

THE INFLUENCE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION ON POLITICAL ORIENTATIONS OF ETHNIC MINORITIES: COMPARING POST-COMMUNIST BULGARIA AND ROMANIA

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ÖZET

Rogers Brubaker'ın ünlü kuramı uyarınca, etnik azınlıkların siyasi yönelimleri üç faktor tarafından belirlenmektedir: iç dinamikler, etnik "anavatan" tarafından cesaretlendirilmeleri ve evsahibi ülkede azınlıklara karşı benimsenen tutum. Brubaker bir yandan ulusların içinde buldukları global siyasi durum üzerine odaklanırken, öte yandan da "yakın-dış ülkelerde" soydaş olarak algılananların mevcut olup olmadığı üzerinde durmaktadır. Bunun sonucu olarak da Brubaker, oyunun dördüncü aktörü, yani Avrupa Birliği tarafından oynanan rolü gözden kaçırmaktadır. Bu olgu kendisini azınlıkları temsil eden siyasi partilerin gerçek işlevini ve bu partiler arasındaki iç çatışmaları dikkate almaktan ahıyormaktadır.

Avrupa Komisyonu, müzakerelerin ilerlemesi açısından aday ülkelerin ekonomik reformları hayata geçirmelerini bir şart olarak ongormektedir. Bu reformlar tüm aday ülkelerde aynı hız ve etkililikte uygulanamamaktadır, çünkü komünist dönemden miras kalan yapısal engeller ülkeden ülkeye farklılık göstermektedir. Böylece, bazı ülkeler "ıyı öğrenciler" olarak nitelendirilmekte ve Avrupa Birliği genişlemesinde bir sonraki aşamaya geçmelerine imkan tanınmakta, buna karşılık diğerleri daha uzun vadelerle karşılaşmaktadırlar. Bu tarz bir farklılık, ilgili etnik azınlığın "anavatanı" ile yaşadığı ülke arasında ortaya çıktığında karşılaştırmalar kaçınılmaz hale gelmektedir. Bu çerçevede, Bulgaristan ve Romanya örnekleri özelinde de görülebileceği üzere, çeşitli konfigürasyonlar gözlenebilmektedir.

INTRODUCTION

In order to understand the political orientations of the parties which represent an ethnic minority in Central and Eastern Europe, it is useful to draw comparisons. Some parties deserve particular attention because they have been continuously represented in parliament and are capable of waging parliamentary battles over particular legislative texts: the Movement for Rights and Liberties (*Dviseenie za Pravata i Svobodie*, DPS), which is supported by the Turkish

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minority in Bulgaria; the Democratic Union of the Magyars of Romania (*Uniunea Democrată a Maghiarilor din România*, UDMR) which represents the Magyar minority in Romania. These parties represent a strong minority but they do not play the same political role.

According to data from the population census of December 4, 1992, Bulgaria has a population of 8,487,317 with ethnic Bulgarians being the most numerous - 7,271,185 (85.7% of the population) and some way behind in second place ethnic Turks, numbering 800,052 (9.4%). The DPS was created in 1990 as an organisation which declared its intention to direct its efforts to the protection of the rights and interests of Bulgarian citizens of Turkish origin. The DPS took part in all general parliamentary and local government elections. It had representatives forming a separate parliamentary group in the three previous administrations. Of the 240 members of parliament elected to the 38th National Assembly (April 19, 1997), there are 15 ethnic Turks. In the last local elections, the DPS won 25 municipalities, and now has a total of 670 mayors across the country and over 1,000 municipal councillors. The DPS declares that it would be defending the interests and rights of Bulgarian citizens in general, although it has on the whole remained confined to Bulgarian citizens of Turkish origin and Bulgarian Muslims. The DPS formulates cultural demands; it has never upheld a precise economic programme. Hence, it has adopted a flexible political stance and agreed to form an alliance with two contending parties: it has supported the liberal government formed by the Union of Democratic Forces (*Sajuz na Demokratichnite Sili*, SDS) until October 1992. Following this, it supported the forming of a new government in alliance with the Bulgarian Socialist Party (*Balgarska Socialisticheska Partija*, BSP).

According to the census of 1992, the Magyars of Romania number about 1.62 millions; they represent 7.1% of the total population and 20 % of the population of Transylvania. In the so-called *Szeklerland*, that is to say in the rural districts of Harghita and Covasna, they represent 84.7 % and 75.2 % of the population respectively. The UDMR was created in December 1989 in Tîrgu Mures, the only important city (170 000 inhabitants) where the ethnic Romanians are still in minority. It federates pre-existent confessional movements, as well as associations of young people, professional associations and cultural associations.... In the 1990 parliamentary elections, the UDMR collected 7.2 % of the votes. Its main demands are the creation of a *ministry for Nationalities*, the recognition of bilingualism in the Transylvanian administration and judicial system, the systematic organisation of an education programme in the Hungarian language and the opening of a Hungarian university in Cluj. It is also seeking for a quick implementation of the economic reforms required by the European Union and international creditors. It opposed President Ion Iliescu and the governments formed under his authority between 1992 and 1996. In 1996, it contributed to the success of the opposition candidate Emil Constantinescu. In keeping with this

support, it has participated in government until 2000. It continued to demand collective rights. The slowness of the government to answer its demands provoked it into making repeated protests and to threats to withdraw from the governing coalition.

To sum up, two contrasted configurations are to be considered. The DPS formulates moderate cultural demands and is ready to form alliances with big political parties regardless of their ideological orientation. The UDMR formulates vindictive cultural demands and agrees to share power only with parties which are likely to implement economic reforms.

