main source of Bulgaria's marginalization was its association with the conflict-ridden Balkans that were commonly perceived as lying beyond the civilizational borders of Europe, Europeanization performed the function of battling marginalization well by prescribing complete identity transformation and enabling a strategy of differentiation from the Balkans. The ODS government's success in deploying the Europeanization paradigm during the Kosovo crisis was largely due to its ability to elaborate such a strategy and to link it to its strategic plans to utilize Bulgaria's 'difference' from the Balkans as a means of speeding up the country's Euro-Atlantic integration.

Although Balkanism was declining throughout the 2000s, the marginalization of Bulgaria and the Balkans was not being reversed; it was only being reframed in terms of failed economic transition and low living standards (that frequently encouraged labor emigration to the wealthy European states). Ethnic conflicts in the Balkans subsided and representations of deficient economic development gradually overtook representations of deficient cultural and civilizational identity as the main elements of the marginalizing international discourse on the Balkans. Since the early 2000s, the Balkans have been more often perceived as Europe's ghetto locked in a vicious circle of economic devastation and criminalization, rather than simply as hotspots of ethnic tensions. Bulgaria has not been the worst in the 'ghettoizing' group – indeed, many policy analysts have excluded the quickly europeanizing countries like Romania and Bulgaria

from this representation – but it has nevertheless been depicted as located on the periphery of Europe. Importantly, Bulgarian society itself has appeared to be sensitive about its second-rate status in Europe. If the strategy of differentiation from the Balkans was to remain effective in this changed ideological environment, it had to be redefined. Therefore, the stress has since been put not on demonstrating Bulgaria’s difference from the Balkans in terms of identity, but on asserting Bulgaria’s better prospects for economic recovery and its role of an engine of regional development.

During the Kozloduy crisis, however, the Europeanization paradigm could no longer sustain its basic proposition regarding development – namely that economic development is guaranteed by European integration. In addition, it was no longer possible to invoke ‘Balkan’ dangers to improve Bulgaria’s position in Europe. When the BSP government attempted to exploit the argument that regional stability would be endangered by Bulgaria’s inability to export electricity after the closure of units 3-4, the EU was simply unimpressed. Europeanization no longer appeared suited to combat Bulgaria’s marginalization. In contrast, the discourse of nuclear nationalism promised national economic development and seemed well suited to address the problem of marginalization. The alleged economic significance of the nuclear energy sector and its perceived ability to turn Bulgaria into a technologically developed country – a nuclear energy power and an energy center of the Balkans – were the key imageries of the discourse that won it the public support that it enjoyed.

The Europeanization perspective on the nuclear energy issue also became a victim of ordinary Bulgarians’ dissatisfaction with the social and economic conditions in Bulgaria. Struggles over identity in the course of the two crises were not only struggles over values and cultural traits; they were also struggles between the divergent visions of economic development prescribed by the different identity choices. The strength and weakness of policy discourses had thus much to do with their perceived ability or failure to reverse the economic decline and the decline of living standards. Additional factors were the emergence of endemic public perceptions of pervasive crisis and the related “emergence of cynical and angered majorities” (Krastev 2002, 17). Simply put, to the average Bulgarian citizen the country’s economic transition was not a success story. The perception of this average citizen was that the governing elite was unable to fend for

citizens' welfare, to arrest the continuous decline of living standards, and to tackle problems of social dislocation, loss of dignity and feelings of personal insecurity.

The elusiveness of economic development and social cohesion was a key factor behind the waning public support for the reform agendas of the elites and resulted in a pervasive crisis of democratic representation. EU conditionality exacerbated the problem because, whilst living standards remained low (or falling) during the 2000s, EU conditionality was strengthening citizens' perceptions that they had no control over the policymaking process (*Ibid.*, 29). As the Kozloduy predicament started to be represented – and perceived – as a symbol simultaneously of the loss of cheap energy and the loss of sovereignty over decision making in the sphere of the economy, it became a summary symbol of the economic troubles of Bulgaria's transition. For the majority of ordinary Bulgarians, opposing EU demands for closure of the Kozloduy units was a symbolic expression of their dissatisfaction with the outcomes of Bulgaria's transition.

The Importance of Infrastructure

When examined together the two case studies suggest that Bulgaria's Europeanization has been intricately related to large-scale transport and energy infrastructure. The reason why the two domains have become intertwined is that the vision of Bulgaria's economic development has taken on the particular form of infrastructure development. And just like Europeanization grew more contestable when it started to be perceived as no longer conducive to economic development, so it grew more contestable when it started to be perceived as no longer conducive to transport and energy infrastructure development.

