The Turkish Minority in Bulgaria and the 'Revival Process': The Construction of a Political Minority

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Introduction

If George Orwell's prophecy was fulfilled in any place in 1984, that was Bulgaria. The Communist Party put to work all of its hegemonic capacities to try and control the identities of its population. In 1984, the state initiated a campaign to change the names of its Turkish population with ethnic Bulgarian ones.

The dominant nationalist discourse in formal and informal spheres of public communication in Bulgaria (such as media, electronic forums) stigmatizes Bulgarian Turks powerfully and reduces them to a single homogeneous block of stereotypical individuals that existed statically and in isolation. On the other side of the "barricade", the same premise underlies the rhetoric of the pro-Turkish party fighting for the minority's equality, tolerance and rights. Its activity and discourse has managed quite successfully during the past 20 years to place the Turks under a common denominator and to sustain the impression of a fundamental 'one-ness' and distinctiveness. Political debate and news coverage work under the same assumption, perceived as self-evident. Last but not least, a large portion of the scholarship studying the Bulgarian Turkish minority from different social scientific standpoints – ethnology, anthropology and sociology, religion, state politics and law etc. – also fails to escape, or at least question, this potential conceptual trap and regards the group's various geographical, temporal and otherwise manifestations as a single unit. Put simply, all discursive actors, while very often occupying drastically opposite standpoints with respect to the Turkish minority in the modern Bulgarian nation-state, view it as an objective, timeless and unchanging group.

An obvious question that no one deems necessary to ask is: What do we mean when we talk about the Turkish minority? Most references to it that try to provide some historical perspective go back to a stormy period of roughly 30-years - starting with the 60s and

culminating with the so-called Revival Process of '84-'89 - during which the Bulgarian Communist Party launched a campaign of an unprecedented scale and publicity to assimilate once and for all the Turkish population of the country. It involved history propaganda, banning of rituals, traditional clothing and language, forceful name changing and, naturally, mass protests and resistance on the receiving end. In 1989, the border with Turkey was opened and the Bulgarian Turks were encouraged to voluntarily leave the country. 300, 000 people felt the need or compulsion to do so. Soon after, the Communist regime in Bulgaria fell and approximately half of the people returned. The new government reversed the name changing policies and restored some rights for the Turkish people. In 1991, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms was formed unilaterally by the Socialist Party to ensure rights protection for the Bulgarian Turks, and the issue translated itself onto the now multi-party democratic stage of the state.

It will be the purpose of this exercise to link the existence of a strong Turkish minority consciousness and organization to the above-mentioned period and, more specifically, the events of the Revival Process. Departing from a pre-conception of a fundamental and constant dynamicity and fluidity of social groups and identifications, I cannot take for granted the objective continuity presumption, and, instead, hypothesize that it was the potent effect of the Communist assimilation campaigns that produced not only an influential and lasting minority concept, but resulted in the palpable presence, cohesive organization and high self-consciousness of the minority group known today as the Bulgarian Turks. The main challenge would be to draw a meaningful distinction between past minority realities and those ensuing from the Revival Process. As early as the 1920s, there was a legally recognized Turkish national minority in Bulgaria with broad cultural autonomy, including Turkish-language press, private religious schools, and considerable self-governance in religious affairs (curiously, much more than what they have nowadays). The early

Communist regime supported and encouraged those institutions and arrangements while placing them completely under its control. Before the assimilation efforts began in the 60s, therefore, there had already been a long history of recognized ethno-cultural presence of the Turkish population in Bulgaria and, thus, all the right conditions for a certain minority consciousness as well as perception by the majority out-group were present. There are, however, few signs of any political activity, debates, participation, representation, etc. Given the unique nature and scale of the assimilation campaigns in the 70s and 80s and the tremendous politicization of the issue that followed and continues until present day, I believe I will find that the period created a significantly new form of minority in both conceptual and practical dimensions.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

We can distinguish two kinds of contemporary scholarly literature on the Turkish minority in Bulgaria: monographs or studies of a highly historical nature and journal articles examining particular problems or periods. This review is concerned mainly with scholarship written after 1990, such that takes into consideration the events of the 1980s – the name-changing campaign undertaken by the Bulgarian Communist Party and other assimilation policies, as well as the reactions and resistance of the Bulgarian Turks – as those are the focal point of the thesis paper. The scope of this review is also limited to literature that, in one way or another, qualifies as critical, independent, and nuanced, as opposed to state-sponsored studies, national history, and nationalist propaganda. The latter would rather fall within the object of the thesis analysis. It is, then, to the above-described body of scholarship dealing with the Turkish or Muslim[1], more generally, minorities in Bulgaria that the thesis paper is looking to contribute by assuming a much more deconstructionist approach to the issue and questioning the more or less taken-for-granted notion of the Turkish minority. What does it mean to talk about the group at different points of 20th-century independent Bulgarian state? Where does it derive its identity? What are its manifestations and were they always the same? Particularly, what effects did systematic persecution and suppression during the late Communist period have on the group? These will be some of the guiding questions in evaluating the wealth of historical and factual information on the topic. They will help make this analysis conceptually distinct from the existing body of literature. Lastly, the work

[1] The bulk of scholarship includes the Turks of Bulgaria within the larger subject of Muslim communities in Bulgarian history and in the Bulgarian independent nation-state. An equality sign between the two terms is, obviously, unthinkable for all authors, but so is divorcing one from the other and considering it in isolation, as the parallels in treatment and experience between the two groups are many.

conducted so far is still of tremendous value, as it is highly professional and in-depth, and contains pieces of data and theoretical insights indispensable to this research.

In an aspiration for an all-encompassing account, mainly historically, most studies work within a common, well-established time frame, as well as under a set of similar premises. It will be useful to delineate some of the overlapping themes and structure found in the literature on the Turkish (and other Muslim) minorities in Bulgaria. In doing that, important questions will stem from the conceptual gap identified in the literature. They will serve as guidelines for the future analysis. They seek to abandon the approach that merely tells the story of a group from a certain perspective, critical as it might be, and open up a new space for discussion of the constitutive nature of the group. The review will also point to threads in the existing literature, which consciously or not pertain to such a constructivist perspective. Finally, much needed theoretical support will be included in the 'conversation' between existing literature and the problems this analysis raises.

The majority of authors find a necessity to trace, at least in some detail, the formation of Muslim communities in Bulgaria, or the Balkan Peninsula at large, starting with the first Ottoman conquests in those lands and the first settler communities from Anatolia and Asia Minor in the 14th century. This is a need mainly driven by the extreme claims made by the Bulgarian Communist Party in the 80s that "there are no Turks in Bulgaria", used to justify name-changing and other violence against the Turkish population. This negation, essentially, meant that all Turkish-speakers in the Bulgarian lands are descendants of pre-Ottoman Slavs and Bulgarians who were forced to convert to Islam and adopt the language of the oppressor in various ways. Contrary to this claim, much of the recent scholarship (as well as research

conducted in pre-Communist Bulgaria, as shown by A. Zhelyazkova[2]) demonstrates a complex, prolonged process with many discontinuities of the emergence of Muslims and, more importantly, native Turkish-speaking communities in the Balkans. Far from being the product of mass coercion of locals, those communities were largely migrant settlers and nomads whose movement was encouraged by the Ottoman authorities in order to create demographic balance in the newly conquered territories. Forced conversion to Islam, assimilation into a dominant majority society, or "Turkification", it is generally agreed by scholars, was not at any point a priority or systematic policy of the Sublime Porte. Isolated, locally confined cases of mass conversions as well as grandiose intentions voiced by individual rulers do exist in the records, but the majority of converts are believed to have chosen the Islamic fate voluntary stimulated or compelled by socio-economic considerations.

Even those studies, however, which offer the above renditions of the Ottoman past in the Balkans, and, thus, significantly contradict national histories, often fall into the same traps as their opponents. In his chapter on the status of Islam in Bulgarian history, Ali Eminov uses arguments about demographic shifts, assimilation, and identity changes of Bulgarians and other minorities as a result of Islamicization of localities and regions under Ottoman rule. Despite the obvious implications about the possibility to transform socially and culturally groups and places, and about the malleability of identity, such tendencies do not seem to apply to the much more rigid idea of the Turkish-speaking population in Eminov's work[3]. Kemal Karpat goes even further to say that, as a response to Bulgarian state claims during the

[2] See Antonina Zhelyazkova, "Isliamizatsiata na Balkanite kato historiografski problem" [Islamicization of the Balkans as historiographic problem], in *Miusiulmanskite Obshnosti Na Balkanite I V Balgariia: Istoricheski Eskizi*. Fate of Muslim communities in the Balkans 1, ed. A. Zhelyazkova et al. (Sofia: International Center for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations, 1997).

[3] See Ali Eminov, *Turkish and Other Muslim Minorities of Bulgaria*, (London Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs, 1997).

Revival Process about the Bulgarian origins of all Turks in the country, he, in his book, intends to prove that "modern Turks of Bulgaria are the descendants of people of genuine Turkish stock."[4] These, and many other, accounts are deeply historical in nature, looking for facts and data to prove and disprove claims, looking to expose the 'truth', and, ultimately, treat people as unchanging groups who despite major shifts in political regime, socio-economic conditions, geographic location, language, and religion remain essentially themselves. They deal with the 'larger picture' of events, often succumbing to teleological, primordial, 'identitarian' and 'groupist'[5] temptations. What is understood by Muslims, Turks, or minority – as well as a multiplicity of other questions surrounding the terms and their context – often remains unanswered. The thesis paper will stray away from the unspoken assumptions described above and try to address those pressing conceptual matters.

The starting premise of this paper, and what, essentially, spurred the idea of embarking on this particular analysis, is the belief that it is more meaningful to view ethnic minorities as the products of lasting or powerful processes, or as such themselves, rather than static in time entities. Theoretical support will be sought largely in Brubaker's discussions of the political contingency and processual nature of ethnic groups; of ethnicity as a discourse, experience, interpretation of the world, set of institutions etc., but not a real object or actor.[6] The latter perception, prevalent in most studies, needs to be challenged on other related grounds, too – those of 'groupism,' again borrowing from Brubaker. This is the implicit

[4] Kemal Karpat, "Introduction," in *The Turks of Bulgaria: The History, Culture and Political Fate of a Minority*, ed. K. Karpat (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1990), p.2.

[5] For a discussion of the tendencies to objectify the term 'identity' in much of scholarly literature see Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond Identity," in *Ethnicity Without Groups*, ed. R. Brubaker (Cambridge, Massachussets: Harvard University Press, 2004).
"Groupist" approaches to ethnicity assume that it necessarily manifests itself in distinct bounded groups. See Rogers Brubaker, "Ethnicity Without Groups," in *Ethnicity Without Groups*, ed. R. Brubaker (Cambridge, Massachussets: Harvard University Press, 2004).

[6] Brubaker, "Ethnicity Without Groups," p.11.

understanding that ethnic or other minorities necessarily come in the organic form of discrete, bounded groups and act as such.[7] The literature reviewed above tends to consider Bulgarian Muslims or the Turks of Bulgaria as given, objective, unitary, and immutable in time groups without much attention to what produces them, changes them, and what particular meanings and manifestations they acquire at different stages. The assumption that it is necessary to understand groups as socially, discursively, and politically constructed and negotiated underlies the main argument of this research.

It clearly does not suffice to limit ourselves to sweeping generalizations about the origins and history of Turkish-speaking and Muslim populations in the Balkans, or Bulgaria in particular, regardless of their ideological or moral orientation. As shown by one of the highly respected historians of Muslim communities in the Balkans, Antonina Zhelyazkova, different regions and periods in the Ottoman Empire gave rise to different conditions, setting various micro-processes in motion, which shaped in significantly distinct ways the formation of Muslim groups. She finds many inconsistencies in the hypotheses on the origins of Muslim communities advanced by Balkan national historiographies, attributing them largely to the holistic, hegemonic approaches through which they consider issues of 'ethnogenesis' and serve the goals of political regimes.[8] This observation begs the questions how this state hegemony on writing about ethnic and religious minorities might have influenced their experience and our conceptions about them, and how else we can think of the Muslim communities in the Balkans. What other, more meaningful, ways are there to talk about their identities and what are the sources behind them? Zhelyazkova acknowledges the existence of more balanced and thoughtful analytic work on Islam in the Balkan history such as, for instance, the studies about the various crypto-Christian Communities and religious

[7] Ibid., p.8.

[8] Zhelyazkova, "Isliamizatsiata," p.34, p.40.

syncretism in Ottoman times, or debates about the Muslim origins of Bosnia. Such discussions raise questions about the specific forces behind an existing ethnic group – are they strictly religious, political, economic, national or other? The thesis paper will look to expand on such questions in the context of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria and its experience vis-à-vis Bulgarian state policy, especially with regard to the systematic assimilation campaigns of the 1970-80s. What does it mean to be a Muslim in a specific region of the Balkans having undergone certain powerful processes, violence, and transformations? What does it mean to be a Turk, or part of the Turkish minority, in Bulgaria? Zhelyazkova concludes her chapter on Balkan Muslims and Balkan national history writing with a point about the perseverance and survival of traditions in the various Muslim communities.[9] Again, questions immediately come to mind: How did those survive and what does it mean for them to have 'survived'? Was it a pure cultural continuation, or were they (re-)invented and transformed? What processes contributed to that? Did it take political power to accomplish this 'survival'? Did they become politicized? Dwelling on such problems can be nothing, but fruitful for the understanding of a certain ethnic or religious minority group in any national state.

The second major time period that the scholarship agrees upon is, predictably, the pre-Communist post-Independence period or, in other words, 1878-1945. There is considerable 'silence' on the issue of Turks in Bulgaria with respect to the pre-WWI years. They fell under the larger legal category of Muslims in State definitions, which is what makes it difficult to talk specifically about the Turkish-speaking communities. Post-World War I international conventions along with the establishment of the Turkish national republic in the early 1920s and some bilateral treaties between Turkey and Bulgaria led to the constitutional recognition

[9] Ibid., pp.53-54.

of a Turkish minority within the Bulgarian borders. Authors concerning themselves with the years preceding those developments give greater heed to the Pomak issue, as the Bulgaria Mohammedans were in the forefront of the young state's nationality policies.

The majority of the literature tends to unite around the idea that the treatment of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria up until 1944 was 'quite favorable'[10] , as there was little systematic discrimination and only the anti-Muslim sentiments of individual leaders would exacerbate its situation. Starting with the 1920s, they enjoyed extensive autonomy over cultural, religious and educational affairs. There are two important questions to be answered here by the thesis research in a comparative perspective with the violence of the 1980s. If there was little or no targeting of the minority by the authorities, could we speculate in retrospect about little or no political mobilization and group consciousness in opposition to a heightened self-awareness in the resistance to assimilation in the 1980s? To what extent did the cultural networks (e.g. abundant press in Turkish in the 20s and 30s) in the years prior to WWII foster a sense of national belonging and facilitate its propagation?

The issue of corrosive Turkish nationalism is recurrent on the agenda of the Bulgarian state, especially after 1960, but there are little indications of a substantive threat up until 1944. In regard precisely to the period preceding WWII, however, Yonca Koksal makes a compelling argument about trans-border networks and the flow of ideas from the Ottoman Empire and later Turkey, which allowed for the formulation of a shared ethno-national identity among the Bulgarian Turks, increased political presence, and the capacity for collective action and demands before the Bulgarian state.[11] The degree of pervasion and the political dimensions of Turkish nationalism and national consciousness are crucial to the

[10] Eminov, *Turkish and Other*, p.50.

[11] Yonca Koksal, "Transnational networks and kin states: the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, 1878-1940," *Nationalities Papers* 38, No. 2 (March 2010): p. 192.

main thesis argument. It hypothesizes that a significant increase in those was induced by the name-changing campaign and other assimilation policies under Communism, and, thus, a substantially new minority emerged – politically organized for the first time, conscious, and cohesive.

The literature divides the period of Communist rule into two main periods according to ideology and practice vis-a-vis the Turkish and other minorities. The first 10-15 years were marked by tolerance, optimism and conscious effort on the part of the central state to promote institutionally the cultural heritage of every recognized ethnic minority within the country. The rhetoric, greatly influenced by the Stalinist model, revolved around liberation from fascist and monarchical oppression of the past and rightful inclusion into the socialist project by creating proper condition for each nationality to thrive. The Party kept much of the pre-existing cultural networks in place, but took full control over newspaper publishing and the supervision of education and religious affairs. Head of the Bulgarian Communist Party, Zhivkov, made a public announcement committing to working towards upholding and enriching Turkish national culture. Things, however, started to change drastically by the end of the 1950s. All of the studies point to a gradual return to the 'national question,' in which the Muslim population was a burning unresolved issue. Most authors propose a similar set of reasons for the newly rising nationalizing nationalism in Bulgaria, especially with respect to Turks and Muslims, some of which have important implications for this research.

The famous break with Stalinism in the Eastern Bloc allowed for many socialist states to begin to attend to their national projects in particular, locally informed ways. A homogenous Bulgarian ethnic nation was the ideal of Bulgarian nation-builders from the very inception of the idea, and 'extricating' the Bulgarian 'figure' from the tangled 'Ottoman carpet' was of utmost priority for Bulgarian nationalists from the start and all throughout the

pre-WWII period.[12] In her book 'The Orient Within,' M. Neuburger demonstrates elaborately the ways in which this was done with special reference to the Muslim and, what was seen as, 'Oriental' taints in the newly discovered Bulgarian nation. Chapter 2 of the book shows how the same process of negotiating nationhood through exclusion of the Muslim, Turkish, or Oriental elements from public life resurfaced with the resurgence of Bulgarian nationalism under Communism in the 1960s. The state was largely targeting tangible, material expressions of 'non-Bulgarian character' such as the fez, the women's shalvar, circumcision, and other forms of "Islamic fundamentalism".[13] Centralized Bulgarian nationalist discourse would never be able to shake off these notions until the regime's demise in 1989. Its paranoia would keep growing exponentially causing it to shut down Turkish schools completely, trying to assimilate Muslim and Turkish consciousness into the mainstream majority under the excuse of integration into the Bulgarian socialist 'organism'. In 1984, the Party would launch a campaign of an unprecedented scale for the replacement of Turkish names with 'ethnic' Bulgarian ones, banning and persecuting Muslim and Turkish dress, rituals, language and other cultural markers. Throughout the entire period of aggressive, systematic assimilationist policies, state rhetoric would be actively involved in defining the 'other' through such symbols in order to justify the atrocities. Multiple scholars devote entire chapters to the detailed examination of nationalist state discourse under Communism. What matters to this specific research is the effect of that hegemonic discourse on public perceptions of nation and groups. The ways in which what the state understood and

[12] "Extricating" the Bulgarian "figure" from the Ottoman "carpet" is a metaphor used by Neuburger to denote the critical relationship between Bulgarian nation-building a break with the Ottoman-Turkish legacy. This positions the Muslim minorities in a position of permanent 'otherness'. For discussion of the notion see Chapter 1 in Mary Neuburger, *The Orient Within: Muslim Minorities and the Negotiation of Nationhood in Modern Bulgaria (*Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2004).