How can one explain such a diversity? Why do the parties which represent an ethnic minority not adopt the same political stance in every case? Does it mean that they are not subjected to any common logic? Does one have to settle for a case by case analysis and forgo any comparison? In our view, the comparison is possible on condition that one can define an appropriate theoretical framework and take into account the most significant variables.

Rogers Brubaker's theory is frequently used to explain how the presence of an ethnic minority can shape a national political balance. It asserts that the position of ethnic minorities is determined by three factors: internal dynamics, encouragement from ethnic homeland and behaviour toward minorities by the host country. Brubaker describes the ethnic minority as a "*dynamic political stance or, more precisely, a family of related yet mutually competing stances, not a static ethno-demographic condition*". He notes that within the minority "*some may shun overtures to external parties, believing it important to demonstrate their loyalty to the state in which they live and hold citizenship*" while "*others may actively seek patronage or protection from abroad — whether from a state dominated by their ethnic kin or from other states or international organizations*".¹ He focuses on the conceptions of citizenship, conceptions which are rooted in the global political situation nations find themselves in on the one hand, and in the presence or absence of perceived compatriots in the "near-abroad" on the other hand.

One has to put this theoretical framework under closer scrutiny, so as to specify whether it is cogent for interpreting the changes observed in Eastern and Central Europe since 1989. We believe, it proves inefficient because it does not

¹ Rogers Brubaker, "National Minorities, Nationalizing States, and External National Homelands in the New Europe", *Daedalus*, 124(2), 1995, pp 110-121, **Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe**. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996, pp 4-7, 55-78. "Myths and Misconceptions in the Study of Nationalism", Moore Margaret (ed), **National Self-Determination and Secession**, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998, pp 233-265

clear up the differences observed between our two cases. Its main flaw is that it underrates the economical dimension of the relations between ethnic minorities and majorities. As a consequence, it overlooks the role played by the fourth actor of the drama: the European Union. This oversight prevents Brubaker from considering the actual function of political parties which represent a minority and from paying attention to the *precise* conflicts which are noticed within these parties.

The economic situation of the "homeland" exerts a determining influence on the political orientation of ethnic minorities in Eastern and Central Europe. It is particularly meaningful with the strategies aroused by the perspective of the European Union's enlargement process. As a condition to proceeding with negotiations, the European Commission requires that applicant countries implement economic reforms. Such reforms cannot be implemented at the same rate in each and every case (the structural impediments inherited from the communist period differ from one country to another). Thus, some applicants are considered as "good pupils" and can qualify for the next round of the European Union's enlargement, whereas others are sent away to more distant prospects. When this kind of gap is observed between the "homeland" of an ethnic minority and the country where they live, comparisons are quite unavoidable. Several configurations can then be envisaged which can be illustrated with our two concrete cases.

Bulgaria and Romania are kept aside from the first wave of the European Union's enlargement. The factor of variation is to be sought in the differentiated position that the "homeland" of every minority occupies in the race for integration in the European Union. This position can be similar to that of the country the minority lives in, but it can also be better or less favourable. In every case, an international comparison is drawn. It is not drawn for itself nevertheless but in connection with the internal pressures the minority undergoes - and that is why it is appropriate to speak of a combination. The political party must be thought of as an interface between the national conflicts the minority is engaged in and the international set.

This logic of combination has a direct effect on the organisation of each party. It gives birth to two kinds of factions, which can be qualified as *outward-looking* and *inward-looking*. In every ethnic party one finds an outward-looking faction which pushes hard to strengthen the links with its homeland. One also finds an inward-looking faction which turns more to the internal balances in the society it lives in: it looks for an agreement with other parties so that the host state takes on the international position of the "homeland". The direction of the party should balance these contending factions. The balance is more or less difficult to obtain as the gap between the kin-state and the host-state is wide or slight.

When the "homeland" of a minority and the country they live in are in a rather similar situation, the outward-looking faction does not formulate radical demands and the agreement with the inward-looking faction is quite easy to obtain. The party, which represents the ethnic minority, is liable to collaborate with all other parties without being beset with difficulties. This is the case of the DPS in Bulgaria.

When the comparison is not in favour of the country the ethnic minority lives in, the outward-looking faction wishes to obtain a separate status so as to benefit from the same advantages as the people who live in the "homeland". The inward-looking faction strives for reforms which could fill the gap between the two countries and help the whole country it lives in to get closer to European Union standards at the same rate as its "homeland". Both strategies can be observed within the UDMR in Romania. They are uneasy to combine.

I. BULGARIA: THE INTERNAL CONFLICT CONTAINED BY THE ENLARGEMENT PROCESS

The Turkish minority of Bulgaria is strongly established in two confined regions: Razgrad-Shumen, in the Dobrudja plain, and Kardzhali, in the Rhodope Mountains. The DPS obtains there its greatest electoral successes. Lutfi Yunal, vice-chairman of the DPS, explains that the DPS aims at "safeguarding national identity and culture versus groups and values furthering national nihilism". According to him, all the conditions were ripe in 1989 for Bulgaria to follow the same road as Bosnia or Kosovo. A spark was just needed to set fire to the powder keg. But the DPS has pushed hard to defuse the conflict and to find "a civilised way" to restore the rights of the Turkish minority.²

Some elements are to be found in recent history of the relations between the Turkish minority and the Bulgarian majority that are likely to back such an interpretation. In the course of the violent campaign for changing the names in 1984 and 1985 - the so-called "restoration process" -, more than 350,000 Bulgarian Turks left the country. About 150,000 subsequently returned to Bulgaria. The beginning of 1990 was marked by the adoption of the *Declaration of the National Assembly on the National Question*, which rejected the previous policy and served as the basis for the reform of Bulgarian legislation in the sphere of minority protection. It was followed by the passing of the *Names of Bulgarian Citizens Act* (March 5, 1990) which allowed Bulgarian citizens whose names had been forcibly changed to restore their former names.³