Infrastructure projects appear to have overtaken many of the ideological functions of economic growth and even of social welfare. During the Kosovo crisis, the ODS represented the construction of Danube Bridge-2 as pursuit of the national economic interest. The public accepted the project as if it could really offset the losses incurred during the conflict. The Kozloduy NPP has been widely regarded as a great asset of the Bulgarian economy that sustains the whole energy sector, brings economic profit, and keeps consumer prices of electricity low. The Belene NPP is believed to be

indispensable if Bulgaria is to guarantee its future economic development, keep prices of energy affordable, and retain regional leadership. I have argued that the economic significance of large-scale infrastructure is in fact dubious and that its association with increased social welfare is altogether unsubstantiated. Thus, if the public's chief concern has been more dignified living standards, replacing demands for development and social welfare with demands for transport and energy infrastructure development has been a strategic failure. The fact that local policymakers have forcefully represented infrastructure development as Bulgaria's natural developmental path and as the key to future prosperity is not a sufficient explanation of the public's tendency to 'buy' the argument.

My reading of the two case studies suggests two reasons for these rather puzzling public preferences. One reason is the crisis of democratic representation. Several key developments associated with this crisis stand out as particularly important: distrust in politicians, in state institutions, and in their reform agendas; disappointment with politics; and perceptions that citizens are left out of the policymaking process. Unlike economic reforms and policies, single 'grand' infrastructure projects are seen as ideologically neutral, as largely independent of the (always shady) local political struggles and, hence, as serving the public and national interest; at the same time, their scale and importance have been sufficient to allow citizens to feel as relevant participants in the policymaking process.

Another reason for the public's willingness to support large-scale infrastructure projects is that, unlike mundane reforms and policies, such projects serve important symbolic functions that befit the public's desire to recover some sense of collective self-esteem and purpose. The expected symbolic effects of Danube Bridge-2 – namely to reestablish Bulgaria's (temporarily) severed spatial connection to Europe and to terminate Bulgaria's dependency on the Milosevic regime – was an important factor behind its acceptance by the public. With the decline of Balkanism the public has more often attributed Bulgaria's marginalization to the country's dire socio-economic situation than to its insufficient European credentials. Public support for the nuclear energy sector (in defiance of crucial EU accession conditionality) has thus reflected the desire of Bulgarians to defend the last vestiges of the country's economic prowess.

In many respects, the symbolic features of big infrastructure projects have been purposefully accentuated and exploited by the elite and other stakeholders in order to garner public support for these projects. However, even the elite story calls for a constructivist, as opposed to a narrow rationalist, approach. In order to understand why the elite selected these projects (rather than others) in the first place, it is necessary to analyze the role of ideational factors. The ODS chose Danube Bridge-2 neither for purely economic reasons, nor for purely instrumental reasons of elite survival. The bridge's economic viability was dubious and elite survival, although undoubtedly important for the ODS, could have been assured also by other forms of economic compensations. The ODS appears to have been drawn to this project in large part due to its symbolic power. The selection of Danube bridge-2 was part and parcel of the government's effort to formulate a foreign policy doctrine that could combat Bulgaria's Balkan image.

The symbolic importance of the Kozloduy and Belene NPPs as 'great' 'national' assets, too, is central to understanding the way the elite approached and handled the Kozloduy crisis. Saxkoburggotski came to power due to widespread hopes that someone theretofore untainted by Bulgarian politics could reverse the distressing trends of economic decline and social malaise. At the peak of his popularity he listed 'big' infrastructure projects such as the Belene NPP and Danube Bridge-2 as projects that would mobilize the positive energy of the nation. The most significant feature of these projects has been that they are not immediately dependent on the developments in the economy as a whole and could continue to be associated with national development even as the elite has been failing to deliver economic development. The pervasive sense of crisis, disillusionment, and loss of collective self-esteem that has accompanied the crisis of Bulgarian democracy has urged the ruling elites to tackle the domestic malaise by turning to large-scale infrastructure as visible, consensual, and easily deliverable solutions to economic and social problems.