[13] Ibid., p.61.

persistently defined as Muslim, Turkish or Oriental became reality gives much insight into processes of constructing a minority. National Bulgarian academics of the 'Revival Process' (name given by the state to the name-changing campaign of 1984-5) themselves admitted to the critical relationship of names and other cultural markers with self-consciousness of individuals and groups. The effects of their powerful politicization on Turkish identity in Bulgaria, resulting from forced assimilation attempts, are central to this analysis. What also needs to be noted is that much of state political and historical propaganda, crafted and employed to justify the Revival Process of 1984-5, is still very much a part of contemporary Bulgarian nationalist language.

The overwhelming power of a hegemonic state and its capacities to structure social life through discursive and political practice is another major premise informing the thesis research. The discursive 'invention' of the Turkish minority as a result of systematic categorization by the central authorities is a key element to the analysis. The production of language and categories about the Turks and Muslims, filling them with tangible meanings from the real world, reached an unprecedented intensity and duration in the coercive assimilation of the 70s and the 80s. As noted earlier, many of the authors deal extensively with the rhetoric of the Communist party justifying the assimilation policies, and inevitably imprinting potent and lasting new notions about the Turkish minority in the public imaginary. Here, tools and concepts from critical liberalism and related theory will prove useful in dealing with issues of 'ethnicization' from above through (mis-)recognition and distribution of symbolic resources regulated by a hegemonic authority. Courtney Jung, among many theorists to acknowledge this, writes that historically it was no other structure, but the overarching state that "raced", "classed" and "ethnicized" the population "by organizing access to power, resources, and citizenship on the basis of differences that are otherwise at

least potentially arbitrary."[14] This section of the theoretical background draws largely on related authors such as Spivak, Aihwa Ong, and Nancy Fraser.

Besides the presumed homogeneity and integrity of the national consciousness – ethnic, socialist or otherwise – that the Party strove to foster, growing Turkish nationalism within the minority, as noted above, was a serious potential threat in the minds of the leadership. Many studies cite it as key to the decisions made by the Communist on more than one occasions, including the furthering of assimilatory policies in the 70s and 80s. Both Koksal and Neuburger talk about the cleavage between conservative and Kemalist reform-minded Turks, introduced by Turkish educated elites in the 1920-30s and continuing into the post-WWII period.[15] Understandably, the Bulgarian government always expressed its clear preference for the traditionalists and the well-established cultural autonomy the Turkish communities had been granted, while trying to curb the spread of perilous radicalism by the Kemalists. Already in 1950-51, the Party found it necessary to expel 150,000 Turks due to an increasing fear of nationalism among Turkish intelligentsia. Gruev and Kalyonski[16] point to the fact that growing numbers of educated ethnically conscious Turks who were the product of large-scale minority integration into education in the 60s and the 70s added to the fears of

[14] See Courtney Jung, "Introduction," *The Moral Force of indigenous politics: critical liberalism and the Zapatistas* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[15] See Koksal, "Transnational networks," p.206; and Neuburger, "The Orient Within," p.40.

[16] Mihail Gruev and Aleksei Kalyonski, *Vuzroditelniyat protses: miusiulmanskite obshtnosti i komunisticheskiyat rezhim [*The Revival Process: the Muslim communities and the Communist Regime], (Sofia, Bulgaria: Ciela, 2008). Exemplary representatives of the contemporary critically oriented Bulgarian scholars of the Revival Process and, more widely, the history of the Bulgarian state and its minorities. Other recent studies by Bulgarian historians in a similar vein include a collection of state archives telling the story of the 'Revival Process,' Iskra Baeva and Evgenia Kalinova, *Vuzroditelniyat protses: Bulgarskata durjava i bulgarskite turtsi* [The Revival Process: the Bulgarian state and the Bulgarian Turks] 2 vols, (Sofia, Bulgaria: Darzhavna Agentsia "Arhivi" [State Archive Agency]).

Turkish nationalism in Bulgaria and pushed the government towards pursuing the eradication of Turkish national consciousness.

Besides the questions raised earlier of whether, to what extent, and in what forms minority nationalism was there, one also needs to consider the constant interplay between state action and the reaction of the suppressed. The literature often hints at the real dimensions of this relationship while rarely expanding upon it. Ibrahim Yalamov for instance, in his introduction, establishes one of the basic premises of his work, namely that the Turkish minority of Bulgaria has consolidated as a distinct ethnic minority group within "concrete Bulgarian conditions" and in the context of the evolution of the Bulgaria nation-state.[17] He points to the absence of this important underlying idea in most studies.

Gruev and Kalyonski suggest that the extreme Turkish nationalism in Bulgaria in the 1980s was probably ignited by the very authorities through continuous violent coercion on a mass scale.[18] In discussing the resistance to the name-changing campaign of 1984-85, they argue that the growing solidarity among the Turkish-speaking population and the ultimate consolidation of their threatened identity, which frustrated greatly the intentions of the State, was provoked by the activity of that very same state.[19] Such arguments might seem commonplace and self-evident, but are often neglected, or given little attention in intellectual debates and scholarly studies about state and minority issues.

The success of this analysis exacts finding a strong link between the two phenomena – top-down coercion into assimilation and the emergence of a newly defined sense of self-determination. To what extent can systematic persecution construct anew the identity of a group, both on the inside and in outside perceptions, or even produce the very group itself?

[17] See Ibrahim Yalamov, *Istoria na Turskata Obshtnost v Bulgaria* [History of the Turkish Community in Bulgaria], (Sofia, 2002), pp.7-10, 58.
[18] Gruev and Kalyonski, *Vuzroditelniyat protses*, p.128.
[19] Ibid., p.142.

What particular aspects of 'identity' do we take into account when contemplating such questions? The political construction of minorities is an idea that finds its backing in several important scholarly works.

The collection of articles by the name of "The Construction of Minorities: Cases for Comparison Across Time and Around the World, edited by A. Burguiere, and R. Grew, present various processes through which minorities can emerge and take shape within a given sovereign territory. Articles dealing specifically with ethnic or other groups targeted by powerful states with assimilatory intentions are the focal point of this paper. The authors of those articles reach important conclusions about the entirely novel forms that a minority identity can acquire as a result of persecution, or coercive assimilation; that such periods provide new sources of identity origins for the imagined community; that the group is compelled to invent and re-invent itself and its institutions to survive the threat.[20] Theoretical inspiration will be derived from these as well as other similar works. Scholars such as Maria Todorova and Anna Krasteva write of minority identity constructions in the context of the Bulgarian Pomaks. Todorova discusses how throughout the 20th century state-sponsored processes of inclusion and exclusion, of distribution of economic and symbolic resources, and of perpetual defining from above have led to the constant (trans-)formation of Pomak identity. Krasteva deconstructs the same phenomenon adopting a Foucauldian approach of the economy of knowledge, discourse, and power. These works tie well to issues of hegemonic 'ethnicization' mentioned above and together form a solid theoretical foundation, on which the thesis research seeks to rest its claims.

[20] See David Bien, "Imagining the Huguenot Minority in Old Regime France," in *The Construction of Minorities: Cases for Comparison Across Time and Around the World*, ed. A. Burguiere and R. Grew, (University of Michigan Press, 2004), p.95, And Todd Endelman, "Continuities and Discontinuities in Constructions of Jewishness in Europe, 1789-1945, in *The Construction of Minorities: Cases for Comparison Across Time and Around the World*, ed. A. Burguiere and R. Grew, (University of Michigan Press, 2004), p.141.

Authors generally do touch upon these links between issues of identity and the legacy of forced assimilation, if only as a side note in most cases. Scattered thoughts in that direction and traces of a new conceptual dimension to the issue are present and visible in the analyses, as already noted above. Neuburger dedicates the last two chapters of her monograph to the power of naming and the relation between land and identity – problems of a much more philosophical nature than giving a mere history of the minority experience. She observes that 'Muslim attachment to names ran as deep as Bulgarian fixation with changing them,' and, borrowing from thinkers such as Bordieu, she asserts that renaming is a symbolic demolition of an existing identity accompanied by renovation and reordering.[21] In her last Chapter she explores, among other things, the impact of land processes on the Muslim notion of 'self', which gives rise to questions about how the controlled distribution of resources and other socio-economic processes shape ethnicity, groups, and identity.

Ali Eminov also devotes attention to some social transformations that occur among the Turks of Bulgaria as a result of nationality policy. He focuses on the educational experience and the severe repressions that followed after the 1970s, connecting briefly the latter to a consolidation of ethnic consciousness.[22] An important point emerging from this discussion is the reviving of the completely obliterated by Communism Turkish-language education, which inevitably leads to the constructions of new institutions under a new regime creating yet another novelty dictated by the events of the 1970-80s. The cultural rights arrangements for the Turkish minority, which were gradually reclaimed after 1991 through the consistent efforts of the party-protector, the MRF, are in no way comparable in scope or form to either of the two preceding regimes.

[21] Neuburger, *The Orient Within*, p.143.
[22] See Ali Eminov, "The Education of Turkish Speakers in Bulgaria," *Turkish and Other*, pp. 128-143.

The internal social dimensions of group transformations are, obviously, as important as discursive and political constructions that shape ideas on the outside. What is more, a close link exists between the two spheres and they constantly influence each other. In order to be able to reflect as fully as possible the changes in a minority group or community, we need to address the sociological side of the coin. That is, having speculated about the powerful effects outside forces can have on the group, we need to find a way to account for the reconfigurations and new forms of organization and perception that take place on the inside, too. Relying on fundamental theoretical work by Henry Tajfel, Cornell and Hartmann, and others, the paper will discuss the conditions under which minority consciousness forms, consolidates, or fluctuates as a result of outside pressure. The presence or lack of various socio-cultural or even political institutions will determine the ways in which we can talk about the existence of certain kinds of minority life for the Turkish population in Bulgaria at different points in time.

The work reviewed here is far not all that has been written on these topics and does little justice to the wealth of content present in the various studies. There is much more to be found on the, especially with regard to the Muslim experience, culture, and communities more generally, as well as some older literature on the Turkish minority, the essence of which is well integrated into the recent scholarship. These samples, however, do come close to an exhaustive synthesis of the thematic and conceptual content available on the subject, and, as shown, raise a plethora of new interconnected questions, insufficiently addressed so far. Answering some of them in a coherent argument will be the purpose of the thesis paper, thus making an attempt at an original contribution. Those questions pertain to the overarching issue of minority identity – in the broadest possible sense – and how it evolves or is continually (re-)constructed and negotiated as a result of state-hegemonic assimilatory pressures and policies. The paper will step out of the conventional frame, which emphasizes

historical facts, numbers, or policies and narrates a ‘large’ story, and dive into the less carefully explored domains of what that abundance of information means when released into a dialogical space with the concept of the Turkish minority of Bulgaria.

Chapter 2: Minorities: from assimilation to construction. Theoretical grounds

This exercise is based on the hypothesis that the assimilation campaign launched against the Turkish minority in Bulgaria from the 1960s on - with its obvious counter-productivity – in fact helped construct a much stronger and conscious minority. The basic premise is that minorities could emerge from potent political and socio-economic processes dictated by a higher sovereign authority, the state. A minority is never simply an objective given, a pre-existing cultural entity, a timeless invariable constant that precedes politics, becomes engaged in certain power relations and, eventually, outlives events and historical periods remaining fundamentally itself. Instead, I hope to find, they are the creation of powerful subjectivities - often originating outside and above rather than within the group - that affect vastly power arrangements and processes of inclusion and exclusion in the distribution of resources. It is, then, this kind of state-sanctioned discrimination that gives shape and life to disadvantaged groups, which can come to be viewed as distinct and separate in exclusively cultural terms through repeated categorization and identification on the part of the state institutions and the majority. Ultimately, these relationships might lead to the internalization of the existing categories both by the minority group and the surrounding 'others', which, in turn, legitimizes the regime and social order in place. Individuals and groups could increasingly - though not always as we will see – start to experience and organize life through those particular categories and make them meaningful, 'real', and lasting.

The validation of the hypothesis above will be pursued through cases that approach the issue from a similar constructivist perspective – including the Gypsy and Muslim minorities during Communism in Bulgaria, the Huguenot minority in pre-Revolutionary

France, Jewish emancipation in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries, as well as through some more general theory on problems such as the social psychology of minorities and the persistence of ethnic views of the world.

It is necessary to briefly discuss what constitutes a minority and give some general parameters as to the notion of minority employed here. As mentioned earlier, a key criterion is the social position of the group relative to the majority or other groups. That is, it is not enough for a collectivity of people to exhibit some shared features and comprise significantly smaller numbers than a quantitatively dominant majority group. According to many theorists, this conception does not do much useful analytic work. Instead, a group needs to be socially inferior to qualify as a minority in a given society. Borrowing from Simpson and Yinger as well as Wagley and Harris, Tajfel defines them as self-conscious subordinate segments of society, held in low esteem by the majority and bound by shared traits, disabilities and social disadvantages.[23] Clearly, a context of group domination and subordination must be present, among other conditions, for one to be able to speak of minority-majority power relations. The cultural or other kinds of common characteristics are obviously a requirement for a group to be identified and feel as a separate unit, but are far from being the sufficient condition or any sort of objective marker. Their saliency and mobilization as resource is rather a side-product or the main outcome of the long processes establishing group inequalities, thus the very features becoming politically contingent.

Another crucial, and to a large extent self-evident, indicator of minority group existence – or of most social groups for that matter – is the self-awareness factor. A "feeling of membership and belongingness" as well as beliefs, attitudes and sensibilities held in

[23] Henry Tajfel, "The Social Psychology of Minorities" in *Human Groups and Social Categories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp.309-310.

common by a collectivity are the main distinction between a mere category of people and a "genuine social group": group awareness begins to take shape when group membership or assignment leads to a consciousness of shared social consequences of discrimination.[24] Needless to say, it often takes long social and political processes – with their continuities and discontinuities - for this sense of "separateness" to become fully fledged and for the boundaries, rules, institutions and "informal social behavior" of members to establish themselves as the "outside consensus" of their experienced 'groupness'.[25] It is the purpose of this theoretical inquiry to explore precisely the relationship between these two key factors – social disadvantage and a distinct minority consciousness – and how the former, when properly instituted and maintained by dominant authorities may give rise to the emergence and consolidation of the latter.

Given that privileging certain groups and isolating others from access to resources and equal participation in public life – and in this way inevitably fostering those same groups and their identities – lies exclusively with the capacities of states, we have to look at the specific ways in which they use legitimate coercive authority and instruments to organize the distribution of political, socio-economic, and state-symbolic resources among the population through the articulation and imposition of categories of belonging. It is important to try to understand how ethnic groups are constructed and come to life via these state-sanctioned processes because, as noted earlier, it is predominantly along ethnic lines that boundaries are imagined within most modern states. In the words of Brubaker and his category of "ethnicity as cognition", analytic work should not be content with establishing the constructed nature of ethnic groups: construing ethnicity as a basic form of perceiving the world, it is then possible

[24] Ibid., pp.311-312.
[25] Ibid., pp.311, 314.

to understand how it is constructed, under what circumstances 'groupness' appears on the surface of the social scene while remaining "latent" at other times, and how macro-level and micro-level processes of 'ethnicization' of life are linked.[26]

Policies and laws implemented by the state to regulate the ethnic composition and divisions within populations fall into this last relationship between macro- and micro-level tendencies, especially when one takes into account the powerful and 'real' influence state-produced knowledge can have on material life, public discourse, informal associations and everyday private interactions, perceptions, self-understandings, etc. Having said this, we may transition to the discussion of one of the most universal methods through which states address the ever-present, multifaceted and fundamentally insurmountable diversity of their populations – assimilation. Various hegemonic regimes in modernity – monarchies, republics, fascism, and communism – have pursued the utopian homogeneous, enlightened national community, and for all one common denominator has been the subjection of obstinate and problematic groups to uncompromising assimilationist policies. The outcomes, it appears, have been pleasing far from often. We will now turn to some cases from different historical periods where counter-productivity transpires in the resulting arrangements and the implications for issues of identity are quite interesting.

Even when talking about assimilation, we have to begin with the realistic assumption that the campaigns and policies put in practice by various states at different times in history do not neatly fit the same patterns, do not envision identical goals, and produce new arrangements that are only partially similar. It is this comparability in the last stage, however – in the context of the strong assimilatory and nationalizing pressures suffered by minorities in all the cases – that we want to extract from the examples. Finally, those findings will help

[26] Brubaker, "Ethnicity Without Groups," pp.17-18.

illuminate and predict common points, power relations and outcomes in the reference case of the Bulgarian Turkish minority under Communism, granted its own uniqueness, too.