² David Holley, "Bulgaria's Ethnic Calm Is a Sharp Contrast to Region's Troubles", *Los Angeles Times*, Monday, February 12, 2001

³ Daniel G Bates, "What's in a name? minorities, identity, and politics in Bulgaria". *Identities*. 1 (2-3), 1994, pp 204-210, Ivan Ilchev & Periy Duncan, "Bulgarian ethnic groups politics and

In the course of the process of democratisation all restrictions were abolished regarding the religious rights and freedoms of Bulgarian citizens of Turkish origin and Bulgarian Muslims. In Bulgaria, there are presently more than 950 functioning mosques, a large number of them having been built in the past 5-6 years. The Koran and other religious literature are freely disseminated in both Bulgarian and Turkish. Currently, there are four secondary religious Muslim schools and one undergraduate Islamic institute in the country.⁴

These measures of accommodation were not enough to defuse the conflict. The legal framework for Bulgaria lends itself to the development of a violent conflict in as much as the minorities enjoys no collective rights. Being based on the notion of the unity of the nation, the Constitution does not provide for collective political rights of ethnic or religious groups of the population. It acknowledges the existence of religious, linguistic and ethnic differences and guarantees the possibility to exercise rights deriving from those differences in the form of individual, rather than collective rights (Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, art. 2. 1.).

Hence, the scope of the rights enjoyed by ethnic Turks does not satisfy the DPS. Leaders of the party demand the extension of this scope by adopting the principle of granting collective rights⁵. On the face of it, it might lead to the emergence of separatist and irredentist tendencies. But the DPS negotiates with the Centre and defuses the conflict. Its members expect to obtain what they want by a series of small concessions and they succeed to a large extent. Legislative measures are introduced by the Bulgarian authorities - by the Centre - so as to satisfy them and to prevent them from making too many violent demands. The Public Education Act (1991), as well as the Rules and Regulations for the Implementation of the Public Education Act (1992), reaffirm and specify the constitutional right to study one's mother tongue in public and private schools. At present, mother tongue instruction is provided in municipal schools as an

perceptions," **RFE/RL Research Report**, 2 (12), 1993, pp 36-37 , Kemal H Karpat, "The Turks of Bulgaria" in Z Abedn Syed and Sardar Ziauddin, eds **Muslim Minorities in the West**. London Grey Seal, 1995, pp 51-55

⁴ Ivanka Nedeva, , "Democracy building in ethnically diverse societies: the cases of Bulgaria and Romania" in Ian Cuthbertson & Jane Leibowitz (eds), **Minorities: The New Europe's Old Issues**, Prague, Institute for East-West Studies, 1993, Wolfgang Hopken , "From religious identity to ethnic mobilization: the Turks of Bulgaria before, under and since communism" in Hugh Poulton and Suha Taji-Farouki, eds **Muslim Identity and the Balkan State**. New York New York University Press, 1997, pp 54-61

⁵ Yulian Konstantinov, "Nation state and 'minority' types of discourse, problems of communication between the majority and the Islamic minorities in contemporary Bulgaria", **Innovation in Social Sciences Research**, 5 (3), 1992, pp 85-86, Petya Nitsova, "Bulgaria minorities, democratization, and national sentiments", **Nationalities Papers**, 25 (4). 1997, pp 729-740

optional subject up to 4 hours a week and is financed by the municipal budget, with textbooks provided to students free of charge.⁶

In June 1995, a National Council on Social and Demographic Issues was set up with the Council of Ministers with consultative and co-ordinating functions and it has been transformed, since January 1998, into the National Council on Ethnic and Demographic Issues. It includes representatives of all ministries and institutions concerned with these issues. Its working meetings can be attended by representatives of other organisations and research institutes. A special public council on ethnic issues has been created with the Presidency.

Last but not least, Bulgaria signed the Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities on behalf of the Republic of Bulgaria on October 9, 1997. This act was a result of a six months of public debate on the issue of whether the country should be a party to the Convention. The DPS has played a major role in this debate. Bulgaria became the 36th state which signed the document and thus expressed its positive attitude towards the prevailing understanding within the Council of Europe that national minorities need better protection.⁷

If one focuses on the relationship between the DPS and the ruling parties, one misses the point. So as to understand the political positioning of the Turkish minority, one has to take into account the international set and especially the European Union enlargement process.

Bulgaria is kept aside from the first wave of enlargement for economic reasons. It is considered insufficiently advanced in economic reorganisation.⁸ Turkey is not more favoured: Cardiff's European Council of June 15 and 16 1998 stated "the intention of the Commission to think about the means to support the implementation of the European strategy for Turkey and to present appropriate propositions for that purpose"⁹. That could hardly be taken for a firm commitment. Because of the nearness of the Bulgarian and Turkish positions on the international scene, the differentiation between the factions is weak within the DPS. There is indeed a powerful inward-looking faction, strongly implanted in

⁶ Ali Eminov, "The Movement for Rights and Freedoms and the issue of Turkish language instruction in Bulgaria", *Balkanistica*, n°10, 1997, pp 145-150, Stojanov V, "The Turks in Bulgaria", in *Relations of Compatibility and Incompatibly between Christians and Muslims in Bulgaria*, Sofia, International Centre for Minority Studies, 1994, pp 268-272.