Both the 'marginalization' factor and the 'infrastructure' factor underscore the importance of the (material) structural constraints related to Bulgaria's failing economic transition as determinants of the policy impact of the Europeanization approach and its rivals. Yet, my analysis suggests that the impact of these constraints upon the strength of

policy approaches has not been direct. Rather, it has been mediated, on the one hand, by the public's interpretation of these constraints and, on the other hand, by the process of political mobilization and policy legitimization. In both crisis situations, the proponents of the Europeanization approach and of its rival nationalist discourses struggled to appropriate the project of national development. The way in which they have enframed their policy agenda to respond to the problem of Bulgaria's economic decline has been crucial for the strength of each policy approach. Both the Europeanization paradigm during the Kosovo crisis and the nuclear nationalist discourse during the Kozloduy crisis boosted their power by offering strategies for encouraging economic development (through EU accession and participation in post-conflict economic reconstruction of the Balkans or through the development of the national nuclear energy sector).

Lessons for Europeanization on the Periphery of Europe

I started this analysis with the story of Bulgaria's europeanization miracle as perceived by a leading European think tank. This is a story that has less to do with Bulgaria and more to do with the Balkans because Bulgaria's europeanization miracle is expected to serve as a model for the Balkans. It is not by chance that I started with it. I believe that the Europeanization approach is the international community's best policy approach to the region we currently have. By telling a different story about Bulgaria's europeanization 'miracle', I do not wish to discard this approach but to suggest that it might benefit from opening up to the story of local politics.

The Europeanization approach is mostly woven around the soft power of the Europeanization idea and the benevolent involvement of the EU in the process of EU enlargement. This is fair enough. The Europeanization idea has been powerful everywhere across East Central Europe. But everywhere it has also had to cohabit with other 'national' projects – projects of nation building, projects of economic development, and projects of social welfare. These other 'national' projects have not always worked *with* Europeanization; often they have worked *against* it. Studies examining the politics of transition and europeanization reforms in East Central Europe suggest that the dynamics of domestic political competition have made these projects

rather ‘mobile’ within the broad ideological environments of the europeanizing countries, i.e. there have been different patterns of attaching these projects together or detaching them in the process of political mobilization. In some cases, like Estonia or post-Meciar Slovakia, the Europeanization project was articulated as compatible with ‘national independence’ or ‘nationhood’ projects; this setup encouraged radical political and economic reforms (including reforms necessary for convergence with EU models) and at least temporarily secured public support for such reforms even when they brought social and economic distress (Bohle and Greskovits 2007; Greskovits forthcoming 2008, forthcoming 2009). In contrast, in cases such as Hungary, nation-building and identity politics have been less of an issue and have been less associated with the ‘europeanization’ of national identity; in such a setup the Europeanization approach has had to coexist and battle with a strong social welfare project necessary to ensure public support for reforms (Bohle and Greskovits 2007; Greskovits forthcoming 2008).

Such studies, as well as my own analysis, pose more questions about europeanization in the Balkans than they are able to answer. Two things seem to be clear: due to the incomplete nation-building projects and the pervasive economic, social and democratic crises, all the ‘national’ projects are likely to be important in the region; and they are likely to interact with the Europeanization project. The lesson that I, together with other observers, would draw is that if Europeanization-inspired policy analyses are to understand the dynamics of such interactions, they need to complement the analysis of EU conditionality and influence with an analysis of the local political process in europeanizing states (see Greskovits, forthcoming 2009, 9; Krastev 2002).

I also started this analysis with the marginalization of the Balkans as a volatile place where cultures are not European and politics is dominated by ethnicity and conflict. I ended up with the marginalization of the Balkans as the place where Europe’s biggest ghetto is being formed. My analysis suggests that marginalizing discourses are not very likely to work for Europeanization but in the longer run are very likely to work against it. The Balkanism discourse was a mixed blessing for Bulgaria’s europeanization. For a period of time it linked the Europeanization paradigm to identity politics and thus encouraged its influence on policy (e.g. on foreign policy and transport policy). But since the link between Europeanization and national identity was the exclusionary

discourse of Balkanism, the link was as contestable as the discourse itself. It was thus easily weakened by the competing national project of development and welfare and by the desire of Bulgarians to recover their sense of collective self-esteem.

As for the discourse that currently marginalizes the Balkans as Europe's underdeveloped corner, it is likely to accentuate issues of autonomy, equality to the developed states, and *national* economic development. As Bulgaria's Kozloduy drama shows, it might end up encouraging economic nationalism rather than Europeanization. A discourse that represents the Balkans as part of the developing world is not very likely to make it part of Europe's world of peace and prosperity. Thus, while I agree with proponents of Europeanization that the EU needs to focus on assisting structural reforms and economic development in the Balkans, I also believe that it needs to focus on the legitimacy and democratic deficit of its conditionality and on the way in which it communicates its messages to the Balkans.