A case with many parallels often evoked for comparison is that of the Bulgarian-speaking Muslim population whose disgruntling ambiguity has been subject to constant redefinition, reduction and assimilation attempts since the foundation of the modern Bulgarian state in the end of the 19th century. It was the early Communist regime after 1945 that tried to preserve the diverse cultural constitution of the national space by allowing many to regain their Muslim names and ensuring religious freedom while largely excluding them at the same time from socio-economic modernization processes, which is at the core of the high degree of segregation and huge economic difficulties for those communities today.[27] The notorious shift towards sweeping nationalizing nationalism in the 1960s, targeting groups seen as deviating from the Bulgarian ethnic image, failed to significantly improve social mobility, while elevating the ideal of a predetermined, "historically grounded", "agentless" identity dictating that the community or the group "precedes the individual and ascribes its specific features to him."[28] Unsurprisingly, similar top-down oriented rhetoric and practice pervaded the justifications for the assimilation and name changing of the Turkish-speaking minority.

The situation under Communism for the second largest minority (after the Turkish one), the Gypsies, was not entirely different from that of the Muslim communities. When they usurped power, Communists found a "marginalized, pre-industrial, diverse, and non-

[27] See Anna Krasteva, "Identity and Power: Communist and Postcommunist Discourse on Minorities," in *Communities and Identities*, ed. A. Krasteva (Sofia: Petekston, 1998), p. 108. And Maria Todorova, "Identity (Trans)Formation Among Pomaks in Bulgaria," In *Beyond Borders: Remaking Cultural Identities in the New East and Central Europe*, ed. Laszlo Kurti et al. (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), p. 72.

[28] Krasteva, "Identity and Power," pp. 116, 119, 120.

organized politically ethnos", plagued by poverty and extremely low literacy rates, and whose social and economic life took place largely on the local level.[29] Communist modernization policies targeted their communities, destroyed many of the existing local ties and associations, replacing them with formal state institutions, and sought to transform and integrate their economic practices, work and social ethic, employment and education rates, and residence among other factors.[30] Needless to say, these policies affected dramatically their ways of life and forms of identification as a consequence.

Moving away from Communist-specific hegemonies and further back in time, we can introduce two more cases: that of the Huguenots, a Calvinist Protestant religious minority in pre-Revolutionary France, and that of Jewish emancipation across Europe in the 18th and 19th century. The expansion of the republican ideals forced a movement "out of the ghetto" for the Jews – one envisioning inclusion but also demanding that they reconsider, "shrink" and "compartmentalize" their particularistic identity, practices and beliefs, comply with citizenship obligations, and identify culturally with the rest of the nation.[31] Socioeconomic improvements and integration into the education system sought to remove them from the control of rabbis and expose them to "universal civility and true culture", which in 19th century Russia, for instance, inevitably meant the ultimate acceptance of Christianity.[32]

Similarly, the 'problem' with the Huguenots in Old-Regime France was framed in religious terms, but was in reality much more socially pervasive. The regime of religious tolerance, instituted in 1598 with the edict of Nantes, ended abruptly in 1685 when the edict

[29] Deyan Kolev, "Shaping Modern Identities: Social and Ethnic Changes in Gypsy Community in Bulgaria During the Communist Period" (MA Thesis, Central European University, 2004), pp.27-34.

[30] Ibid., pp. 53, 61, 62.

[31] See Endelman, "Continuities and Discontinuities," pp. 128-129.

[32] Ibid., p.131.

was reversed and a 'return to order' entirely rejected and denied the existence of Protestants in the religious and civil domain.[33] The initiative could afford to assimilate legislatively small urban elites, but had to repress coercively peasant masses, and, thus, achieved a sharp differentiation and alienation between peasant communities, Catholic and Protestant, that had often had histories of tolerance, mixing and intermarriages:

> *It was in the state and within the elite more broadly that the idea of the Calvinist menace sharpened and spread. At the center of the perceived threat were unknown people in unregulated and proscribed corps, distant, evoking fears of hidden conspiracies in a largely opaque peasant society.*[34]

Hegemonic states, supporting and supported by majority sensibilities, had everything to do with forced assimilation campaigns and ideologies, targeting groups that did not fit the ostensible universal 'whiteness' they wanted to construct within their borders. As implied by the above quote, however, realities 'on the ground' never succumb easily to such projects. Diversity, opacity, fluidity and transitiveness are inherent to the cultural composition and ethnic identification, more specifically, for all communities and populations.

Clujeni are never simply Hungarians or Romanians, writes Brubaker, and do not "constitute distinct, bounded groups."[35] Groupness is rather an "event" and a "contextually fluctuating conceptual variable"; ethnicity is "relational, processual, dynamic, eventful, and disaggregated" formation based on particular "cognition" of the world; participants have a "performative character" because they evoke and produce the group through invoking it.[36] However, their performance fluctuates: it is never constant across long periods of time. At

[33] See Bien, "Imagining," pp. 65, 90.
[34] Ibid., p.68.
[35] Rogers Brubaker, *and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006), p.209.

[36] See Brubaker, "Ethnicity Without Groups," pp. 10, 11, 12, 17.

one time, Hungarians in Cluj tell about a sense of being under attack by the waves of Romanian migration from the country side during nationalizing urbanization Communist policies while at another time they admit that ethnicity was not a cause for economic competition or confrontation in everyday life.[37] Ethnicity in Cluj is constantly in the making, it is continuously reproduced, reminded to people, shaped, negotiated, and dressed in meanings and nuances.

To facilitate and control these processes and in order to 'conquer' the omnipresent diversity of society, state apparatuses introduce categories that organize groups, and help distinguish the "others" and distribute resources accordingly. Those categories become institutionalized and "entrenched in administrative routines" as well as in discourse through "culturally powerful" myths and narratives.[38] Ethnicity becomes politicized, institutionalized, and, therefore, legitimate. It can become an integral part of people's socialization, or even most intimate experiences, and the consequences can be dramatic and lasting.

Large-scale campaigns for assimilation, modernization and homogenization could, first and foremost, lead to irreversible transformations in ways of life, economic and social habits, which, in turn, affects forms of identity. As seen, Communist policies in Bulgaria targeting the Gypsy Communities uprooted them from the traditional local community and attempted to integrate them into larger society through the work force and education system. This fostered for them a new kind of broader, regional identification, on a "meta-group" level, with other Gypsy communities, largely through similar economic status and continuous labeling by surrounding majority populations.[39] Communist policies, though inconsistent,

[37] See Brubaker, *Nationalist Politics,* pp. 110, 115-117.
[38] Brubaker, "Ethnicity Without Groups," p. 13.
[39] Kolev, "Shaping Modern Identities," pp.24, 36.

"provoked (for the first time in Bulgarian history) a significant awakening and rise of Gypsy self-consciousness, and supported the beginning of modern Roma identity formation".[40]

The continuous imposition of identities and the saturation of all domains – political, public discursive, social, private etc. – with state-promoted categories leads inevitably to resistance, but to at least partial submission and internalization of the assigned status. When allegedly asked by a famous Bulgarian writer who he is, a young Muslim answered: "I don't know either. They call us Pomaks, yet our fathers were Bulgarian!"[41] This is not simply an inability to reconcile two competing identities that by themselves are not in any kind of inescapable clash. It is the internalization of the whole debate - the opposition crafted outside of the group and ascribed to its members. What is visible here is the absolute monopolization of discourse by hegemonic agents – state and majority – and the absence of "cognitive alternatives" for the in-group to articulate its identity autonomously, which leads to "acceptance of the inevitable".[42] This often compels minority members to open up new spaces and invent new terms through which they re-discover or re-conceptualize the essence of the group.

In the 1970s and 1980s Transylvanian Hungarians were "rediscovered from below" by a movement for the preservation of cultural heritage and, more specifically, folklore: a reaction to the nationalizing policies of the socialist Romanian state.[43] Similarly, once emancipated and "no longer masters of their own choices", Jews had to "submit to their new condition" defined by the state as a traditional religious minority, which spurred a whole set of new conceptual "neologisms" coined by intellectuals to capture their suppressed collective

[40] Ibid., p.37.
[41] Krasteva, "Identity and Power," p.112.
[42] Tajfel, "Social Psychology," pp.318, 319.
[43] See Brubaker, *Nationalist Politics,* p.87.

identity: race, ancient Jewish community, family, nation, solidarity etc.[44] When using such broad terms that need to be filled with particular meanings, there is always something 'discovered' in the process of 'rediscovery' dictated by the new social conditions and relations of the group.

Similar resistance to assimilatory pressures can also lead to strengthening of the social ties and institutions, formal and informal, within the group. In the Jewish case, many were frustrated with the fact that their social cohesion and exclusiveness only seemed to consolidate as a result of emancipation. Contemporaries to the periods of reforms would later remember that despite significant institutional integration, Jews still spent most private time within family, relatives and Jewish friends like a "whole nation dwelling apart in inviolable seclusion" where "no Christian was allowed to set foot."[45] Reliance and contingency on formal connectedness – a term introduced by Brubaker to designate a high level of 'groupness' achieved through lasting communicative links between the members - is even more evident in the case of the Hungarians in Cluj.[46] Hungarian schools, newspapers, publishing houses, and cultural organizations, despite being weakened, did not disappear during Communism, facilitated "cultural reproduction" and helped Hungarian identity and consciousness survive.[47] An important parallel could be made here with the Turks in Bulgaria from whom such privileges were entirely taken away in the 80s, and in the course of struggle and resistance to state oppression they formed a number of illegal political organizations to ensure connectedness for the group.

Finally, issues of identity and identity itself can come to the forefront only after it is targeted and threatened. Only then it becomes relevant and actors begin to define it, rethink it,

[44] Endelman, "Continuities and Discontinuities," pp.139, 141, 149.
[45] Ibid., 133-135.
[46] Brubaker and Cooper, "Beyond Identity," p.46.
[47] Brubaker, *Nationalist Politics,* pp. 88, 117, 118.

and evoke it, which brings it into existence and, in a way, creates it. The period of the Huguenot persecution demonstrated the "capacity of a persecuted group to endure and to defend its collective identity", but further, in fighting back they "found some specific resource of identity", and "it was indeed then that the Protestant minority became conscious of itself."[48]

It is somewhere in between all these cases, their unique specificities and shared patterns, that the Turkish minority in Bulgaria has to be located: among continuous discrimination and social disadvantage, 'groupist' and 'identitarian' visions from outside, an imagined enemy by state and the elites, a subject and product of assimilation, an event reproduced by debates and struggles, internalized categories and labels, and groupness based on shared commonalities and strengthened by communicative, cultural and political connectedness. Only so we can reconcile the rigid and appealing homogenizing categories, the impact of historical processes and events and the multiplicity of social and cultural forms always present in 'real' life.

[48] Bien, "Imagining," pp.94-95.

Chapter 3: The Turks in Bulgaria, 1878-1944.

Autonomy or Exclusion

Religious Autonomy

The territories of the tributary Bulgarian Principality and the autonomous Ottoman province Eastern Rumelia[49] inherited from the Ottoman Empire an ethnically and religiously diverse population with a Bulgarian-speaking Orthodox Christian majority considered by the Bulgarian Liberation movement the rightful claimants to the Bulgarian lands and, historically, the native building block of the local population.

Demography

The second largest religious community after the Christians in the newly-formed state was the Muslim community. Five hundred years of Ottoman domination over those lands with a history of conversion to Islam, settlement of Turkish-speaking Muslim groups, and the 'komshuluk' model of peaceful coexistence of Muslim, Christians and other religious denominations down to the sub-levels of the village left an indelible trace on the demography of the region. Despite the widely recognized in Ottoman studies 'millet' model of religious

[49] In July 1878 the Berlin Treaty created the two units as part of the dismantling of the much larger independent Bulgarian state that the San Stefano treaty of March the same year envisioned following the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-8. The Bulgarian Principality more or less coincided with the borders of the Ottoman vilayet of Tuna or Danube and was a self-governed state under the suzerainty of the Porte. Eastern Rumelia, immediately South of it, was a smaller territory that remained an autonomous province of the Empire with a Bulgarian-dominated government. The latter was to voluntarily be annexed to the Principality in 1885 in what is known today in Bulgarian national history as the Unification and in 1908 the independence of the Bulgarian state was proclaimed. The Principality and Easter Rumelia comprised the bulk of the future 20th-century Bulgarian state.

tolerance and autonomy, an almost exclusively Christian Rumeli (European Ottoman Provinces) prior to the Ottoman conquests in the Balkans had become home to huge numbers of Muslims. Many places such as present-day Albania, Bosnia, the Sanjak of Novi Pazar or even pre-World War I Macedonia according to some studies contained Muslim majorities. In the Bulgarian-to-be lands Muslims were a numerical minority, but comprised close to 40 percent of the total population before the Russo-Turkish War and the rise of the Bulgarian state.[50] Most of them were Turkish-speaking.

According to Ali Eminov, Muslims constituted over one third of the population immediately after the war in 1878[51] despite the atrocities committed against them during the war and the mass emigration that ensued. Ibrahim Yalamov talks in detail about the "refugee question" created by deliberate violence targeting civilian Muslims on the part of the Russian army and Bulgarian volunteer groups who sought to ethnically cleanse the region and force as many Muslims as possible to flee.[52] Their number reached 200,000 based on some sources consulted by Yalamov. Other authors paint a much more extreme picture of the mass exodus of Muslims during the war, and claim a total of 1.5 million displaced Balkan Muslims as a result of the war.[53] In 1881, writes Neuburger, the 578,000 Muslims in Bulgaria comprised 28.8% of the population despite the continued large-scale migration during and after the war.[54] Other sources point to the 1881 census as reporting 27% Turks in the Principality out of a rough total of 2 million people, and another 34.5% Turks in Eastern Rumelia (Yalamov: 67). It is interesting to juxtapose statistics presented by Neuburger and Yalamov for the

[50] Yalamov, *Istoria*, pp. 47-48.
[51] Eminov, *Turkish and Other*, p.81.
[52] Yalamov, *Istoria*, pp. 68-70.
[53] See Bilal Simsir, "The Turkish Minority in Bulgaria: History and Culture," in *The Turks of Bulgaria: The History, Culture, and Political Fate of a Minority*, ed. Kemal Karpat (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1990), p.162.
[54] Neuburger, *The Orient Within*, p.36.

Principality. Both seem to refer to a total Principality population of 2007 thousand, but Yalamov seems to count as Turks almost all the Muslims indicated by Neuburger while the Bulgarian-speaking Muslim have always historically constituted between 10 and 20 percent of the total Muslim population in Bulgaria. What is more, the census categories at the probably only referred to religious affiliation.

Since then a "steady stream" of Muslims leaving or being forced out of the country was sustained, says Eminov, and by 1900 they amounted to less then 15% of the population.[55] Such were the numerical realities of the demographic structure of the new Bulgarian state in the years of its formation and first steps towards consolidation. The estimates, even when they vary greatly from source to source, offer a rather consistent image of the undeniable presence of Muslims and Turks in early Bulgaria – a more than visible presence, which was not seriously disturbed even by their constant large-scale outflow.

The Status of Muslims

Numbers, as it will be discussed in more detail later, are not the only factor determining the relative standing of a perceived community such as the Muslims in post-Liberation Bulgaria. Notwithstanding the fact that they were a numerical minority, under the Ottoman Empire Muslims in the future Bulgarian territories enjoyed an elevated status as state officials, soldiers, religious leaders, or even simply peasants. Such a generalization could be problematized, but it becomes especially valid in contrast with the drastic decline of the symbolic position of Muslims and Turks once inside the boundaries of the new Bulgarian state. In the words of Gruev and Kalyonski, Muslims went from being a state-building („държавотворен") element to marginalized („маргинализиращи се") religious minorities

[55] Eminov, *Turkish and Other*, pp. 78-79.

[plural used by authors] in the "new political and cultural conditions."[56] In a similar vein, Yalamov contends that Turkish people and other Muslims in Bulgaria who, one could say, found themselves 'trapped' in the new state, were faced with the need to adapt to a set of new sociopolitical arrangements, which lead to their gradual consolidation into an ethnic minority.[57]

One way to think of the groups comprising the Muslim population of the newly established state is according to linguistic differentiation – the two major components relevant to this work, but far not the only ones in reality, were the Slavic or Bulgarian speakers and the Turkish-speaking Muslim communities. The position of the former was always markedly different and perhaps more complicated in purely abstract terms of belonging.[58] The Turks, on the other hand, were never ceased to be the 'other' against which the Bulgarian nation would continue to imagine its ethnic frontiers deep into the 20th century, as Mary Neuburger for instance exemplifies elaborates. Perceived as the foreigners, the

[56] See Gruev and Kalyonski, *Vuzroditelniyat protses*, p.90.
[57] Yalamov, *Istoria*, pp. 66-67.
[58] The difference referred to here has to do with the relationship of the Bulgarian-speaking Muslims (also known as the Bulgarian Mohamedans or the Pomaks) with the central authorities and how they, the Muslims, were conceived by them. From the inception of Bulgarian nationalism in early 19th century, language was a defining feature according to which the architects of the 'Revival' movement selected the populations to be 'awakened' and included in the future Bulgarian nation. All Slav speakers West of Serbia basically, including Serbian Eastern peripheries and Slavs of the three Macedonian 'villayets' were considered ethnic Bulgarians because of some degree of linguistic unity. That is why Muslims groups of Slavic linguistic heritage were generally considered native Bulgarians who had strayed from the path of Orthodoxy and proper untainted 'Bulgarian-ness' by way of treason or of having been coerced, depending on the ideological current of the times. The state always sought to incorporate them into the envisioned national population by striving to eliminate problematic differences and markers of identity through education, religious conversion, name-changing etc. We will also see the dualistic attitudes towards them persisted, the bias against them overwhelmed integration efforts and they ended up at bottom of the economic society or even largely excluded and isolated from it.

minority, the 'guest' element from the very start, this population was left by the Bulgarian state to organize and govern its own internal affairs such as education, which was carried out largely under the umbrella of religion and religious institutions.