⁷ The ratification of the Convention by the Bulgarian National Assembly however, needs to be accompanied by an interpretative declaration specifying the minority groups in Bulgaria to which the principles of the Convention are to apply

⁸ European Commission, "Elargissement préparation à l'adhésion Partenariat pour l'adhésion de la Bulgarie", 1998, <http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/leg/fr/lvb/e40108a.htm>

⁹ European Commission, "Elargissement préparation à l'adhésion Stratégie de pré-adhésion de la Turquie", 1999, <http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/leg/fr/lvb/e40108a.htm>

regions with a concentration of Turks. One also finds an outward-looking faction which turns its eyes to Turkey and which is powerful within the parliamentary group of the DPS as well as in the editorial staff of the party's newspaper (Rights and Freedom, *Prava i Svobodi*). But both factions are not very principled and the leader of the party, Ahmed Dogan, succeeded in reconciling them on the whole.¹⁰

At the first free elections, which were held in October 1991, the UDF obtained the largest share of the vote (34.4%), defeating the BSP by a narrow margin of just over 1% of the votes cast. The UDF won a total of 110 seats in the legislature, while the BSP obtained 106 seats. Filip Dimitrov, the leader of the UDF, was elected chairman of the new government with the support of the DPS. Such support was in keeping with the strategy of the inward-looking faction. It was meant to obtain some concessions from the government. But the outward-looking faction did not oppose it.¹¹ It was all the less amenable to oppose it that the main party in the opposition, the BSP, summoned the DPS before the Court of Justice in 1991, charging it with an infringement of Article 11 (4) of the Constitution which forbids the formation of an ethnic party. As a consequence, the party would not have been allowed to take part in the general elections.¹² The Constitutional Court finally ruled in its decision No. 4 of 21 April 1992 that the DPS had a legal status but the relationship between the DPS and the BSP remained unfriendly.

Throughout 1992, social unrest was endemic. In April the government's programme of price liberalisation caused strikes by miners, port employees, public transport, medical staff, civil servants, teachers and munitions workers. As the UDF was beset with economic hardships, it was no more amenable to take into account the DPS's demands. This situation cast doubts on the relevancy of the inward-looking strategy. The outward-looking faction then pushed hard to obtain a shift of strategy. At the end of October, the DPS and BSP Members of Parliament in the National Assembly defeated the government by 121 votes to 111 in a motion of no confidence. The government subsequently resigned. Following the failure of the UDF and DPS to reach an agreement for a coalition under DPS mandate, an academic, Professor Lyuben Berov, became Prime Minister. The DPS was represented in the new government. Evgeni Matinchev, member of the parliamentary group of the DPS and leader of the outward-looking faction, was designated first deputy prime minister. The Berov government wished to look apolitical: it assumed that it was determined to support

¹⁰ Zlatko Anguelov, 'The leader and his movement', *East European Reporter*, 4 (3), 1990 pp. 27-28.

¹¹ Kjell Engelbrekt, 'The Movement for Rights and Freedoms', *Report on Eastern Europe*, 2 (22), 1991, pp. 5-8; Bates Daniel G., 'The ethnic Turks and the Bulgarian elections of October 1991', *Turkish Review of Balkan Studies* (Annual), 1993 pp. 195-196.

¹² Duncan M. Perry, 'Ethnic Turks face Bulgarian nationalism', *Report on Eastern Europe* 2 (11), 1991 pp. 5-8.

programmes designed by independent minded technocrats instead of following party platforms. The DPS exercised control over appointments of high-ranking officials in the executive branch. Matinchev was in a position to implement new laws and acts. But his outward-looking orientation prevented him from taking advantage of this position. In office, the DPS made no effort to translate liberal principles that might regulate the relationship between ethnic minorities and majorities into economic programmes that would benefit minorities. The inward-looking faction soon began to protest. Members of Parliament elected in regions with a high concentration of Turks feared a loss of popular support as they realised that their constituents did not understand why the government failed to address their daily problems.¹³

A shift in the political situation happened to reshuffle the balance between the two factions. On 5 April 1994, thousands of demonstrators protested in Sofia against government economic policies. On 2 September 1994, Berov's government offered its resignation. At the general election, which was held on 18 December 1994, the BSP (in alliance with two small parties) obtained an outright majority in the National Assembly, with 125 seats, while the UDF won 69 seats.¹⁴ The new government, headed by the Chairman of the BSP, Zhan Videnov, was appointed at the end of January 1995; the majority of the ministers were members of the BSP. The DPS then came back to its first inward-looking orientation and decided to engage with the UDF in the United Opposition Forces (UtdDF). The outward-looking faction took issue with this backward step. Mehmed Hodzha, member of the DPS parliamentary group, decided to create a new Turkish party which he called the *Party of Democratic Change*.¹⁵ Journalists of *Prava i Svobodi* went on strike.¹⁶ But these protests soon stopped when the BSP began to denounce the resurgence of "Turkish nationalism" and to stir up nationalistic feelings by invoking "the threat from rising Islamic fundamentalism". In November 1995, the Member of Parliament Gincho Pavlov, one of the leaders of the National Committee for the Protection of the National Interests - a coalition partner of the Bulgarian Socialist Party - referred to the Movement for Rights and Freedoms as "an organisation detrimental to Bulgaria" and started collecting signatures among the remaining Members of Parliament for a new petition to the Constitutional Court, demanding that it should be banned.