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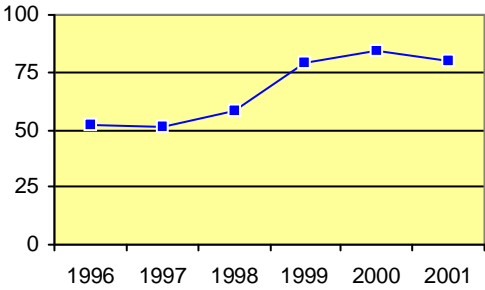
Maps and Figures

Map 1: Pan-European Corridors Crossing Bulgaria



Source: Ministry of Transport 2006, Appendix I.1.

Figure 1: Public support for EU membership in Bulgaria



Sources: EC 1998b, 2001; Alpha Research 2001

Tables

Table 1: Share of the Kozloduy NPP in overall electricity production in Bulgaria (percentage)

Year	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Share	36	35	33.7	38	41.6	42.4	43.6	42.7	41.5	42.4	50	46	47.3	41	40.4	42.2	42.6	34*

(*) Unofficial data (deputy director of the NEK's National Dispatching Center, quoted in *actualno.com* 30.1.2008)

Sources: NEK 2004a: 6; Kozloduy NPP 2006: 2

Table 2: Annual GDP Growth vs. Growth of Final Electricity Consumption in Bulgaria

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
GDP Growth (percentage change on previous period)	4.0	2.3	5.4	4.1	4.5	5.0	6.6	6.2
Growth of Final Electricity Consumption (*) (percentage change on previous period)	-2.9	-8.3	1.7	1.6	-2	4.5	-0.9	3.2
Final Electricity Consumption (in thousands tons of oil equivalent)	2224	2040	2075	2109	2067	2159	2139	2208
Final Energy Consumption (in thousands tons of oil equivalent)	9904	8814	8578	8611	8695	9365	9026	9506

(*) my calculation

Note: Data from the pre-1997 period is excluded due to the intensity of industrial restructuring in the early years of transition and the severe economic crisis of 1996-1997.

Source: Eurostat database

Table 3: Electricity Production and Exports in Bulgaria
(gigawatt hours)

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Total gross electricity generation	43968	42679	42600	41621	44366	43934
Electricity exports	8017	8335	5125	6620	8380	8875

Sources: Eurostat database; UCTE 2006

Table 4. Energy intensity of the economy
(kilogram of oil equivalent per GDP unit of EUR 1000)

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
EU (15 states)	215.42	211.33	211.85	206.10	205.38	209.35	202.71	201.03	195.69	190.53	191.35	188.42	189.48	187.65	184.85
Bulgaria	2142.05	2134.27	2305.57	2192.13	2326.00	2543.79	2392.23	2250.66	1986.60	1931.10	1930.01	1804.30	1769.19	1595.28	1582.41
Czech Republic	1160.46	1174.52	1134.12	1071.96	965.76	952.09	969.47	946.52	868.41	888.39	883.88	875.79	891.18	874.42	823.38
Hungary	802.51	747.99	758.84	730.61	740.62	747.46	700.49	661.91	642.04	600.51	588.64	579.58	566.61	533.64	543.58
Romania	2011.24	1924.06	1896.47	1724.26	1738.25	1793.32	1717.10	1638.27	1481.46	1457.22	1368.64	1316.48	1353.68	1226.89	1164.89
Croatia	-	-	-	-	680.43	407.97	390.74	386.93	488.33	442.27	450.01	441.03	452.67	436.79	-
EU (25 states)	-	-	239.89	231.34	230.39	234.98	227.58	224.16	214.94	208.76	209.71	206.51	207.56	204.89	-

Source: Eurostat database

Table 5: Distribution losses of electric power (*)
(percentage of total gross electricity generation)

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
EU (15 countries)	6.3	6.3	6.1	6.2	6.2	6.4	6.4	5.9	6.3	6.2	6.6	6.3	6.2	6.3	6.5	6.3
10 New Member States	7.9	9	9.6	11.5	11.6	11.7	11.5	10.9	10.2	10	9.3	9	8.7	8.6	8.3	8.3
Bulgaria	10.5	13.7	13.9	12.6	12.4	13	13.1	14	13.4	16.9	15.4	13.9	14.5	14.1	12.2	11

(*) my calculation

Source: Eurostat database