Authors agree on the idea that emerging from the Ottoman Empire as an independent young state, Bulgaria largely preserved the Ottoman 'millet' legacy of relative cultural autonomy for religious communities. This was most strongly pronounced in the case of the most numerous group, the Muslims, who despite large-scale migration and flight in the years of and after the Bulgarian Liberation War remained a considerably sizeable minority within the borders of the young Bulgarian state. The Muslim religious Community, now headed by the Muftiship in Sofia and formally still under the 'Sheyhulislam' in Istanbul, was granted "fairly far-reaching" autonomy within which they ran their own 'Sheriat' courts, funded private schools, and administered local affairs.[59] The governance of social life of Muslims in Bulgaria took place in the context of religious autonomy and under the supervision of religious institutions.

International Legal Provisions

The equal rights of ethnic and religious groups in Bulgaria were guaranteed in the Berlin treaty of 1878, the Tarnovo Constitution of 1879, as well as a number of other international acts in the years to come. The rights of Turks and other Muslims in Bulgaria were upheld largely within the framework of religious liberties and equality for Muslims, as well as freedom from discrimination on the basis of confession, language, nationality or race for all citizens of Bulgaria. It is genuinely interesting, and also of high necessity to this particular exercise, to trace the evolution of the rights language with respect to Muslim, Turkish and other presumed minority persons and groups entrenched in the most prominent

[59] Neuburger, *The Orient Within*, p. 36.

treaties and agreements of the time cited by scholars. Such documents undoubtedly influenced the ways in which the 'non-native' groups in Bulgaria were constructed and perceived. They established the terms in which those groups were conceptualized on a state bureaucratic level and to whom state resources were allocated. The legal frames through which various population groups in Bulgaria were seen served as basis on which groups were empowered or excluded in processes of nation-building. The distribution of power by the state among groups inevitably reinforces the theoretical categories crafted in constitutions and peace treaties and easily transforms them into real-world relationships and ways of experiencing the world. That is why it is crucial to study the language through which Bulgarian demography was imagined at various times. It is also genuinely intriguing to evaluate the language of authors and works dealing with the Turkish minority of Bulgaria against the backdrop of the categories put forth in those legal documents.

In an article dealing specifically with the legal status of Turks in Bulgaria since 1878, A. Mete Tuncoku asserts on multiple occasions that "from the very beginning of Bulgaria's establishment as an independent entity, Bulgarian authorities formally guaranteed respect for the minority rights and freedoms of the Turkish people in their country".[60] He goes further to say that "an examination" of the legal documents "clearly shows that the Turkish people living in Bulgaria have been recognized as a distinct ethnic group" or even as "one of Bulgaria's minority groups" by the Berlin Treaty of 1878 – a status reproduced and amended by "numerous subsequent international treaties."[61] The author then provides an appendix with article V of the Berlin Treaty, which contains provisions against discrimination strictly on the

[60] A. Mete Tuncoku, "The Rights of Minorities in International Law: The Case of the Turkish Minority in the People's Republic of Bulgaria," in *The Turks of Bulgaria: The History, Culture, and Political Fate of a Minority*, ed. Kemal Karpat (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1990), p.243.

[61] Ibid., pp. 244-248.

basis of "religious creeds and confessions" and guarantees "the freedom and outward exercise of all forms of worship."[62]

The section quoted by Tuncoku to substantiate his claims deals in an unambiguous way solely with religious distinctions and religious equality. It seeks to ensure equality and non-discrimination for the non-Christian citizens of Bulgaria, in other words, but makes no mention of linguistic and national differentiations or of ethnic and minority groups. Another researcher, Yalamov, brings up other articles of the Berlin Treaty, which do identify different ethnicities living in the Bulgarian state. According to Yalamov, article five poses that in localities where "Bulgarians are mixed with Turkish, Greek, Romanian and other populations, the rights and interests of those peoples will be taken into consideration in regard to elections and the working out of the Constitution."[63]

The Turnovo Constitution of 1879, the first Bulgarian constitution, declares the equality of all Bulgarian subjects before law and that no divisions are acceptable („разделение на съсловия"), while in the same time affirming the freedom to association for all citizens when the exercise of this right does not go against state order, religion and "good morals" („добрите нрави").[64] It does not, however, in any form speak concretely about ethnic or linguistic groups or minorities. Expectedly, the only differentiation it makes is according to religion, as it extends the right to non-Christian Orthodox individuals to practice

[62] Full text of the article in Tuncoku: *The difference of religious creeds and confessions shall not be alleged against any person as a ground of eclusion or incapacity in matters relating to the enjoyment of civil and political rights, admission to public employment, functions, and honours, or the exercise of the various professions industries in any locality whatsoever.* And further: *"The freedom and outward exercise of all forms of worship are assured to all persons belonging to Bulgaria, as well as foreigners, and no hindrance shall be offered either to the hierarchical organization of the different communions, or to their relations with their spiritual chiefs.* Ibid., pp.248-249.

[63] Yalamov, *Istoria*, pp. 74-75.

[64] Articles 57 and 83 of the Constitution, see "Turnovska konstitutsia" [Turnovo Constitution], available at http://www.kingsimeon.bg/downloads/Turnovska_Konstitucia.pdf.

their faith freely and grants religious autonomy to non-Christian Orthodox communities.[65] As Ibrahim Yalamov rightly notices, despite these rights and liberties, the principle of equality of different religions was not adopted in the Constitution, which proclaims Orthodox Christianity dominant in the country.[66]

Yalamov refers to one more article in the Berlin Treaty, which mentions explicitly the rights of Turks in newly-founded Bulgaria in the context of land ownership. It holds that Turkish real estate owners („турските стопани") are entitled to retain their possessions even after leaving Bulgaria by leasing them to other persons.[67] This provision, along with the previous one cited by Yalamov, is evidence to the presence of a notion of 'Turks' as distinct people who probably spoke the same language, shared certain cultural markers – the most salient of which was without a doubt their belonging to the Islamic faith – and occupied dominant positions in the former Ottoman society. When talking about them, authors such as Tuncoku, Yalamov and others use indulgingly terms such as 'ethnic group', 'minority,' 'Turkish minority' etc. The information available in the above legal documents, however, should be cautiously interpreted and its possible implication as to who the so-called Turkish and the Muslims minorities might have been at the time reconsidered.

The Ottoman social and political order in the Balkans did facilitate the gradual emergence of a more or less standardized Turkish ethnic culture. Despite the strength of religious identification deeply entrenched in imperial governance, already in the 19th century religious divisions were "loaded" with notions of ethnic belonging and content, according to some.[68] Valid as this assertion may be from certain points of view, anthropological studies of 19th century Ottoman society also show that these "ethnic" identifications could be equally

[65] Ibid., articles 40 and 42.
[66] See Yalamov, *Istoria, p.76, as well as "Turnovska konstitutsia," article 37.*
[67] Yalamov, *Istoria,* p. 77.
[68] Ibid., p.56.

feeble or irrelevant for many. Either way, minority, as Brubaker, argues, however, is not simply "given by the facts of demography" or a "static ethnodemographic reality", but it is instead a "dynamic political stance."[69] In other words, it is modeled by the ways in which a given ethno-cultural identity is mobilized (or not) and educated into self-awareness, the claims to rights and power made on behalf of that group, and its socio-political organization and representation. Thus, its existence (or not) as well as group manifestations can vary greatly through time and space. The mere presence of carriers of common cultural markers, however, is hardly ever tantamount to the concept of minority.

The term 'Turk' was not unknown to the lower classes of the Ottoman Empire. 'Turk' was the common way of designating the people in various positions of power by the Slavic-Bulgarian, for example, peasant subjects of the Empire. So they were referring to the Ottoman state, 'Turkey', and even Islam, the 'Turkish faith', as well. It would not be too much of a speculation, either, to say that those 'Turks' were, in fact, aware of their distinctiveness among the vast sea of other cultural forms inhabiting the Ottoman state and that they probably even possessed some group consciousness mainly due to their common language (or similar dialects as opposed to completely different linguistic groups such as the Slavic and the Greek surrounding them), religion and higher socioeconomic status. It is also well known, however, that individuals in positions of power in the Ottoman Empire preferred to identify with a high 'Ottoman' elite culture rather than with the lowly 'Turk'. Turkish was the culture of the common peasants of Turkic origins who had lived within the same sovereign state for hundreds of years and had reached some degree of homogeneity. It was precisely this 'Turkishness', too, that early Turkish nationalism in the Ottoman Empire

[69] Rogers Brubaker, "National Minorities, Nationalizing States, and External National Homelands in the New Europe," in *Daedalus*, Vol. 124(2), What Future for the State? (Spring 1995), p. 112.

sought to 'awaken' and mobilize. It needed to do that because it found it in a loose state of non-exclusive cultural identity intersected by various other forms of identifications.

The different social institutions which governed communal life for Turks and were largely left intact after the establishment of the Bulgaria state, were under the umbrella of Islam and the Muslim 'millet'. They in no way emphasized any kind of overarching Turkish national identity and neither did the treaties considered above. The rights of Turks in the nascent Bulgarian state were upheld as political rights of individual citizens members of a civic nation and as the freedom of religion for Muslims. They were not oriented at recognizing, celebrating, or preserving any kind of Turkish cultural or national language, heritage, culture, ethnic group, minority, nation etc. The Berlin treaty and the Tarnovo Constitution remain unequivocally silent on that issue. Religion was still the most important formal legal cleavage, which comes as no surprise for a state emerging from the Ottoman Empire. The role of religion in organizing political life of course should not be overstated. Other obvious social distinctions did exist and religious communities were informally subdivided into linguistic and other cultural units, but those found no expression in legal and institutional language of governance at the time. This is significant because it was about to change.

Religious Autonomy

As discussed, the earliest legal frameworks concerning the rights of non-ethnic Bulgarians are confined to ensuring equality before law regardless of religion and religious autonomy for non-Orthodox Christian communities. Civic and political rights were guaranteed for members of all religious confessions. This means that the legitimate, legally recognized groups into which society divided itself were religious communities entitled to

self-governance. The right to be a member of one's religious community and practice one's faith free of prejudice and discrimination were values of the highest moral and political caliber at the time. That is why the first documents that seek to legitimize the new Bulgarian Christian-dominated state make sure to, among other things, secure the equality of its more than sizeable Muslim minority.

The structures, hierarchies, and institutions of the Muslim religious community formed during Ottoman times were largely preserved and left in place by the Bulgarian state after the establishment of the Principality in 1878. According to studies consulted by I. Yalamov, Bulgaria inherited 2 356 mosques, over 300 Islamic schools, and 400 vakfs[70].[71] The Turnovo Constitution explicitly states that the "church affairs" [„църковните работи"] of communities other than the Christian Orthodox remain under the control of their own "spiritual authorities" [„духовни власти"], but under the "supreme supervision" [„върховний надзор"] of the respective Bulgarian minister.[72] The intactness of hierarchical organizations and relations between spiritual leaders and believers is *** by/in the Berlin Treaty and reaffirmed in 1913 with special reference to the Muslims of Bulgaria by the Treaty of Constantinople concluded between Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire after the Second Balkan War. The latter's article VIII dictates that "Moslem communities [in Bulgaria] already constituted or which shall be constituted in the future, their hierarchical organization, and their endowments shall be recognized and respected; they shall be holden of their spiritual heads without hindrance".[73] It should also be noted that the document treats

[70] Endowments in the forms of estates and property donated by wealthy Muslims used to cover the costs and needs of communal religious life such as paying the salaries of hodjas, muftis etc.

[71] Yalamov, *Istoria,* p.81.

[72] "Turnovska konstitutsia," article 42.

[73] "Treaty of Peace Between Bulgaria and Turkey," The American Journal of International Law, Vol. 8, No. 1, Supplement: Official Documents (Jan., 1914): pp. 33.

the subjects of the two states as primarily religious national identities. The Bulgarians on Ottoman territory immediately become equated to the "other Christian communities" and entitled to the same rights while the Ottoman Empire acts as patron of all the Muslims in Bulgaria and "the name of His Imperial Majesty the Sultan, as Caliph, shall continue to be pronounced in the public prayers of Moslems" (articles VIII, IX).[74]

From 1895 on, a decree by the Bulgarian Prince called "Temporary rules for the spiritual governance of Muslims" set the institutional frames and formal structure of Muslim religious autonomy in Bulgaria. Among other things, it appointed a Grand Mufti residing in the central mosque in Sofia Banya Bashi who unctioned as mediator between the Bulgarian Muslim Community and the Sheik-ul-Islam in Istanbul[75] who remained their supreme spiritual leader, at least nominally, until Bulgarian Independence in 1908[76].

All Bulgarian provincial capitals had their own Muftis – mostly Turks rather than Pomaks – nominated and paid by the Bulgarian government, who were in charge of mosques, religious schools, and the 'vakfs'.[77] The Sheriyat continued to be the law through which communities solved internal conflicts and the local Sheriyat courts were kept in place, restored, or created where needed as part of the religious court system – along with the three appellate and one supreme spiritual court – which enjoyed far-reaching autonomy as well as the status of official law within the limits of Bulgarian state legality.[78] After 1880 they were

[74] Ibid., articles 8 and 9.

[75] Te highest Ottoman state official overseeing matters related to religious administration, Islamic law, education etc.

[76] Yalamov, *Istoria,* p.82-83.

[77] See R. J. Crampton, "The Turks in Bulgaria, 1878-1944," in *The Turks of Bulgaria: The History, Culture, and Political Fate of a Minority*, ed. Kemal Karpat (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1990), p. 65.

[78] See Dimitar Gyudurov, "Religioznata politika na Bulgaria i miusiulmanite (1919-1925)" [The Religious policies of Bulgaria and the Muslims], *Godishnik na department Istoria*

transferred under the authority of the Muftis who were now oversaw matters of justice as well.[79]

The specific law describing in detail the rights and status of the Bulgarian Muslims – the Law Concerning the Establishment and Administration of the Mohamedan Religious Community in the Kingdom of Bulgaria - was not crafted and finalized until 1919. The Law had an inclusive nature and reiterated the most important concessions of religious autonomy made to the Muslims in past agreements. It granted the Muslim communities "considerable autonomy in their internal affairs": they could establish councils administering mosques, schools and other religious property, and solving issues of family life such as "matrimonial disputes, disagreements between parents and children, divorces, paternity cases, and disputes over wills and testaments.[80] Based on the 1919 Law, the self-administration of the religious affairs of Muslims still fell under the control of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Confessions, the Muftis had to keep all their records in Bulgarian only while the local councils were allowed to use both the Bulgarian and the Turkish language.[81] The Grand Mufti in Sofia would be appointed by the Bulgarian Prince, so as to remove his dependence on the Sheik-ul-Islam who would only be informed of the selected candidate for approval.[82]

Although most authors agree that the Bulgarian authorities by and large respected the long-established religious autonomy of Muslims and rarely interfered, there were occasions on which they gladly exercised their authorities over with restrictive purposes. The 1880s saw dismissals of muftis for political reasons as well as efforts by specific governments to close

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[History department Annual], Vol. 2(2007): pp. 360-363, 383. Available at http://ebox.nbu.bg/pro/12%20Dimitar%20Giudurov%20+.pdf.

[79] Yalamov, *Istoria,* p.83.
[80] Crampton, "Turks in Bulgaria," p.65.
[81] Gyudurov, "Religioznata politika," pp.358-360.
[82] Ibid.

down the main muftiship in Sofia, but the greatest infringement on the religious autonomy of Muslims was the incomplete restoration of 'vakf' properties, which was never carried out fully by the state and many parcels of land, schools and mosques were appropriated or destroyed by it.[83]

Religious autonomy covered virtually all spheres of social and cultural life for Muslims such as religion and worship, courts and justice, education and schools, cultural and even some professional associations, etc. According to Gyudurov, the Muslim Community along with the Bulgarian state managed properly only the first of the above tasks, namely the care for mosques and the clergy while neglecting other important functions such as religious educational institutions.[84] It is no wonder, then, that in the 1930s there were no sufficiently qualified candidates to be appointed as justice in the high Muslim Court of Appeals in Sofia.[85] One constant observable in all the branches of Muslim autonomy is that it remained fundamentally apolitical. One can say that Muslims in Bulgaria enjoyed large cultural autonomy while suppressed and excluded by the political domination of Bulgarian Christians. High positions and structures power were occupied almost entirely by the latter, but more than that, where Muslims and Turks did participate in local governance for example they were incorporated into larger units such as Bulgarian political parties. Muslims never attained any meaningful political representation of their group interests or identity, as will be discussed later. This status quo would be somewhat disturbed by followers of nationalist, reformist and Kemalist circles of the Ottoman Empire and later the Turkish Republic. These movements exerted palpable pressure among Turks and Muslims in Bulgaria in domains of intellectual life such as education and press.

[83] Yalamov, *Istoria,* p.84.
[84] Gyudurov, "Religioznata politika," p.384.
[85] Crampton, "Turks in Bulgaria," p.66.

Education, Kemalism, Political Participation

Treaty of Neuilly

The Treaty of Neuilly in 1919 negotiating the conditions for Bulgaria defeated in World War I introduced a tangible change in discourse with respect to minority rights. Self-determination of small, formerly oppressed nations as well as protection of national minorities had climbed to the top of the agenda of international relations influenced by the Versailles Treaty and the famous 14 Points of the American president Woodrow Wilson. Besides already familiar clauses on the equality before law and free practice of all religious confessions, the Treaty stipulates "full and complete protection of life and liberty" for all inhabitants as well as equal civil and political rights for all citizens "without distinction of birth, nationality, language, race or religion."[86]

These additional distinctions are now elevated to the same status as religious divisions and find fully-fledged recognition and protection in the following articles of the document. Article 53 reads that "no restriction shall be imposed on the free use by any Bulgarian national of any language in private intercourse, in commerce, in religion, in the press or in publications of any kinds, or at public meetings" and, further, "adequate facilities shall be given to Bulgarian nationals of non-Bulgarian speech for the use of their language, either orally or in writing, before the Courts.".[87] The use of one's native language or "speech" becomes a value of utmost importance and a civic right to which everyone must have equal access, for which purposes the state is obliged to provide "adequate facilities" to all its nationals. The diversity of the Bulgarian population is now not only recognized and protected

[86] Articles 50 and 53 of the Treaty. See Tuncoku, "Rights," p.251.
[87] Ibid.

by a binding international legal document, but its practice and sustenance is also encouraged and embedded in the treaty. Article 54 says,

> *Bulgarian nationals who belong to racial, religious or linguistic minorities shall enjoy […] equal right to establish, manage and control at their own expense charitable, religious and social institutions, schools and other educational establishments, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their religion freely therein;*[88]

The concept of 'minority' as a discrete unit of the population with its own culture that deserves to be upheld and developed through state support is one of the major innovations in the Neuilly and Versailles Treaties, which continues to evolve and acquire more prominence in future international acts and agreements. The obligations in this regard imposed on Bulgaria in 1919 put much pressure on its Agrarian government under A. Stamboliiski who in an attempt to enhance the standing of the country takes comprehensive measures to cater to the needs of minorities in Bulgaria. The domains of education, press, and various cultural organizations are the ones where minority rights are most often manifest.