¹³ Sabine Riedel, "Die türkische Minderheit im parlamentarischen System Bulgariens", *Sudosteuroopa*, 42(2), 1992, 118-19

¹⁴ B Koulou, "Elections In Bulgaria", *Political Geography*, n°14, 1995, Georgi Karasimeonov, "Parliamentary Elections of 1994 and the Development of the Bulgarian Party System", *Party Politics*, 1(4), 1995, p 586, Georgi Karasimeonov, "Past and New Cleavages in Post-Communist Bulgaria", Kay Lawson, Andrea Rommele & Georgi Karasimeonov (dirs.), *Cleavages, Parties and Voters. Studies from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Romania*, Londran, Routledge, 1999, pp 117-118

¹⁵ It obtained 0,27% of the votes in 1997 elections

¹⁶ I Ganev Venelin, "The Mysterious Politics of Bulgaria's Movement for Rights and Freedoms", *East European Constitutional Review*, 4(1), 1995, p 50

These outside attacks silenced the dissension within the DPS. Both factions decided to close ranks faced with the danger.¹⁷

On 21 December 1996, Videnov unexpectedly resigned from the office of Prime Minister and the post of party leader. In January 1997, the BSP designated the Minister of the Interior, Nikolai Dobrev, to replace Videnov as Prime Minister. The BSP and two nominal partners governed in a coalition. Widespread social unrest provoked daily anti-government protests in January and February. Under mounting pressure, the BSP-led government agreed in early February to hold elections in April 1997. A parliamentary general election was held on 19 April 1997. This resulted in the UtDF gaining an overall majority in parliament with 137 seats; the BSP and its allies obtained 58 seats. Ivan Kostov, the leader of the UtDF, was asked to form a government. So as to prevent new tensions between its two factions, the DPS decided not to be represented in the government.

In September 2000, the final version of the draft Denominations Act, prepared by the Parliamentary Commission on Human Rights and Religions on the basis of the three previous drafts elaborated by the UDF, was published. On October 12 2000, the text was submitted to Parliament for the second and final reading. The DPS fell short in opposing its implementation. Lutfi Mestan and Ahmed Usein, Members of Parliament from the DPS stated that, on the whole, the Draft was worse than the acting Law which was passed at the beginning of the Communist regime. They stressed that the draft gave far-reaching rights to the Directorate of Denominations, a state body especially created to provide for "the co-ordination of the State with the various religious faiths". The Directorate had the right to give the Court opinions for the registration of religious organisations. It also had the right to approve the creation of schools for the training of all kinds of clergy and to approve the curricula of these schools. It was provided in the Draft that the Directorate of Denominations "shall control the activities of the various faiths with reference to their compliance with their statutes and the provisions hereof". Moreover, the Directorate "shall investigate the religious basis and rites of the thus associated religious faith and shall issue an opinion on the registration of the same". These rights were formulated in extremely vague terms and thus gave great possibilities for arbitrariness. The implementation of the Draft made it impossible for the DPS to get closer to the UDF.¹⁸

Then, the inward-looking faction was almost ready to make an agreement with the BSP but its plans were overturned by a documentary on the communist

¹⁷ Dimitrina Dimitrova, "The influence of communist style administration on ethnic conflict in Bulgaria.", in Farnen Russel F. (ed.), *Nationalism, Ethnicity, Identity*, New Brunswick NJ, Transaction Publishers, 1994, p 397

¹⁸ Emul Cohen, "Bulgaria A meeting of religious leaders denounces the final version of the draft denominations act", 2000, <http://www.piln.org/lists/piln/archives/msg00692.html>

assimilation campaign against ethnic Turks in 1984 which was compromising for some leaders of the BSP. It became evident that Dogan would have lost the backing of ethnic Turks if he agreed to enter a coalition with former Communists. Thus, the DPS decided to run alone, postponing any coalition decisions until after the parliamentary elections due in June 2001.¹⁹

Simeon II National Movement (Nacionalno Dvienie Simeon Tsvori, NDS II) a new coalition created three months earlier by the last Bulgarian king, eventually won the elections. It fell short of obtaining the absolute majority, gaining 43.04 % of the votes. The DPS won 6.73 % of the votes and presented itself as the best ally for the formation of a new government. No frame for collaboration was still available, as the NDS II was a new-born coalition. But, due to pragmatism, DPS was prone to find an agreement. In August, it moved officially to NDS II its nominees for deputy ministers. Under the coalition agreement, it was entitled to five deputy ministerial positions: the regional development, finance, defence, economy and environment ministries. The movement put forth two nominees per position allowing the respective minister to choose from the two candidates.

When one takes into account the EU enlargement process, it becomes easier to understand the political positioning and repositioning of the DPS. Bulgaria and Turkey being in a similar rank in the race for accession to the EU, the outward-looking faction remains moderate and it never opposes bluntly the inward-looking faction. The tensions between both factions remain episodic. Such a configuration is in stark contrast to the Romanian case.

II. ROMANIA: AN INTERNAL CONFLICT MAGNIFIED BY THE ENLARGEMENT PROCESS

The UDMR is built on a territorial basis. It finds its main support in Transylvania. It upholds the interests of the Transylvanian Periphery and demands for a decentralisation of the Romanian State. These demands collide with the centralism of authorities. All the same, the UDMR is not in a position to collaborate effectively with big governing parties. At first, it opposed the governments formed under the aegis of president Ion Iliescu. When the authorities laid down institutions for negotiations between central authorities and minorities, the UDMR considered it was nothing but a trap designed to suffocate its demands instead of satisfying them. In March, 1993, the government announced the creation of a Council for National minorities (Consiliu pentru Minoritatile Nationale - CpMN). The charter of the CpMN was elaborated in association with an American Non-governmental organisation (Project one Ethnic Relations). It granted 14 seats to the government's representatives and a seat to

¹⁹ Ron Synovitz, "Bulgaria: Documentary on Assimilation of Ethnic Turks Stirrs Debate", RFE/RL, 9 January 2001.

each of 17 registered national minorities. It was specified that assemblies will be held regularly so as "to ratify" the texts of law which contain elements of particular concern for ethnic minorities. Each member had the right to veto. The UDMR criticised the fact that all the minorities were placed on the same basis while they did not have the same weight: the Polish minority which numbered less than 3000 members had the same power and the same veto right as the Magyar minority which numbered 1,62 million representatives. The UDMR finally opted for a "conditional participation": it claimed that the CpmN should elaborate a text of Law on the rights of national minorities and to amend the Law on Education. The government opposed these demands. UDMR then decided to boycott the CpmN.²⁰

In 1996, the political change in the majority created a new context for UDMR's leaders but it did not bring them to negotiate with the power as efficiently as the DPS in Bulgaria. Having defeated Ion Iliescu and his followers in the general elections, the *Democratic Convention of Romania (Conventia Democrata din România, CDR)* was willing to introduce economic reforms at an accelerated rate and to move closer to Western standards. The UDMR decided to support it. Two of its representatives were appointed to the new government: Akos Birtalan became minister for Tourism; György Tokay became minister without portfolio, in charge of national minorities besides the Prime Minister (his task consisted in proposing reforms and monitoring the observance of international and national texts dealing with the rights of ethnic minorities). What is more, the UDMR managed to implement *Prescription n°22 on local administration* and *Prescription n°36 on Education*. Prescription n°22 made it compulsory for municipalities in which at least 20 % of the population belong to a national minority to have bilingual public registrations. Prescription n°36 education authorised the use of the Hungarian language in secondary grammar schools and vocational schools; it also stated that the training of the teachers can be assured in a minority language. The prescriptions could not be applied until being completed by statutory acts. The government implemented these statutory acts at a very slow rate. The UDMR interpreted it as a lack of will. It realised that its positioning in office did not change the actual situation of the Magyar minority. In December 1997, the UDMR adopted a vindictive stance: it threatened to withdraw from the government and demanded the dismissal of the Minister of Education, Andrei Marga.²¹

If one focuses on these internal variables, one cannot perceive what makes the peculiarity of the UDMR and what differentiates it from the DPS. So as to

²⁰Michael Shafir, "Minorities Council Raises Questions", *RFE/RL Research Report*, 11 June 1993

²¹Dan Oprescu, "Politici publice pentru minoritatile nationale din Romania 1996-1998", *Sfera Politicii*, n°66, janvier 1999

draw a cogent comparison, one has to pay attention to the differentiated strategies aroused by the European Union enlargement process.

Because of its bad economic performances, Romania is not likely to be included in the first wave of enlargement.²² By contrast, Hungary is promised a quick integration. Its inhabitants enjoy economic conditions far superior to those the majority of the Romanian citizens live in. Thus, Magyars of Romania look enviously beyond the frontiers. On behalf of their membership of the "Hungarian community", they wish to benefit from the economic reforms implemented in Hungary and to tie up fruitful contacts with the western powers.²³

Various political options stem from such an orientation. An inward-looking faction is to be found within the UDMR, as well as an outward-looking faction. The first is numerically superior to the second. However, the UDMR grants real autonomy to its local cells so that a minority faction can lean on isolated strongholds and direct disproportionately the general line of the party.²⁴ This principle of organisation nurtures permanent internal tensions, but it prevents political splits at the same time.²⁵

The inward-looking faction is connected to the so-called *Liberal Circle* of Cluj. It is mainly supported by urban Magyars. Until 1993, it was led by Géza Domokos, a former member of the Romanian Communist Party's Central committee who remained in good terms with Ion Iliescu. Domokos and his followers tried hard to encapsulate the Magyar issue in a broader reflection on democratisation and decentralisation of Romanian society²⁶. They do not demand cultural autonomy for the Magyar minority but rather territorial autonomy for the whole of Transylvania. Their recommendation is to "take things one step at a time" rather than to hurry the Romanian leaders. They do not expect to obtain territorial autonomy straight away but rather progressively and by means of little concessions. They wish to raise one by one the apprehensions of the ethnic Romanians.²⁷

²² European Commission, "Agenda 2000 élargissement rapport régulier sur la Roumanie", **Bulletin de l'Union Européenne**, n°9, 1998, pp 3-53

²³ European Commission, "Agenda 2000 élargissement rapport régulier sur la Hongrie", <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/docs/index.html> . 1999, Capelle-Pogacean Antonela, "Hongrie/Roumanie, rivalités et synergies dans la marche vers l'Europe", **Politique Etrangère**, 96(4), 1997, pp 853-866

²⁴ UDMR, **Statut**, 1991, p 1

²⁵ Horatiu Pepine, "UDMR - Organizație umbrelă sau partid disimulat?", **Sfera Politicii**, n°18, 1994 6-7

²⁶ Lazslo Fey, "Radicali și Moderati în UDMR", **Revista** 22, n°1, 1997

²⁷ Edith Oltay, "The Hungarian Democratic Federation of Romania Structure, Agenda, Alliances", **Report on Eastern Europe**, 19 July 1991

The outward-looking faction is mainly established in the Hargita and Covasna districts. It is steered by the charismatic pastor Laszlo Tökes. Among its influential members, one has also to mention Imre Borbely, elected in Mercuria Ciuc (prefecture of the Hargita district), Adam Katona, an elected member of the municipality of Țirgu-Seuieș (in the Covasna district) and Geza Söcs, a former correspondent of Radio Free Europe, still closely connected with western journalists. Generally speaking, the upholders of the outward-looking faction compensate their numerical inferiority within the UDMR with foreign support. By so doing, they wish to obtain the immediate recognition of an autonomous Magyar entity which could follow the same path as Hungary whatever happens in the rest of Romania. Tökes and his followers demand the building up of specific Magyar institutions in Transylvania and the recognition of collective rights for the Magyar minority. They take issue with the strategy of "taking things one step at a time" as they consider the government can use it to divert the Magyar minority from its main objectives. They assert that the only effective method is to stir things up.²⁸ In 1990, Laszlo Tökes set out on a diplomatic visit to the United States and demanded that complete autonomy should be granted to Magyars of Romania. In September, 1992, he went on hunger strike to denounce the "infringements of human rights" in Transylvania. The outward-looking faction drafted a series of memoranda on this issue and sent them simultaneously to the Romanian government and to the international organisations (Council of Europe, UNO...). It attempted to demonstrate that the Magyar minority was confronting a process of "ethnic cleansing".