Education of Muslims and Turks

The traditions in education for Muslims in Bulgaria dated back to the Ottoman period and cannot be discussed without taking into consideration this continuity or their intimate ties to religion. The second half of the 19th century brought observable enhancements in the Tuna (Danube) 'vilayet' (present-day Northern Bulgaria) under Midhad Pasha and his reforms. In 1875 there were 2,700 primary schools, 150 'medresses', and 40 'rushdiyes'; approximately 2500 schools were located in the same year in the present-day Bulgarian parts of the Edirne

[88] Ibid.

'vilayet' (Southern-Eastern Bulgaria).[89] In the primary schools, also known as 'mekteps', student learning was strongly based on the Koran, and only some schools taught basic writing skills; the 'medresses' were the secondary religious schools and they prepared specialized clerical cadres.[90] The number of the modern, more secular 'rushdiyes' was very low in the Bulgarian lands and in the Ottoman Empire as a whole.

The Russo-Turkish war lead to the destruction of many schools and the flight of teachers and clergy. By 1885 and later, many were restored and new ones were built. The number of Turkish schools grew steadily until the 1920s, which did not necessarily reflect growth in the quality of the system. The Education Law of 1885 along with some amendments in later years outlined the juridical frames of the Muslim educational institutions. The Muslim schools were treated as private, so they had to rely on their own funding as such, with a considerable degree of curricular independence, but still under the ultimate control and supervision of the Bulgarian Ministry of education.[91]

The different status of the Bulgarian public and the Muslim private religious school system lead to many disparities that harmed the latter. Although the 1885 Law allowed access to Bulgarian public primary education to all children, the "overwhelming majority" of students attending were Bulgarian.[92] There were gross disproportions in funding, too. As Turkish and Muslim education was under the umbrella of religious autonomy for the Muslim community, schools were funded exclusively by the 'vakfs'. Up until World War I, the Ottoman government would also provide some assistance in the form of textbooks and salaries for teachers.[93] A "lack of adequately trained Turkish teachers" in general, however,

[89] Simsir, "Turkish Minority," p.163.
[90] Yalamov, *Istoria,* p.84-85.
[91] See Simsir, "Turkish Minority," p.164, and Yalamov, *Istoria,* p.87.
[92] Eminov, *Turkish and Other*, p.124.
[93] Simsir, "Turkish Minority," p.164.

along with insufficient resources for salaries and materials "contributed to a poor quality of education in these schools," writes Eminov, which accounts for the disastrously low literacy rate of 4% among the Turkish population in 1905.[94]

Until the end of the 19th century education was conducted by the "old system" inherited from the Ottoman Empire, under which schools did not know different classes, all students sat on rugs in one common room, and there were no official curricula.[95] Despite some drive for modernization in the first decade of the 20th century influenced by pro-reformist intellectuals and the Young Turk revolution in the Ottoman Empire, the realities did not change much until the First World War, and the general "cultural backwardness", the "low educational levels" of the Turkish population in relation to the majority was explained to a large extent by the poor state their autonomous education.[96]

When after World War I A. Stamboliiski's tried to comply with the Neuilly and Versailles treaties and ensure facilities for the education and enjoyment of their own culture of minorities, many new schools and papers[97] appeared, and many evaluate the activity of his government as benevolent and favorable for the autonomy of the Turkish and Muslim communities. Others, however, see no significant improvements between the two wars, as the

[94] Eminov, *Turkish and Other*, p.124.
[95] Yalamov, *Istoria,* p.87.
[96] Ibid., p. 90.
[97] A detailed account of press publications for Muslims and Turks in Bulgaria is beyond the scope of this paper even though they were one of the most important measurements of cultural autonomy, and political activity. Muslim press in Bulgaria also has a rich history dating back to Ottoman times. It flourished in the 20s and was overtaken by same fate as schools in the 30s. For a good history of newspapers, journals and periodical publications in Bulgaria see: Bilal Simsir, *The Turkish minority press in Bulgaria: its history and tragedy, 1865-1985*, (Ankara, 1986). Their contributions to the consolidation of the Turkish minority identity is reflected in the general discussion of the meanings of cultural autonomy, the relative position of the Turkish population under this religion-based autonomy, and the political involvement and consciousness of the group.

government was unable to provide sufficient resources. The incapacities of Turks to participate as equals in the state economy were still felt due to "lack of adequately trained teachers, shortage of funds, mass illiteracy, and the reluctance of parents to dispense with the valuable labor of their children."[98] Their condition was undoubtedly exacerbated after the coup against Stamboliiski in 1923. Bulgarian nationalism or even pro-fascism was on the rise, many pro-Muslim policies were revised or reversed, state interference with education increased as de facto autonomy was shrinking, and Turkish members of parliament went from 10 in 1923 to a mere four in 1933.[99]

Others yet, contend that "it was certainly the case that the Turks in Bulgaria demonstrated a rather high level of civic involvement in the inter-war period." [100] Obviously, the truthfulness of such a claim is very relative and depends on the factors and spheres of involvement taken into account. It is also important whether one considers some more or less real manifestations of involvement or judges strictly based formal legal arrangements. Nominally, the Turks and Muslims of Bulgaria in the 1920s enjoyed broad religious and cultural autonomy including schools, newspapers, and some cultural and professional associations. They were also, however, predominantly illiterate, poor, and rurally settled, excluded from larger society, meaningful representation and participation in governance. The political dimensions of the Turkish minority issue raise serious questions as to the precise kind of minority that the group was at the time.

[98] Eminov, *Turkish and Other*, p.126.

[99] See Valeri Stoyanov, "The Turks of Bulgaria," in *Relations of compatibility and incompatibility between Christians and Muslims in Bulgaria*, project directors A. Zhelyazkova et al. (Sofia: International Center for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations, 1994), p.270.

[100] James Warhola and Orlina Boteva, "The Turkish Minority in Contemporary Bulgaria," *Nationalities Papers*, vol.31, 3 (Sept. 2003): p.259.

Among other things, autonomy in religious, educational and other affairs implied that the Turkish communities were to be left out of the national project. The Bulgarian nation was to be defined and crafted through their marginalization and absence from it. The Turks of the Bulgarian state were to be the element through the 'othering' of whom the narrative of the nation was being and would be told in popular myths and history books, as well as in real life through state policies and politics of exclusion. The self-governance of religious and educational matters for the Turkish-speaking population also meant lack of support by the state. Education for Muslim Turks was relying largely on private and religious funding and resources and, therefore, dependent on it. Exclusion of the Turkish population from state-sponsored education "ensured that the educational level of the Turkish minority would remain very low and they would not be able to challenge Bulgarian dominance."[101]

Minority, Kemalism, and Political participation

V. Stoyanov writes that "the beginning of the 20th century found the Turks as an already formed traditional minority which practically had cultural autonomy insofar as the state did not interfere in their religious affairs, the functioning of the Sheriat legal system, the self-determination of Turkish schools and the publishing and spreading of books and periodicals in Turkish."[102] In a similar vein, Yalamov maintains that in the first decades of the 20th century, along with the overarching Muslim identity, the Turkish population of Bulgaria began to self-determine as Turkish – a people with common history, culture, language, customs, etc. – it was designated so by "the others", and strove to preserve its

[101] Vesselin Dimitrov, "In Search of Homogeneous Nation: the Assimilation of Bulgaria's Turkish Minority, 1984-1985," *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* (2000): p.4.

[102] Stoyanov, "Turks of Bulgaria," p. 269.

character.[103] At the same time, there is W. Hopken's rendition that Until World War II the Turkish population lived as a "closed ethnic and religious group, mainly agrarian with only 15 percent living in urban centers" whose identity was largely religion-based.[104]

These readings of the situation are not necessarily mutually exclusive. One needs to, however, 'measure' the institutional, legal and power dimensions structuring the minority identity. The autonomy or "traditional minority" described by Stoyanov does not necessarily equal widespread ethno-national self-determination. One needs also not forget that the autonomy under which ethnic Turks lived was defined and institutionalized in religious terms. The Turkish language, schools etc. might have only served as media for conducting the education and public affairs of a religious community. The Treaty of Friendship in 1925 by Turkey and Bulgaria, while upholding the linguistic and other rights of Bulgarian minorities put forth in the Neuilly Treaty, still formally talks about the category of 'Muslims' in Bulgaria.[105] The role of the kin state is one of the three nodes of the "triadic nexus" between nationalizing state, national minority and native homeland, suggests Brubaker.[106] For a long time, for the Bulgarian Turks this was the Ottoman Empire, a state founded upon religious classification, considered the protector of Muslims in Bulgaria. This is of course not to say that the idea of a Turkish people or nation was still foreign to Bulgarian Muslims. Pan-Turkism and Kemalism had been on the rise for some time now, and their impact will be discussed further on.

[103] Yalamov, *Istoria,* p.57.

[104] Wolfgang Hopken, "From Religious Identity to Ethnic Mobilization: The Turks of Bulgaria before, under and since Communism," In *Muslim Identity and the Balkan State,* ed. H. Poulton et al. (London, 1997), p.56.

[105] See "Treaty of Friendship between Bulgaria and Turkey. Signed at Angora, October 18, 1925." *League of Nations, Treaty Series*, vol. 54 (1926): pp.127-133.

[106] Brubaker, "National Minorities," p.118.

What is described by Yalamov is closer to a mass mobilization and based on a shared ethno-national consciousness. The political opportunities for the propagation of such nation building are of critical importance here, however. Explanations based on currents confined to intellectual elites or on sheer legal frames are often times misleading.

Ted Gurr defines minorities as "politicized" or "politically salient" communal groups, which become such through forces of economic, cultural, and political discrimination, and when "they have taken political action in support of collective interests."[107] Both conditions are equally important. The first one stresses the function of the interaction with a majority group, or its representative institutions of power such as the nation-state. Discrimination in spheres of social, political and economic life or, in other words, nationalist exclusion of a portion of the population based on perceived characteristics simultaneously constructs those groups and strengthens feelings of solidarity among them. The second condition, equally important, requires that "the group was the focus of political mobilization and action in defense of promotion of its self-defined interests."[108] This condition means that an active political stance on behalf of the group, which induces meaningful in size mobilization, is key to the existence of a minority. The presence of a population ethnically distinct from the majority and culturally similar within is not sufficient then. A community recognized and organized around religious autonomy existing within a state would also respond to a different kind of minority concept. Minority rights to education and culture in its own language granted to a largely passive, rural, illiterate population, while already constructing an idea of a distinct ethnic group, also falls short of politicization.

[107] See Ted R. Gurr, *Minorities at Risk : a global view of ethnopolitical conflict,* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, c1993), p.6.

[108] Ibid., p.8.

On the question of discrimination, two parallel arguments could be made. Many authors extol the Bulgarian regime prior to 1944 for its legendary tolerance and progressive treatment of minorities – an opinion that seems to be strictly based on formal institutional arrangements of autonomy and guaranteed rights. Discrimination and nationalist exclusion, however, are usually much more subtle and in the meantime profound, as is the case with Turks and Muslims in post-Independence Bulgaria. The autonomy they 'enjoyed' was a de facto exclusion from society, politics, and the nation. Left to the mercy of religious leaders, disadvantaged by illiteracy and low education due to the poor quality of private religious schooling, frequently suffering from the arbitrary land laws of the state, and deprived of political representation, Muslims and Turks stood no chance in competing with the majority in the state economy.

Their condition, often bordering on bare life, is seen by some as a main reason for the continual waves of immigration. No doubt, those were always indirectly, or less so, encouraged by the state. Crampton sees in Bulgarian nationalism, anti-Turkish attitudes, and the nationalization of the state after 1878 along with a number of other factors including period violence and insecurity, land laws and impoverishment the driving forces that regularly "depressed" Muslim morale and compelled them to emigration in large numbers by 'choice'.[109] According to varying statistics, between the Russo-Turkish War and World War II, close to or over 500,000 Turks and Muslims left Bulgaria permanently for the Ottoman Empire and Turkey. By the 1990s, those numbers were to exceed 1,000,000. The "emigration syndrome," write Gruev and Kalyonski, is the only unbroken continuity in Bulgarian state policies towards the Muslim minorities, regardless of the regime in power.[110] After restrictions imposed in the 1930s, the Communist authorities were to again pick up the

[109] For an elaborate history of Muslim emigration and the reasons behind it, see Crampton, "Turks in Bulgaria," pp. 44-62.
[110] Gruev and Kalyonski, *Vuzroditelniat protses*, pp.116, 118.

expulsion line, contemplate it periodically, and utilize it on two occasions in colossal proportions.

Certainly, one of the forces suppressing a secular nationalist movement among the Turks of Bulgaria was the very religious autonomy under whose protection they lived in the foreign nation-state. Here, Brubaker's definition of a minority as a "family of related yet mutually competing stances" and claims made by different groups from within proves useful.[111] The clergy and spiritual leadership of the Muslim Community enjoyed the full backing of the state against any other expressions of nationalism. It had institutional power, controlled access to funds, and possessed symbolic authority over other potential claims. Hopken describes the relationship between the Bulgarian state and the Muslim religious leaders as one of "compromise" where the two sides had a mutual interest in suppressing national Turkish consciousness and mobilization among the Muslims.[112] This relationship was employed to its fullest extent in the struggle against Kemalist influences in the 1920s and 30s.

Signs of political division within the Muslim-Turkish Community appeared as early as the end of the 19th century, when reformist influences from the Young Ottoman and Young Turk movements began to find their way through to Bulgarian Muslim teachers and other intellectuals. In the beginning of the 20th century, the more "public-spirited" members of the Turkish community, writes Yalamov, initiated a push towards a modernization of the school system.[113] The Association of Islamic Teachers in Bulgaria, founded in 1906, is an organization connected with this movement. Due to the wretched state of Turkish education, teachers came together to "improve the living conditions of teachers and to preserve Turkish

[111] Brubaker, "National Minorities," p.112.
[112] Hopken, "From Religious Identity," p.58.
[113] See Yalamov, *Istoria*, pp. 87-91

and Muslim identity by limiting Bulgarian intervention in the curriculum and teaching appointments."[114] Progress was slow, and the lack of funds or support from the religious establishment obstructed the process. The popularity and influence of the association grew after the Young Turk revolution in 1908, as demonstrated by the increase of members at its congresses, only 25 at its first and 128 at its sixth in 1911.[115]

Y. Koksal's proposed model of the trans-border flow of ideas from the Ottoman Empire and Turkey into Bulgaria, and their impact on the political dynamics and ethnic consciousness of Bulgarian Turks explains the Islamic Teachers phenomenon. The Turkish minority lost much of its potential political elite and intelligentsia to emigration. Reverse migration, if much smaller in size, is equally significant in content, argues Koksal.[116] The channels for the cross-border exchange of ideas are networks of intellectuals created by the movement of elites, activists, political exiles, and former immigrants returning, now educated, returning to stir the political sentiments and snap the national consciousness of the community out of its slumber. The first Muslim political organizations in Bulgaria such as the Teachers' Union (Islamic Teachers) were established under the auspices of Ottoman dissident intellectuals exiled by Abdulhamid II.[117] The work of these intellectuals as teachers, publicists and agitators created cleavages between conservative religious circles and supporters of the abolition of the Caliphate, a secular reforms, and more political freedoms.

A similar, but more even more intensive, opposition largely involving the Bulgaria state this time was incited by the advent of Kemalism after the establishment of the Turkish republic in 1923. Kemalism replaced the term "Muslim" with "Turk", brought pan-Turkic nationalism – the "common awareness of the Turkic-speaking people as an entity" – but also

[114] Koksal, "Transnational networks," p.202.
[115] Yalamov, *Istoria*, p. 91
[116] Koksal, "Transnational networks," pp. 198-199.
[117] Ibid., 199.

induced a lot of conservatism, and divided fundamentally the Turkish minority in Bulgaria.[118] The major organization in Bulgaria professing and preaching Kemalist ideology was 'Turan'. It started as a sports association of Bulgarian Turks, but was quickly politicized and transformed into a hotbed for Turkish nationalism. It "imposed a feeling of belonging to the Turkish nation and strengthened Ankara's influence among the Muslim population" encouraging Bulgarian Turks to unite politically and campaign for representation at the highest levels of government.[119] Up until then Turks participated almost exclusively in local governance while those who were members of parliament did not stand for the interests of their perceived national community.

Disturbed by growing Turkish nationalism among some groups and the danger of radicalization of claims for self-determination, the Bulgarian state took measures to support the conservative camps and resorted to the help of pro-fascist 'patriotic' organizations, which exerted pressure on the Turkish population, to say the least, and even outright terrorized it.[120] After another coup in 1934, the situation deteriorated further. The new reactionary government banned many political parties and organizations, among them Turan, cut the number of schools (from 1300 in 1923 to 367 in 1944) and publications in Turkish (one paper was left in 1944 out of over 60 in the 20s), and allowed arbitrary acts of violence against the minority to escalate.[121]

The intensified confrontation between state and nationalist minority elites must have inevitably led to some upheaval in mobilization of national consciousness. The assessments

[118] Vera Mutafchieva, "The Turk, the Jew, and the Gypsy," in in *Relations of compatibility and incompatibility between Christians and Muslims in Bulgaria*, project directors A. Zhelyazkova et al. (Sofia: International Center for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations, 1994), p.27.