In the 1990s, a complex triangular game had to be observed between the government, the inward-looking faction and the outward-looking faction of the UDMR. The outward-looking faction acted as a foil to the government. It allowed it to reject altogether the UDMR's demands by pointing the finger at their radicalism. This stigmatisation had no effect but to strengthen the position of the outward-looking faction as it confirmed the charge of ineffectiveness made against the strategy of "taking things one step at a time". So as to avoid dissension appearing in broad daylight, and despite its numerical superiority within the party, the inward-looking faction was then forced to handle Tökes and his followers with care. Therefore, the speeches of the UDMR hardened. New arguments were supplied to the government for refusing any concession - and a new game was to begin... One can map out such a process by considering the successive programmes of UDMR.

²⁸ Michael Shafir, "How Modern Can "Postmodernism" Be?", *Transition (OMRI / Prague)*, 20 Octobre 1995, p. 36, Marc De Bellet, "La minorité hongroise face aux changements politiques en Roumanie", in Maximos Aligisakis, Marc De Bellet & François De Saint-Ouen (eds), *Nationalismes en Europe Centrale et orientale: Conflits ou Nouvelles Cohabitations*, Genève, Georg Editeur, 1997

The first Congress of the party was held in April, 1990 in Oradea. Domokos was elected as president and Tökes as honorary president. Several representatives already rebelled against the inclination of Domokos to negotiate with the government. The second Congress of the UDMR was organised one year later in Tîrgu Mures. Domokos was re-elected by 129 votes to 123 for Söcs. The inward-looking faction then announced its intention to place the Magyar demands on a wider political platform, defined in association with other parties. The outward-looking faction replied immediately: Adam Katona announced the holding of a popular referendum about the establishment of an "autonomous territory" which would group together the Magyar populations of the Hargita and Covasna districts. His initiative was immediately denied by the direction of the UDMR. It provoked a parliamentary debate nonetheless and strengthened the suspicion of other political parties.²⁹ In October, 1992, the inward-looking faction tried to calm the outward-looking faction by taking into account some of its main points. The UDMR published a *Declaration*: it ceased speaking anymore on behalf of a Magyar "minority" but on behalf of a Magyar "co-nation". It demanded a status of "autonomous community", based on *belso onrendelkezes* - a Hungarian concept which can be translated (in Romanian as in English) by "autonomous administration" or by "autonomous government" alternatively. This semantic ambiguity facilitated the concluding of an agreement between the two factions. The inward-looking faction put the emphasis on the first meaning and the outward-looking faction on the second. The inward-looking faction demanded general measures of decentralisation whereas the outward-looking faction demanded a separate political entity. Romanian authorities considered this last position as that of the whole UDMR. They firmly condemned the *Declaration*. The inward-looking faction tried to minimise the importance of the text: Domokos described it as a simple "proposition", as a "basis for discussion". Conversely, the outward-looking faction pushed hard to magnify the incident: Borberly described the *Declaration* as a founding text which could bring to the constitution of a *Parliament of the Magyars of Transylvania*, in a position to veto the laws voted by the Parliament of Bucharest.

In 1993, the third Congress of the UDMR was held in Brasov. It was designed to appoint Domokos' successor. Tökes declared he was a candidate and appeared to benefit from a rather wide support. The inward-looking faction immediately announced that it would leave the party if he were elected. A compromise president was finally found in the person of Bela Marko: more radical than the inward-looking faction, he looked more moderate than the outward-looking faction at the same time. However, the point was to work out a programme which could satisfy both factions. The outward-looking faction proposed to stand up for the rights of the "Magyar national community". The

²⁹ Michael Shafir & Dan Ionescu, "The Minorities in 1991: Mutual Distrust, Social Problems and Disillusion", *Report on Eastern Europe*, 13 December 1991, pp. 24-28.

inward-looking faction assumed that this formulation would reopen the debate raised by the Declaration. It looked for more neutral terms. An agreement was finally found: the UDMR demanded the recognition of a "personal and cultural autonomy" for the Magyars of Transylvania, that is to say the possibility "to protect the Magyar national identity, including its culture in all its aspects: language, religion, education, social organisations and means of information".³⁰ On this base, Bela Marko managed to impose an inward-looking line. So as to maintain the cohesion of the party, he was nevertheless compelled to make some concessions to the outward-looking faction. On January 7, anniversary of the creation of the UDMR, he claimed that Magyars of Transylvania should benefit from a "triple autonomy", "personal, administrative and regional". He announced the constitution of a *National Council of autonomous administration (Consiliu National de Auto-guvernare)*.³¹ At the same time, Marko tried hard to tighten the links between the UDMR and other parties. He explained that the solution to the Magyar issue should be thought of as a means of "modernising" the whole Romanian society.³² On the occasion of its fourth Congress, organised in Cluj in May 1995, the UDMR adopted a moderate programme. It assumed that its priority was "integration in the European Community". According to its programme, it is in keeping with such a goal "and in the interest of all the Romanians" that closer economic links were to be established with Hungary.