[119] Stoyanov, "Turks of Bulgaria," p. 270.
[120] Ibid., p.271.
[121] Ibid.

of its extent vary. According to some authors such as Koksal and Yalamov, Kemalism had a crucial influence in consolidating the ethno-national identity and consciousness of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria.[122] Others are not convinced. Hopkin argues that the effect of Kemalism in Bulgaria was smaller than presented by many authors since the influence of political agents such as Turan was rather limited, high illiteracy among the Turkish population persisted, the collaboration between the strong religious elite and the state preponderated greatly over the small secular elite, and as a result, for the majority of Turks and Muslims religious identity prevailed even after Kemalism.[123] Similarly, Zhelyazkova talks about a secular school movement in the 1930s linked to the Kemalist aspirations of some groups, but fails to see a final instance of politicization on a mass scale, especially in the form of ethnic political parties.[124] The latter is a concern shared and voiced by a number of authors: the Turkish minority in Bulgaria was never really represented as such by a secular leadership through enduring political movements, parties or elections. Stoyanov writes that extensive state violence in the 30s combined with the "aloofness" of the Turkish minority and the levels of illiteracy, turned its into a "politically narrow-minded, economically feeble, and socially indifferent part of society," which was different in "denomination" from the

[122] For a detailed exposition of the Yalamov's argument as to how Kemalism helped consolidate Turkish ethno-national consciousness in Bulgaria, see sections of his book on Kemalism in Bulgaria, for example: Ibrahim Yalamov, *Kemalizma I Negovoto Otrazhenie v Bulgaria* [Kemalism and its Impact in Bulgaria], (Sofia: 2005), p. 205-221.

[123] Hopken, "From Religious Identity," pp.61-62.

[124] See Antonina Zhelyazkova, "The Social and Cultural Adaptation of Bulgarian Immigrants in Turkey," in *Between Adaptation and Nolstagia: The Bulgarian Turks in Turkey,* ed. A. Zhelyazkova (Sofia: International Center for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations, 1998), p.14.

majority, but isolated from Turkey, and was, thus, "pushed" to close themselves off in a religious community with an "extremely passive role."[125]

Ultimately, the controversies and the variegated interpretations around the dimensions of the Turkish minority in pre-World War II Bulgaria will remain. Indubitably, Turkish nationalism and self-consciousness were much more on the rise towards the end than at the start, and were perhaps even replacing religion-based identifications at large. It is hard to claim the same in organizational and institutional terms, though. Minority rights to language, education, etc., though curtailed, had been there since 1919 at least. Nationalist exclusion and political deprivation, however, prevented the emergence of more complex forms of nationalist mobilization. The levels of self-awareness and the specific subjective ways through which common Turks were experiencing their Turkish-ness are anybody's speculation. Much of this was to change, however, and maybe even turn upside down by the end of the century. The Turkish minority was to be subjected to unseen forms of ethnic iniquity and was to emerge in the 1990s with something of a mirror image of its late 1930s condition. Lastly, while swinging from toleration to violent exclusion, and difficult to define one-sidedly, state minority policies never sought to include, integrate, or assimilate. The epistemic shift was around the corner.

[125] Stoyanov, "Turks of Bulgaria," pp. 271-272.

Chapter 4: The Turkish Minority under Communism

Policies up until 1984

Coming to power in 1945 the Communist government found a de-facto segregated, entirely rural, and largely uneducated Turkish-speaking minority, which was the product of nearly 70 years of broad cultural autonomy, but also disregard, suppression, and exclusion by the post-independence governments. For approximately 10-15 years the Bulgarian Communist Party ambitiously strives to raise the living standard of the Bulgarian Turks. Based on the Soviet "internationalist" model, broad autonomy in educational, linguistic, religious and cultural matters was ensured, but centralized and tightly run by the Party.

> *The first Constitution of the People's Republic of Bulgaria of 4 December 1947 stated that 'National minorities have a right to be educated in their vernacular, and to develop their vernacular, and to develop their national culture'. There was a Turkish language department at the University of Sofia as well as a number of Turkish language publications and the Turkish language was taught as an extra-curricular activity*.[126]

In those years, the Bulgarian state repeatedly recognized the Turkish minority as a proud and equal nationality, member of the Bulgarian Socialist nation, whose population deserved all the benefits of cultural policies and the full rights to develop and enjoy education, publications and literature in their own language. After coming to power in 1954, Todor Zhivkov makes a number of public speeches upholding these rights for the Turks and assuring them that the State would do its best to provide facilities for their implementation.

[126] Milena Mahon, "The Turkish minority under Communist Bulgaria – politics of ethnicity and power," *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, Vol.1, 2 (1999), p. 155.

Even then, however, these recognitions seem to bear the mark of a temporary measure and compromise rather than a genuine effort to promote the Turkish nationality in Bulgaria. Further, the forms of inclusion and integration of the Turkish population solidify symbolic cultural and group boundaries by treating the Turks as 'other' in a number of social realms such as for instance affirmative action in admission to Bulgarian schools and universities or discrimination in the military and restricted access to high-ranking positions.[127]

'Priobshtavane'

Already in 1948, the first Secretary General of the Bulgaria Communist Party G. Dimitrov voices a concern that the freedoms that the regime has granted to the Turks creates the danger of the spread of Turkish nationalism and that the compact Turkish population along the Southern border is an "ulcer" and a problem that needs to be eradicated.[128] State and governmental archives reveal a consistent line of preoccupation about regions with a high concentration of Turkish population, propaganda from Ankara among them, and aspirations for emigration to Turkey of large numbers reported by state officials.[129] The emigration motif is by no means something new to the Communist Period. The Party inherits it from the previous regimes and vacillations in its attitudes are visible. It seeks to both suppress such attitudes and release some of the tensions by allowing for problematic 'elements' to leave.

The numbers of the discontent among the Turks, however, are growing. Extreme poverty, radical social change under Communism, collectivization, and Bulgarian institutional nationalism are factors pointed to by informers compelling the Turkish

[127] Gruev and Kalyonski, "Vuzroditelniat protses," pp.108, 111.
[128] Baeva and Kalinova, "Vuzroditelniat protses," p.48.
[129] Ibid. See archives for 1938-1950s

population to contemplate refuge in their 'native' country.[130] Between 1949 and 1951, 155,000 people were 'encouraged' to leave the country permanently once the opening of the borders was negotiated with Turkey and the latter agreed to accept the largest by far wave of immigrants from Bulgaria. The Party did not stop there.

As early as the 1950s policy shifts and rights reductions were already taking place mainly having to do with land appropriation, religious restrictions, and trying to attract Muslim women into the labor force, which disturbed established traditions. In 1958, an official change in discourse was introduced through the pronouncement of the program of 'Priobshtavane' (Inclusion) or 'return to the nation' as termed by V. Dimitrov. It lead to further curtailment of religious and cultural rights and its goal of "full assimilation" of the Turks and Muslims into the Bulgarian nation was "chillingly straightforward."[131]

In 1968, T. Zhivkov declared in a speech given before the Central Committee that the most problematic population in Bulgaria due to their size, the Turks, are not actually Turks, but Bulgarians Turkified in the past, which is why the Party should follow a line of a "gradual merger" ["постепенно сливане"] of that population with the Bulgarian and the fostering of a communist nation around the latter, rather than the former.[132] He expressed worries that if the tendencies of dropping birth rates among the Bulgarians continues, the future will inevitably see the creation of autonomous Turkish territories and republic, a state within the state, the ascension of the Turkish language to an official national status in the densely inhabited areas, the restoration of independent Turkish schools, and the "revival" of Turkish "religious and national fanaticism." Several familiar motifs and continuities transpire in Zhivkov's speech: the fears of Turkish nationalism and the secret workings of the Turkish state through the Bulgarian minority; the ideas of the historically Bulgarian-by-origin Turks. Along with the

[130] Ibid.
[131] Warhola and Boteva, "Turkish Minority," p.262.
[132] Baeva and Kalinova, "Vuzroditelniat protses," p.66-67.

recurrence of the migration and expulsion issue, which scarred virtually all governments in modern Bulgarian history, one sees that the 'Revival Process' was not a spontaneous irrational turn of events, but a campaign grounded in state notions and practices, which had been ripening in the course of decades.

The dual and even schizophrenic nature of Communist minority policies that had been until recently overshadowed by official discourse and policies were expanding beyond anything seen since 1878. Nationalist paranoia and attitudes of hostility previously subdued behind a façade of internationalism were now coming to the forefront and occupying larger and larger spaces on the Party agenda. Education in Turkish was to be gradually phased out, children incorporated into the Bulgarian public school system, religious activity further restricted, and integration into socio-economic life encouraged. In the long run it was expected that the Turkish population would acquire a sense of belonging to a Bulgarian Socialist nation.

The attack on cultural rights and religious freedoms that the seventies see was greater than ever. Policies of spreading atheism and secularism were pursued, "patriotic education" was emphasized, publications and education in Turkish virtually ceased to exist by 1974, and theaters and folklore associations were blended with local Bulgarian ones.[133] Unlike the 1947 Constitution, which guaranteed extensive cultural rights and privileges for all national minorities, the one adopted in 1971 mentioned only "citizens of non-Bulgarian origin."[134] The Bulgarian Communist State was on its way to becoming a fully-fledged "nationalizing state", by Brubaker's definition, whose actions towards its minorities were not only perceived as assimilationist by the targeted groups, but were more and more overtly stated as such by

[133] Gruev and Kalyonski, "Vuzroditelniat protses," p.115-116.

[134] Andrei Ivanov, *The Balkans Divided: nationalism, minorities, and security* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Land, 1996), p.108.

the state leadership itself.[135] And while there is much validity to the argument that it had been a nationalizing state from its very inception despite the ostensible tolerance towards its minorities, a fundamental break with the past was, nevertheless, taking place in regard to the second condition proposed by Brubaker – open formal pursuit of cultural homogeneity. This naturally created 'favorable' conditions for the mobilization of a political movement among the minority members, which would have a profound effect on their self-conception as ethnic Turks.

Despite high levels of integration and acculturation by the end of the 70s, the state still deemed results of the 'priobshtavane' rather unsatisfactory in all spheres of life. Demographically, no substantial decrease in the percentage of Turkish population had been achieved by 1980 relative to 1944, the birth rate of the Turkish population was predicted to soon begin to surpass considerably that of ethnic Bulgarians, and the Turkish settlements remained compact and predominantly rural despite presumed attempts to promote mobility, integration, and urbanization.[136] Levels of religiosity were much higher among Muslims than those among the Christian population, and the pressure and restrictions imposed on the Muslim religious establishment had yielded few tangible results.[137] There were fears that integration into the centralized public education system was actually producing nationalist elites among the Turkish intellectuals rather than loyal Party members and comrades devout to the socialist ideal. Ethnic divisions persisted and differences seemed hard to obliterate. Language usage, affinities towards religion, tradition, and customs, as well as the relationship

[135] Brubaker suggests that a nation-state does not necessarily have to pursue open policies of ethnic assimilation to be qualified as a 'nationalizing state' as long as there is a "real effect" on the minorities. See Brubaker, "National Minorities," pp.114-116.

[136] Gruev and Kalyonski, "Vuzroditelniat protses," pp.119-121.

[137] Ibid.

to the past did not undergo a radical decline, argues Hopken, in spite of channeled state efforts to undermine them.[138]

Persistent Ethnicity

It should be born in mind, however, that these enduring cultural or ethnic traits that proved to be so recalcitrant to assimilation are themselves not some intrinsic, objectively inseparable element of the Turkish identity. Key to any kind of identity construction, as has been shown in the theoretical study, is the unceasing interplay between in-group behaviors and out-group forces. The distinct characteristics of a group become evident and begin to matter, writes I. Georgieva, only in "relation to perceived differences from other groups" the realization and manifestation of which is facilitated by "extreme situation[s]" such as the 'Revival Process'.[139] Groups imagine, practice and construct themselves, but there is always the outside factor, too, in the interactive process that structures a group and invests it with social meaning.

> *Construction involves both the passive experience of being "made" by external forces, […] the claims that others make about the group in question, and the active process by which the group 'makes' about itself. The world around us may 'tell' us we are racially distinct […or] that we constitute a group.*[140]

[138] Hopken, "From Religious Identity," pp.69-70.

[139] Ivanichka Georgieva, "The So-Called Revival Process and the Great Tourist Grip (An Attempt at an Oral History)," in *The Ethnic Situation in Bulgaria (Researches in 1992),* ed. E. Marushiakova (Sofia: "Club'90 Publishers", 1993), p.94.

[140] Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartmann, *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World* (London: Pine Forge Press, 1998), p.81

For minorities under Communism in Bulgaria the "world around us" was the state, which held almost exclusive power over labeling and categorizing. The outside factor in the relational identity construction had much more authority and legitimacy than the voices of the groups it organized. By rejecting the different kinds of markers – or the boundaries that define and construct the minority's ethno-religious identity according to Hartman and Cornell[141] – the state was, in fact, inadvertently defining it, recognizing it, and asserting it. What is left unsaid, so to speak, the premise on which the prohibitions rest – that certain cultural attributes belong to the Turkish and Muslim groups and distinguish them as such – is inferred easily by everyone. The politics of language creates and confirms the existence of a distinct group with the traits, history and meanings ascribed.

The traits and practices themselves are of course real, not invented. There are certain objective givens that people carry, says A. Krasteva, such as language and religion most visibly, but their subjective significance is molded in the encounters with the 'other,' and the seemingly pre-given or voluntary self-classification of 'Turk' can be largely imposed.[142] The consciousness of one's own "specificity" can be "artificially mobilized", continues Krasteva, through efficient political means, which in the case of Bulgarian Turks covers the entire "spectrum of methods of impact – from violence to stimulation."[143] The Turkish minority group falls victim to the discursive construction by state language and policies, which possess supreme epistemic legitimacy. Its members were in many ways passive receivers of their

[141] Ibid.

[142] See Anna Krasteva, "Etnichnost, natsionalna identichnost, grazhdanstvo" [Ethnicity, national identity, citizenship], in *Identichnosti* [Identities], ed. A. Krasteva (Sofia: International Center for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations, 1995), p.124.

[143] Ibid.

social position and had to conform to it. Their current condition and identity is intimately connected to a history of being deprived of the political power to articulate themselves.

Granted, the components of the Muslim-Turkish population in Bulgaria such as, most blatantly, religion and language, have a long-standing legacy originating in the earliest times of Ottoman conquest in the Balkans and consolidating throughout the entire period of Ottoman rule. Their function as 'organic' attributes of a distinct and clearly bound ethno-religious group is a result of modern nation-building processes in Bulgaria (and elsewhere). Returning to Neuburger briefly, Bulgarian nation building after Liberation was reliant heavily on an ideology and practice of breaking with the Ottoman, Islamic or Oriental heritage of the Christian Bulgarians. It was a heritage considered foreign, discrete and dispensable by the national leadership, but was in reality intricately and indiscriminately interwoven with people's ways of life and constituted the fundamental 'hybridity'[144] – to use Neuburger's terms again – of Bulgarian, and broader regional Ottoman culture. Muslims and Christians, Turks, Bulgars, Greeks and others shared religious customs, languages, and traditions to the point of embracing the practices of the 'other' as one's own ways. The common culture and life was not even necessarily perceived as a mix of different national or ethnic cultures. It is thought of as such only in retrospect through the modern 'ethnonational' lens of viewing the world as composed of mutually exclusive, pure cultural units. Traditions of coexistence in the Ottoman Empire had blurred many boundaries that might have formerly existed in smaller, relatively more homogenous societies.

Thus, articulating and excluding the foreign Oriental elements from Bulgarian national identity was the very process of imagining and crafting the nation. Ethno-religious segregation of the national living space and autonomy for Muslims was instrumental in

[144] See Neuburger, "Orient Within," p.28.

separating the Ottoman past from the new, ethnically uncontaminated present. Casting aside visible markers of 'otherness' such as Islam, the Turkish language, or traditional Muslim male and female dress not only defined the boundaries of the Bulgarian nation through the well-known exclusion of the 'other', but by confining those markers to the minority communities, it reinforced ideas of their inherent Turkish or Muslim nature. This process simultaneously constructed two groups – the Bulgarian and the Turkish or Muslim one. It was responsible to a large extent for the fixation and stability of ethnic stereotypes of difference. It distributed the cultural artifacts through which groups and individuals would understand, sustain and express their sense of belonging. In a climate of continuous and aggressive, if often subtle, nationalizing nationalism typical for modern Central-Eastern European nation-states, the marginalized minority groups would feel a justified sense of threat and would cling to those attributes reassuring their identity. In cases when the dominant majority and its representative state - often possessing near-hegemonic access to power and legitimate violence – embark upon coercive assimilation of the foreign groups unsettling national homogeneity, the targeted minorities naturally react by vehement opposition and exaggerated emphasis of their group solidarity and distinct ethno-cultural traits. This mobilization and politicization of ethnicity, in turn, provokes even stronger determination on the part of the power holders to suppress their identity and sets in motion a vicious cycle if intensifying ethnic polarization. Such processes do not simply operate on a pre-existing ethnic plane, but are the very forces structuring the ethnic 'geography' of a given space. The separate and easily recognizable ethnic character of Bulgarian Turks is not unrelated to processes of nation building in modern Bulgarian history involving state-sanctioned exclusion or assimilation. The climax of these politics came in 1984-1989. Bulgaria emerged from this stormy period with a set of new ethno-political arrangements permeating all of society.

The "Revival Process"

In 1984 the Bulgarian Communist Party launched a campaign of an unprecedented scale and nature to change the names of the Turkish-speaking population in Bulgaria to names commonly recognized as Bulgarian. This was only the culmination stage of a 25-year period of consistent assimilatory policies towards the group that sought to gradually and 'silently' integrate them into the majority.

Changing the names of the Turkish minority was meant as a form of a 'final solution' to the protracted process of assimilating the identity and consciousness of the group into the larger Bulgarian-dominated society. This was accompanied by a set of other restrictions and basic rights deprivations such as prohibiting the use of Turkish language in public, banning religious practices such as circumcision, further restricting the freedom of religion, closing down mosques, and outlawing traditional dress. Many of these restrictions were already in place prior to the launching of the campaign in 1984.

As could be anticipated, the events only served to intensify the Turkish ethnic consciousness of the targeted minority. Protests and resistance during the campaign were not uncommon but were suppressed by the state without significant difficulty. Troops, tanks, police, dogs, state officials, gun-point threats, violence, and rape were the tools of coercion used by the state resolute to bring to an end this endeavor.[145] The advanced Communist state (relative to the agrarian past of the country) was deploying its entire hegemonic arsenal – technology, military, bureaucracy, and propaganda – to try and convert the minds of 10% of its population. Tremendous discontent and even outrage on the receiving end, though initially silenced, began to acquire a more organized form.

[145] See Hugh Poulton, *The Balkans: Minorities and States in Conflict* (London: Minority Rights Publications, 1994), p.131.

During the name-changing was in process, the informational "eclipse" was almost complete and the majority population was largely kept unaware of what precisely was taking place and in what dimensions. In the years to follow, the program acquired publicity and the government unleashed its abundant resource of ideological scholarship conducted under its auspices. Its purpose was to provide historical evidence of the Bulgarian ethnic origins of the Turkish-speaking population and to justify the name-changing as voluntary rediscovery of their true identity. According to the work of historians, the ancestors of the Bulgarian Turks were indigenous Bulgarians who not only converted to Islam, but also adopted the language of the occupier. Virtually all Turkish people in Bulgaria were of native Bulgarian stock, asserted the official line. "There are no Turks in Bulgaria," declared Zhivkov in 1985 completing the 180-degree turn in state minority policy started in the 60s. Disinformation on the part of the government also maintained that the acts of 'conversion' were entirely voluntary, requested by the Turks and Muslims who spontaneously became conscious of their lost identity.

The press cooperated readily with the political leadership (or was made to do so) and was instrumental in disseminating these ideas among the majority population. Other influential structures such as schools, the army and economic enterprises faithfully worked to instill and foster patriotic sentiments in support of the policies. All levels of government and administration were involved in supervision and ensuring compliance. This full-scale totalitarian effort was, nevertheless, doomed to failure.

In the meantime, on the other side of the "barricade" defiant acts were becoming widespread: Muslim names would still secretly be given to babies, circumcision was practiced illicitly, Turkish language was spoken at home even more, and state ceremonies

were often boycotted.[146] Turkish educated elite was forming illegal political and dissident organizations in order to build a better platform for resistance. In 1989, a series of hunger strikes and mass demonstrations swept villages and towns and their suppression took human lives. Tumult across the country was escalating, which compelled the government to open the borders with Turkey in the same year. Over 300,000 people were encouraged to embark "voluntarily" on what was later mockingly termed "the Great Excursion".

In 1991 the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, a political party affiliated with the Turkish and Muslim minorities, which was to look out for the protection of their rights, entered the nascent Bulgarian democratic party politics and quickly established itself as a key actor with a united and consistent constituency – the third largest in the country.

Hegemony and Ethnicization

It is these last crucial aspects reflecting the relationship between the all-encompassing state and the heightened consciousness of the minority group that, under scrutiny, elucidate a critical, but rarely recognized, process of politicizing and, ultimately, constructing to a large extent a significantly new ethnic group. Concepts and tools from critical liberalism and post-colonial theory for instance allow us to assume a vantage point that casts much needed interpretative light over this process and to understand differently core issues such as what constitutes and makes a minority group within a powerful hegemonic state founded on a uni-ethnic ideology.

The Bulgarian state, from its inception, was never the enlightened universal liberal arbiter of its citizens. "The [Bulgarian] state was seen being the ultimate 'property' of ethnic

[146] Dimitrov, "In Search," p.15.

Bulgarians rather than as an impartial institution standing above ethnic differences."[147] Courtney Jung, among many theorists to acknowledge this, writes that historically it was no other structure but the overarching state that "raced", "classed" and "ethnicized" the population "by organizing access to power, resources, and citizenship on the basis of differences that are otherwise at least potentially arbitrary."[148] Misrecognition of groups is not simply denying their existence as distinct cultural entities, but – and much more importantly – their effective exclusion from socio-economic life and relegation to a subordinated status with respect to the majority.[149] This is very often what, in fact, constitutes the concealed roots of ethnic minorities, making them largely political constructions. Talking about the structural origins of ethnic groups Jung asserts that "culture itself is a process and an outcome" deeply contingent on history and politics, and not some pre-existing objective division within society.[150]

The post-Independence pre-World War II legacy of socio-economic suppression and exclusion of Turkish-speakers was deeply ingrained in Bulgarian national consciousness and early Communism did not deal away with them successfully. The assimilationist intentions and policies soon to follow in the 1960s culminating in the name-changing campaign proved that. Neither was the cultural autonomy for the Turkish minority, modeled after the Soviet example, reaching far enough to ensure any form of meaningful self-government, empowerment or participation outside the confines of state-sponsored collective progress. In the words of Anna Krasteva, it provided presence, but not representation; "visibility, but not

[147] Ibid, p.9.

[148] See Courtney Jung, "Introduction," *In her The Moral Force of Indigenous Politics* (Cambridge: CUP, 2008).

[149] See Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking Recognition," *New Left Review* (May-June 2000): pp. 107-120, PDF available at http://newleftreview.org/?view=2248, p.4.

[150] Jung, "Introduction."

activity".[151] Cultural autonomy is in itself an "exemption from democratic politics", which assumes complete internal coherence for the group and "freezes" the status quo and current social boundaries.[152] This is why conceiving and organizing social life, making political claims, or trying to redress injustices through the language and politics of cultural recognition is something critical liberalism vehemently opposes. Addressing the issue from this angle only obscures its true structural origins and "displaces" the much needed politics of redistribution and inclusion, as Nancy Fraser main line of argument goes.[153] Early Communism in Bulgaria introduced some measures to break with the long tradition of subordination and exclusion of the Turkish-speaking communities, but raising the economic standards was far from enough to ensure equal membership for them.

With the next stage, the 'return to the nation', and the accelerating pace of assimilation attempts, the full dimensions of state hegemony and its capacities to fashion and control group identities becomes ever more visible. As noted earlier, the main weapon in the legitimation of the assimilation processes and, especially, the justification of the name-changing campaign was the monopoly over historical research and truth. It was what Spivak termed 'epistemological violence' that occurred on an extraordinary scale, as state-sanctioned scholarship tried to fulfill its own prophecy of the Bulgarian ethnic origins of the Turkish minority. The state, as the highest epistemic authority and center of society constructs identities and categories, and slots people into pre-assigned positions, which is nearly impossible to counteract through the articulation and assertion of alternative discourse from below and within since the oppressed group is deprived of all means and channels for the

[151] Krasteva, "Identity and Power," p.108.
[152] Jung, "Introduction."
[153] Fraser, "Rethinking Recognition" pp. 2-3.

production and dissemination of discourse.[154] The stigmatized minority also lacks authority and legitimacy of the knowledge it could produce and here the famous Foucauldian notion of the inherent relationship between power and discourse becomes key: "it is impossible to understand the exercise of power without the economy of discourses on truth."[155] Power produces legitimate knowledge and, in turn, it sustains or buttress the dominant position of the power holder. It is in spheres such as press and education that the state usurps and saturates with its propaganda to create the social categories and order it needs to rule over. It is in those publicly accessible spaces recognized as legitimate carriers of truth that "politics and intellectual debate coincide".[156] Through prescribing the appropriate identity categories to individuals and bringing them together into groups the state, representing the majority, institutionalizes the 'ethnicization', in Aihwa Ong, of the marginalized subjects who are "robbed" of tools to make a statement about themselves.[157]

Due to the "complexity and heterogeneity of modes of national belonging, the nation-state can only reiterate its own basis for legitimation by literally producing the nation that serves as the basis for its legitimation," which is why in its attempts to 'purify' the nation it is by definition "bound up" […] with the recurrent expulsion of national minorities."[158] The overcome the complexity of its population the state creates criteria, stipulates and designates the 'odd' ones - those who don't qualify – who become "at once discursively constituted within a field of power and juridically deprived."[159] From this standpoint, the Bulgarian

[154] Dan Rabinowitz, Class lecture: Anthropological Approaches to Ethnicity and State (Central European University, Dec.1, 2010).

[155] Krasteva, "Identity and Power," p. 118.
[156] Rabinowitz.
[157] Ibid.
[158] See Judith Butler and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Who Sings the Nation-State?: Language, politics, belonging* (London: 2007), p.30-32.

[159] Ibid.

nation-state would be "bound up" by definition with the exclusion of certain minorities that disturb the integrity of the Bulgarian nation. Historically, most salient have been the Turkish-Muslim minorities. For these purposes, however, it would always need to have them around, smoldering alongside the true members in a position of bare recognition, bare life, bare humanity, continually reproduced for the needs of the nation. The proper Bulgarian nation is one that completely denounces its Ottoman past, one that is not Oriental, refuses coexistence with Turkish or Islamic elements and denies them an equal place within the nation. Only in this way can the state reproduce its own legitimacy continuously based on the legitimacy of a homogenous, pure nation. It needs the foreign enemy cast aside, but always available to invoke, bring to the forefront, deprive of rights and expel from nation. It is, then, no wonder that Bulgaria modern state history is marked by period waves of emigration of Turks.

It is through events and critical moments such as mass expulsions that ethnicity becomes highly relevant and a topic of heated debate and re-thinking. It is then that perpetuated social, economic and political boundaries become literal and obtain a physical shape, too. It is then that the Turkish-speaking minority loses the intrinsic ambiguity, 'shapelessness' and transitivity of human identity, the multiple sources of identification and belonging in everyday life, and starts to feel Turkish more than ever before. It is 'Turkishness' with a very particular, political and contextual meaning, however, accepted through coercion.

> *The actual process of 'renaming' involved submitting an application to the relevant local authority 'asking' to change one's Turkish name to an ethnic Bulgarian one. In order to ensure compliance, teams of party activists, policemen and civil servants went house to house soliciting 'applications'. The*

villages were surrounded by tanks and personnel carriers and cut off from the outside world.[160]

Being renamed is probably the transformation of the highest symbolic value. Besides, the passive position of the recipient means that their new identity is constructed by someone else who conquers their very actions and body and compels physical and material manifestations of consent. It is total subjugation and loss of autonomy; one becomes in one's entirety a subject of someone else's ideology, which, ultimately, leads to the inevitable internalization of the new role.

The Act of Renaming

The act of renaming or, in particular, assigning new names as a nationalizing and assimilatory strategy employed by the Bulgarian state deserves some special attention. The decision of 1984 was no whim of an authoritarian ruler intoxicated with a sense of unrestrained power, but rather a well-tested method of manipulating individual identity with a visible continuity in Bulgarian state politics towards minorities perceived as problematic to the Bulgarian national homogeneity. The Pomaks had been subjected to a number of large-scale attempts, the more of which took place in 1912, then a failed one in the 1960s, and an all-out effort in the early 1970s covering mainly the Rhodope region. Bulgarian governments did not limit themselves to giving new names to persons only. State-led campaigns for the renaming of locations and toponyms had taken place in the past. In 1930s for instance, Kimon Georgiev's government replaced the names of two-thirds of all Turkish settlements as part of its administrative reforms, and also in alignment with the general tendency of minority rights curtailment in the 30s.[161] On the eve of the Revival Process, in 1982, a massive number

[160] Dimitrov, "In Search," p.15
[161] Mahon, "Turkish Minority," p.154.

of Muslim Gypsies had also been given Christian names and the state 'laboratory' finally seemed ready to receive the largest and most intractable group, the Turks.

A number of authors dealing with the Bulgarian Turkish question reflect on the profound implications and effects of naming and re-naming. One cannot take away a person's name without damaging the very person herself, writes Neuburger.[162] Name is not simply a bureaucratic issue used in state records; it is not merely a tool for designation. Its psycho-emotional significance runs much deeper by figuring as an essential mediator in the relationship between the individual and society. It is among the most intimate aspects of one's self-perception and occupies a position of high symbolism within it. It functions as a way for the world to invoke a person and, thus, can stand for one's entire identity. The name has a "magic power", writes I. Georgieva, and constitutes an "inextricable component of personality" – a "communal identification" given by the elders at birth as a form of communication between themselves and the group.[163]

This certainly applies with full pertinence to Muslims in specific for whom the Muslim name is a crucial component of their religious identity and a sign of belonging to the community of believers under God. Losing one's name is may signify in Islam losing one's connection with God.

> *It should be pointed out that, within the context of the Muslim religion, renaming is a dramatic act of sacrilege because, according to Islam, a person's name is a vital attribute of personhood. Without his proper name, the Muslim cannot introduce himself to Allah after his death, since Allah calls people by their names and only then decides whether to take them to Paradise assuming they had lived in a proper way.*[164]

[162] Neuburger, "Orient Within," p.143.
[163] Georgieva, "The So-Called Revival," p.96.
[164] Antonina Zhelyazkova, "The Bulgarian Ethnic Model," In *East European Constitutional Review*, Vol.10, 4 (2001), at http://www1.law.nyu.edu/eecr/vol10num4/focus/zhelyazkova.html.

State representatives and the master-minds of the name-changing campaign(s) were well aware of both the psychological and the Muslim-specific implications of being coerced into taking a new name. They knew the potential far-reaching effects they could achieve regarding the position of a person within a majority society. Being renamed is only the first step towards identity transformation. The powerful interplay between the 'self' and the social surroundings takes care of the rest. The person eventually submits to his newly-ascribed role in society and internalizes it, as it is constantly reiterated and imputed from the outside.

This does not mean, however, that one needs to become completely amnesiac of one's former identity. To demand this would be unrealistic. Public space and space institutions confine the former Muslim person to the private consciousness while legitimating the new Christian-Bulgarian person by only recognizing her existence.[165] Outside manifestations of compliance matters most to the successful maintenance of state political and ideological order. The state cannot and does not need to control the inner lives of its subjects as long as it can ensure their outward conformity. Its hegemonic powers render legitimate only that, which its pervasive institutions and bureaucracy uphold. This is why the name-changing did not end with personal names. It immediately erased medical files, archival information, records of the diseased relatives, and even destroyed Muslim cemeteries or replaced gravestones. That is also why as part of the larger assimilation process, the Bulgarian Communist authorities targeted exterior markers of identity such as the veil, 'shalvars', the 'fez', customs such as circumcision etc. It needed to get a tight grip on all possible domains of social activity in

[165] For a personal account of being renaming accompanied by profound philosophical analysis of the meanings of the experience Djemile Ahmed, "Ime, preimenuvane i dvoistvena identichnost (Bulgarskite turtsi po vreme na 'Vuzroditelnia protses' 1984-1989). Name, renaming, and double identity (Bulgarian Turks during the so-called Revival Process of 1984/89)," *Sociological Problems* (2003), No.1-2: p.174.

order to contain and trample expressions of 'Turkish-ness', 'Muslim-ness', 'Oriental-ness', 'Ottoman-ness', 'non-Bulgarian-ness'…

'Othering' through Inclusion

What was ultimately created and internalized, however, is not the nonsensical notion of converting the Turks overnight to 'Bulgarian-ness'. Instead, it helped them overcome their own existential doubts and ambiguities and 'rediscover' their essential 'otherness'. The campaign of 1984-5 and the ensuing unrest, protests, debates and political mobilization only served to uphold and consolidate for both sides one line of thought: the unquestioned existence of the minority as a monolithic group clearly different and neatly separated from the majority. The emerging notions through which people start to understand the ethnic composition of society are continually reproduced and reinforced by public debate and institutions.

> *Once a group is defined as subordinate and subject to special provisions, the sense of difference tends to be reinforced by social discrimination, spatial separation, or legislation in a process that is reciprocal, involving responses within the minority as well as the larger society. Thus, society's categorizers – census-takers, linguists, and social scientists as well as religious leaders and politicians – play an important role even when more direct applications of power are limited or muffled. In this process the minority is likely to become more cohesive and to develop its own self-definition, which often increases the dissonance between internal and external perceptions of how the minority is constituted and what it stands for.*[166]

Despite this "dissonance", one line of thought stays common and relatively constant for both sides and consolidates as a result of this opposition – the unquestioned existence of the minority as a monolithic group with an unambiguous identity clearly different and neatly separated from the majority Resting soundly then on this premise and being informed by it,

[166] Raymond Grew, "Introduction," in *The Construction of Minorities: Cases for Comparison Across Time and Around the World*, ed. A. Burguiere and R. Grew (University of Michigan Press, 2004), p.13.

political leadership, policies and public debates as well as everyday private interactions and subjective experiences at the same time reinforce it and give it life by investing it continuously with relevant social meaning and value. Its expressions become real and acquire importance; the divide becomes visible and impacts strongly both the material and emotional life of individuals. It must be real. The conceptual arrangement transforms and dictates power relations which, in turn, buttress those same conceptual categories through which society is imagined. And while the former is often where the process originates, the two soon become indistinguishably interwoven into one cycle of discrimination and perpetuating difference. Identities are competing, self-definitions are struggling to reject and overturn the labels imposed from above by, yet the debate is already irreversibly trapped within the stifling confines of the 'us-them' dichotomy. Questions about the origins and nature of the very categories, the dividing lines along which society is imagined are rarely raised or paid heed. Dissonance might be increasing over the content of the debate, but its form remains unchallenged and unaltered, and slowly blends with the timelessness of reality.

The fact that for many the frontal attack in 1984 came as a surprise had to do with the levels of integration and acculturation that many Turks had reached at the time as a result of consistent state-lead 'inclusion' or simply non-violent assimilation. Turkish schools had ceased to exist and Turkish students were incorporated into the centralized Bulgarian educational system. Their literacy and command of the Bulgarian language had increased substantially in contrast to the reality that the first Communist government of Bulgaria found. Many young Turks would be more fluent in Bulgarian than in Turkish. The persisting effort to include the Muslim minorities into the state-run economy had also exerted its impact on shrinking or even erasing immediate ethnic and religious differences as well as socio-economic cleavages that might stem from them. By the late 1960s Muslims had become

"invisible minorities, with few outward symbols, no communal political voice, and no politicized notion of ethnic identity by the late 1960s, writes D. Bates, and by the end of the 70s assimilation into the "supra-ethnic Bulgarian culture" was almost complete.[167] Such were the tangible outcomes of the 'priobshtavane' (inclusion) line followed by the government, which allegedly strove to include the Muslim minorities as full members of the socialist 'organism' of the country. Already in the sixties, however, remembers an emigrant from the 1989 mass exodus, there was only "national socialism" in Bulgaria.[168] The state continuously reminded them about their 'foreignness' even through processes of inclusion, which revived or reinforce already existing pro-emigration sentiments among many Turks.

As socialism reportedly progressed in Bulgaria, different blocks of the nation were becoming standardized. Far from any utopian images, country-wide integration was 'taking its toll' or simply doing its job. In this kind of economy, argues Bates, ethnicity became increasingly irrelevant "as a means of organizing labor and production" while still functioning as basis for informal divisions and disproportionate concentration of minority representatives in certain sectors due to "inherent inefficiencies of the centralized system."[169] Such divisions may suddenly acquire visibility and importance and serve as networks for building group solidarity at times of crisis and conflict.

[167] See Daniel Bates, "What's in a Name? Minorities, Identity and Politics in Bulgaria." *Identities*, Vol.1(2-3): pp.209-210.

[168] See Peter Krasztev, "Understated, Overexposed: Turks in Bulgaria – Immigrants in Turkey," in *Between Adaptation and Nostalgia: the Bulgarian Turks in Turkey*, ed. A. Zhelyazkova (Sofia: International Center for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations, 1998), p. 147.

[169] Bates, "What's in a Name," p.220.

A number of anthropological studies tell the stories of Turkish emigrants from Bulgaria who reminisce of the peaceful times under Communism when "Bulgarian, Turkish – it was all one,"[170] when Turks did not feel as strangers and had Bulgarian friends, and when many were "perfectly assimilated," enjoyed privileged positions, or did not even have any contact with other Turks.[171] While at such times, writes Bates, "it is not easy for dispersed minorities to come to visualize themselves as a unified community with common interests,"[172] extreme instances of forced assimilation leaving them no realistic hope for participating in the nation state can 'awaken' them to their Turkishness, in the words of Ayse Parla's interviewee. Levels of integration were high under late communism and many Turks might have felt only nominally such, but inequalities, divisions, and institutional discrimination continued to plague the relationships between the state and majority on one side and the minorities on the other. Those could easily kindle an entirely new, for many, sense of ethnic belonging, injustice, and victimization at times of oppression

Violence, resistance and politicization of minority

The comprehensiveness of the Revival process, the unprecedented degree of suppression it pursued, the resistance by the Turks, and the explosive controversy and publicization of the mass exodus helped bring together and politicize the community beyond a 'tipping point' achieving a permanent mutation within it structure and self-awareness. The Turkish minority and its leaders seized the opportunity to rediscover their Turkishness, magnify its salience and attain new dimensions of cohesion. The events and their projection

[170] See Ayse Parla, "Marking Time Along the Bulgarian-Turkish Border," Ethnography (2003, 4): pp. 567. Parla's work includes many interviews with Bulgarian Turkish immigrants from the 'Revival process' who either stay or returned.

[171] Krazstev, "Understated, Overexposed," p.148.

[172] Bates, "What's in a Name," p.219.

onto the Bulgarian political scene of the 1990s also introduced enduring notions about the Turkish minority for the majority group.

The effect of buttressing the ethnic self-awareness of Turks is captured by many authors even if not necessarily from a constructivist perspective.

> *The most important result of the Communist policy was unintended. It was the strengthening of the ethnic identity of the Bulgarian Turks. The only organized form of life they were left with was the community based on a common language, religion, family links and alienation from the majority.*[173]

The increasing sensation of agency over their own persons slipping away caused them to cling to objects and practices still at their disposal. The severe suppression "stimulated growth of national feeling" among Turks who "hung stubbornly to their identity" by breaching the bans[174] and reviving old myths and symbols:

> *Previously forgotten traditions, customs, family legends, and myths were resurrected. All ethnomarkers that had faded or been obliterated by modern trends and the socialist unification were purposively restored. This spiritual and intellectual mobilization produced tangible results. The community closed in upon itself and restored various patriarchal, premodern, cultural and social characteristics in order to preserve its Turkish and Muslim character.* [175]

By turning to forgotten traditions in order to highlight and reassure their identity, Bulgarian Turks were making a political statement about themselves and moving closer to nationalism on a mass scale. "The forcible eradication of differences between Bulgarians and Turks led to an ideologization of ethnic divions," to "strengthening of inner group solidarity," "increase in the emotional content of group feeling," and "working out of common behavioral

[173] Mahon, "Turkish minority," p.156
[174] Dimitrov, "In Search," p.15.
[175] Zhelyazkova, "Bulgarian Ethnic Model."

patterns."[176] The name-changing campaign spurred an unprecedented grassroots mobilization unified around the idea of preserving an ethno-national group.

The resistance that persecuted Turks managed to put together was far from any sort of coordinated, lasting movement. It rather consisted of sporadic moments of discontent, protests, refusal to comply with orders and clashes with the police and army forces, strikes, and, most prominently, a couple of illegal organizations and minor terrorist attacks. Any organized attempts were in a timely and uncompromising fashion suppressed by the authorities. One of the first instances of outrage made public preceded the launching of the Revival campaign and involved violence and deaths. In 1984 and 1985, two sets of bombings were carried out in trains and airports including the second and third largest cities in Bulgaria, Plovdiv and Varna, which took the lives of nine people. The bloodiest and most brutal act was the blowing up of the car for mothers with children of the Burgas-Sofia train. Those killings are often referred to by the extreme anti-Turkish discourse trying to render Bulgaria Turks fanatic Islamic fundamentalists and using the terrorist acts out of the context of the 'Revival process' repressions.

The bombings are often ascribed to the illegal organization Movement for Turkish National Liberation founded in 1985 whose members have repeatedly denied involvement. The Movement was the illegal Turkish organization to last the longest and to carry out two large-scale campaigns among portions of the Turkish population encouraging them to declare publically their condemnation of the Revival Process and to resist by boycotting local elections.[177] Its members are arrested in 1986 and sentenced to prison in 1987. Several other

[176] Georgieva, "The So-Called Revival," p.97.

[177] Sahlim Karamustafa, *Saprotivata na Bulgarskite Turtsi sreshtu Nasilstvenata Asimilatsia* [The Resistance of the Bulgarian Turks against the Forced Assimilation], (Razgrad, Bulgaria,

similar organizations such as "Struggle", "Long Winter", "Freedom" and others were created in the period between 1984 and 1989, but lasted for significantly shorter periods of time and were unable to spread their activity.

Worth mentioning is also the Democratic League for Human Rights Protection founded in 1988 in accordance with the Bulgarian Constitution and Law to campaign for the restoration of the rights of those affected by the 'Revival Process'. It invokes various international agreements on its side and disseminates its agenda through radio Free Europe, sends it to the British Embassy, Todor Zhivkov and a number of national newspapers.[178] The number of the people affiliated with it grows fast and they help agitate and urge the Turkish population to engage in hunger strikes and other protest activity sweeping the country in the Spring 1989.[179] The members of the League consider themselves instrumental in keeping up the vigorous opposition to the government in the late 80s leading to the demise of the Zhivkov regime.

Besides the evanescent organizations, which the Secret Police quickly cracks down on, many Turks participate in spontaneous or mass activities such as village protests, local resistance to the name-changing procedures, and hunger strikes. There are many heroic tales of the courage demonstrated by inhabitants of Turkish villages and small towns. In 1984, the people of Yablanovo, a large village composed entirely of ethnic Turks, put up barricades, cut off the phone wires and make plans to explode the bridge in order to prevent the authorities from entering the village and carrying out the name-changing.[180] After a three-day siege and attempts on the part of the police and army to dissuade the locals from resisting,

2010), p.106-107. The book is a unique account of the Turkish illegal resistance during the 'Revival Process' given by a participant in many of the organizations in question.

[178] Ibid., p.62.
[179] Ibid., p.63.
[180] Poulton, "Balkans," p.140.

they enter with troops, tanks, tear gas, and live ammunition taking lives. In another instance of mass protest in 1987, the ethnic detainees of the prison for dissidents of Belene stage a hunger strike.[181] Hunger strikes and mass protests become a widely employed tool of peaceful resistance in May 1989 – the final days before the exodus of over 300,000. Thousands of Turkish protestors in various locations across the country clash daily with the police between May 19-30th, who respond with brutal force, killings and beatings.[182] The situation, however, has already escaped the control of the authorities and has reached an unprecedented scale of mass participation and publicity. On May 29th, Zhivkov asks Turkey in a public announcement to open its borders.

The violent interaction between center and the marginal group was forcing ethnic consciousness to become active and for the interaction to be experienced through it – a situation that was in the process of radically departing from past realities of passivity and isolation under the pre-text of cultural autonomy. Turks were beginning to emerge from their current condition of intensifying coercive assimilation into the majority society. "To compel you to stop being a Turk is the most certain way to make you become one," writes Krasteva.[183] The outside pressure creates the need for cohesion, inside organization, and control over group identity and interests superseding individual choice. Homogenization of consciousness, experience, feeling and identification is set in motion and internal differences become irrelevant or disappear fully.

Andrey Ivanov goes as far as to declare that the Turkish minority was the "real winner" in the end of it all since they began to identify exclusively along ethno-national lines and were politically emancipated for the first time in over a century becoming a "rational

[181] Ibid., p.142.
[182] Karamustava, "Saprotivata," p.146-155.
[183] Krasteva, "Etnichnost," p.126.

political actor".[184] The MRF (Movement for Rights and Freedoms) party established shortly after the fall of Zhivkov in 1990 embraced the cause of restoring, protecting and representing the rights of Muslims in Bulgaria and quickly consolidated around its large constituency as a decisive actor in Bulgarian party politics. The party continued the drive for the "activation" and "formation" of the Turkish ethno-cultural identity initiated as a reaction to the Revival Process and advocated its visibility and equal position in Bulgarian society.[185]

The tremendous politicization of ethnicity ensuing from the Revival Process facilitated a transition from a mere state of latent 'ethnicity' or suppressed 'ethnic group' to a nation-wide struggle for the salvation of an identity. The Turkish mobilization in Bulgaria provoked by the attack on their names began to move steadily towards classical forms of minority nationalism. According to Cornell and Hartman, nationalism is a political sentiment, an "effort," or a movement of ethnic groups who seek rights within an "encompassing state." [186] This kind of movement became a full-blown agenda during and after the 80s with considerably greater political autonomy, agency, representation and participation than its culturally recognized but isolated and excluded precursor. In the 90s the Bulgarian Turks found new and exceptional powers in the unity of the political vote. The strong positions of the MRF on in the Bulgarian Parliament provoked repeated nationalist backlash, which continued to remind the Turks of their essential 'otherness' and the precariousness of their current stability.

[184] Ivanov, "Balkans," pp.110-111.
[185] Krasteva, "Etnichonost," p.126.
[186] Cornell and Hartmann, "Ethnicity and Race," p. 36.

Continuities in the 1990s

Even though the developments after 1989 are largely outside the scope of this exercise, sketching some basic tendencies of the ethnic politics in Bulgarian in the 90s are necessary to illustrate the persistence of ideas, institutions and arrangements created by the Revival Process.

Undoubtedly, the creation of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms is the strongest sign of the politicization and relative empowerment of the Turkish and Muslim ethnic groups. Despite strong Bulgarian nationalism, enduring anti-Turkish sentiments and ethnic inequalities entrenched even in the Constitution, writes Hopken, the Muslim and Turkish minority "can live and organize themselves as undisputed ethnic and religious groups, and […] are in a position to articulate their interests effectively."[187] Immediately after its establishment the MRF became a leading political actor in Bulgarian politics swiftly attracting the large majority of Bulgarian Muslims as its faithful constituency. Turkish and Muslim minorities now have a unitary voice on the Bulgarian political stage that matters. Regardless of how nominal their grassroots participation of in MRF politics is, the mere fact that their votes have helped constitute a governing coalition in every single parliamentary election, but the last one, is a clear break with the past.

The MRF has continuously been accused by its enemies of involvement in financial fraud and corruption - characteristic generally of Bulgarian politics during the transition period – of unconstitutionality, as well as of neglecting the living standard of its electorate and using its votes to retain power through fostering ethnic fear. Despite the validity of some these claims, it is, no doubt, the existence of such a party patron of Turks and Muslims that enabled the gradual return of some cultural and religious rights to the communities. Through

[187] Hopken, "From Religious Identity," p.79.

wisely playing the political field, the MRF has managed to make some limited progress in the sphere of rights and privileges for minorities. A restoration of the broad cultural autonomy for Muslims is out of the question in present-day Bulgaria and this the MRF understands full well. This is why they have adopted a program of "self-restraint"[188] and symbolic or 'benign' Turkish nationalism, and a discourse stressing an inclusive civic nation based on democratic principles and ethnic equality. There has been some success in education for instance where they have procured the right of Turkish students to elective classes in their native language. Religious freedoms have also largely been restored after the fall of the Zhivkov regime.

The ethnic and political rights and arrangements that Muslims and Turks have obtained in democratic Bulgaria can be compared neither to the concessions made prior to World War II, nor to the realities of severe repression under Communism. There is an entirely new ethno-political distribution of power based on preserving the ethnic peace through the calculated advancement of only basic cultural rights and ruling out the possibility of any future atrocities similar to those of 1980s by securing representation for the Muslim minorities in the highest political levels. These fundamental considerations structuring the ethnic field in Bulgaria are clearly dictated by the still burning memories of the Revival Process and forced assimilation.

The arrangements that allowed for democratic Bulgaria to avoid bloodshed along ethnic line unlike many of its troubled neighbors have given rise to a new concept in Bulgarian politics, namely the Bulgarian ethnic model. The peaceful co-existence of ethnic and religious groups based on values of tolerance and civic democracy as well as older

[188] Ibid., pp.74-78. In Hopken's view the nationalism of the MRF is rather limited, and consciously so, of which speaks the attainment only basic minority rights such as complementary education in Turkish, a ten-minute daily news broadcast on national television, as well as some symbolic cultural rights.

traditions of 'komshuluk' dating back to Ottoman times and deeply rooted in the mentality of people.

This idealization of ethnic peace, or rather lack of violent conflict, in Bulgaria has obscured other attitudes, which saturate the population notions about minorities, Turks, and Muslims today. Ideas about the Bulgarian native origin of all Muslims in Bulgaria were not invented by 'Revival' historians in the 1980s; they have their long-standing continuity in Bulgarian historiography, among other narratives. What the historical propaganda during the Revival Process did, however, was to instill these ideas into the nationalist collective imaginary and do away with alternative voices. To date, Bulgarian nationalist discourse uses this line as undisputable facts of Bulgarian history. Patriotic history education in Bulgaria is in general very prevalent, it is embedded in the legacy of education and history written during Communism, and it rests soundly on myth and symbols of the Ottoman past and the Turkish enemy. The Revival Process managed to unleash a powerful anti-Turkish sentiment that has been lurking under the surface since and is easy to inflame at times of elections. It has attained new heights and prominence in the past five years. The continuity of discourse and ideas in the "most extreme anti-Turkish sentiments" "would outweigh any substantive change in the academic rendering of the Bulgaro-Turkish relationship", concludes Neuburger quoting Maria Todorova on the subject.[189] Cleavages, mistrust and even sentiments of ethnic intolerance created or magnified during the 'Revival Process' have also securely worked their way through the Bulgarian shaky democratic scene to keep informing present-day ethnic and social relations.

Attempted forced assimilation under Communism gave birth to a whole new industry of ideas, historical narratives, sentiments, and, most importantly, the new deeply political

[189] Neuburger, "Bulgaro-Turkish Encouters," p.7

dimensions of the Turkish and Muslim minorities. This new reality largely shaped by the turbulent events of the 'Revival Process' looks like it is here to stay.

Conclusion

The Turkish minority in Bulgaria evolved from a subdued religious community to a highly conscious ethno-national group. Bulgarian state policies and politics were always one of the driving forces for its transformations and at times visibly the major determinant. The political fate of the minority took them through times of far-reaching religious autonomy combined with deep exclusion, oppression and violence, top-down integration, and, finally, an attempt at complete assimilation. The latter was the most recent and most ruthless form of suppression the Turks experienced defining their current organization, awareness, cohesion, and outside perceptions.

The array of policies and attitudes assumed vis-à-vis the Bulgarian Turks seems wide stretching from pole to pole, from benevolence, toleration and broad autonomy to attempts to culturally obliterate the group. There is one constant, however, present at all times and that is Bulgarian nationalism and nation building. Regardless of the current political conjuncture and 'ethno-political' climate in the state, the Bulgarian nationalizing never stopped to manifest itself. It excluded and discriminated economically, deprived and repressed politically, or sought to incorporate ethnically. State as well as popular attitudes even in periods of relative peace and prosperity were never inclined towards acceptance. The dominant national narrative and myths about the blood-thirsty 'Turk' and the Ottoman 'slavery' are continually reproduced through state institutions and social relations as indispensable components of Bulgarian nationhood.

This begs questions as to whether the Turkish and Muslim minorities can ever receive equality before such notions are reconsidered and the state-ideological industry constructed around them dismantled. Such expectations, however, are rather unrealistic, since those myths and histories are the pillars on which the legitimacy of the state rests. This raises, then,

even more disturbing questions about the possible inherent and insurmountable disadvantages of minorities in nation-states founded on the idea of an exclusive ethnic nation. That is to say, problems for minorities might lie in the very ideological structure of the encompassing nation-state. Their misfortunes as well as their very existence as minorities may actually be pre-determined by the founding moments of that state.

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