Such a balance between the outward-looking and inward-looking factions could not be held for a long time. The outward-looking faction pushed hard for the adoption of a harsher programme. In August 1993, it sent a *Memorandum* to the Council of Europe, asking that the final examination of the Romanian candidacy should be postponed until one should observe a better protection of the Magyar minority.³³ The initiative raised a general outcry. All big parties condemned it as an "anti-Romanian" act.³⁴ The inward-looking faction then accused Tökes and his followers of discrediting the Magyar movement. It tried to marginalise them. In 1996, György Frunda, prominent member of the inward-looking faction, ran in the presidential race for the UDMR. He collected 6,02 % of the votes. The UDMR then recommended to vote for the CDR candidate Emil

³⁰ Michael Shafir, "The Congress of the Hungarian Democratic Federation of Romania postponed Confrontations", *Sfera Politicii*, n°3, 1993, pp 11-12

³¹ Michael Shafir, "The Hungarian Democratic Federation of Romania Actions, Reactions and Factions", in MICKEY (Robert W.) (ed), *Ethnicity Unbound: The Politics of Minority Participation in Post-Communist Europe*, Londron, St. Martin's Press, 1996

³² Steven D Roper, "The Romanian Party System and the Catch-all Party Phenomenon", *East European Quarterly*, 28(4), 1995, p 591

³³ UDMR, *Memorandum by the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania on Romania's Admission to the Council of Europe*, 1993

³⁴ Dan Ionescu & Alfred A Reisch, "Still No Breakthrough in Romanian-Hungarian Relations", *RFE/RL Research Report*, 22 October 1993, pp 26-32, Michael Shafir, "The Political Party As National Holding Company. The Hungarian Democratic Federation of Romania". in Stein Jonathan, *The Politics of National Minority Participation in Post-Communist Europe: State-Building, Democracy, and Ethnic Mobilization*, Amonk NY, ME Sharpe, 2000

Constantinescu in the second round. The UDMR became an integral part of the new majority: for the first time, it reached government...

In October 1997, the UDMR organised its fifth Congress in Tîrgu Mures. It worked out a new platform and published a *List of priorities in the application of the programme of government*. It laid emphasis on its "own vision of the Romanian economic policy". It demanded "the establishment of a market economy based on private property; a progressive reduction of the role played by the State in the economy at national and local levels; the development of an economic environment which could favour private companies; the transformation of the economy in accordance with European and international standards"...³⁵ This clear-cut economic programme was designed to ease the dialogue with other members of the government coalition. It was not likely to contain internal dissent nonetheless: as far as Magyar demands are not completely satisfied, the outside-looking faction can assert with a strengthened credibility that it would be much more profitable to renounce the logic of participation and to return to a logic of confrontation. During the sixth Congress of the UDMR, which was held in Mericiurea Ciuc in May 1999, it openly expressed its dissatisfaction. Senator Josef Csapo drafted a "project of internal autonomy" for the Harghita and Covasna districts. Adam Katona blamed Marko for not pushing hard to obtain the recognition of a "double Romanian and Hungarian citizenship". To assert their strength, 150 representatives of the outward-looking faction sent an open letter to the president of the United States, drawing his attention to the "ethnic cleansing" of the Magyars in Romania. So as to defuse these initiatives, the inward-looking faction had to show some signs of firmness. It suggested that an international conference on stability in the Balkans could be organised and asserted that the UDMR could be invited to participate on the same basis as the Romanian State.³⁶

In November 2000 elections, the ruling coalition was defeated. Ion Iliescu won the presidential race and his party obtained a relative majority in Parliament. So as to improve its international legitimacy, the new government revealed its intention to collaborate with the Magyar minority. The inward-looking faction of the UDMR adopted a realistic stance and decided to take up the challenge. As a result, a *Local Public Administration Law* was voted in Parliament, requiring that bilingual street signs were placed in localities where minorities represent at least 20 percent of the global population. This law was only an episodic agreement and some signs of dissent were soon recorded after it was voted. The so-called *Status bill* created a new bone of contention. This bill, which was considered by Hungarian parliament in april 2001, consists in defining a special status for ethnic Hungarians abroad (it grants them special rights when they come to study or to

³⁵ UDMR, "Lista de prioritati privind aplicarea programului de guvernare", 1997, UDMR, "Programul Ununii Democrate Maghiare din România", 1997

³⁶ UDMR, "Al VI-lea Congres UDMR raportul presedintelui Ununii", 1999

work in Hungary). It immediately provoked strong reactions within UDMR and within the governing party. Romanian Prime-minister Adrian Nastase protested that implementation of laws passed by foreign countries is possible only "*on the basis of mutual agreements, or commonly accepted international standards,*" and "*must respect [the provisions of the] constitution and the current internal legislation.*" At the same time, the Hungarian Status bill reinforced the outward-looking faction within the UDMR: Tökes and its followers were legitimated in its radical demands; they felt stronger and expressed blatantly their demands. Bela Marko, had to pay lip services to them. In March 2001, he protested against the "*nationalist rhetoric*" of the governing party. One month later, he met the Hungarian minister for education and called for a "*new strategy of education in mother tongue*". As a consequence, the collaboration with the governing party get harder and harder.

In Romania, the factions game is much more conflictual than in Bulgaria. Because of an important distance between the position of Romania and that of Hungary in the European Union's enlargement process, the Magyar minority is torn between two options: to negotiate with the government so as to obtain that Romania as a whole benefit from the same international status as Hungary or to look for a particular solution for Transylvania so as to connect it separately with the Hungarian economy. The followers of the first option are dominant, but the upholders of the second option are politically active and they impede any peaceful dialogue with the authorities.

CONCLUSION

So as to interpret the observed differences without renouncing a global explanation, it is necessary to consider both the homeland of the ethnic minority and the country it lives in. But it is not sufficient. One has to consider the positioning of these actors in connection with a fourth actor, i.e. the European Union. The balance between inward-looking and outward-looking factions within the party which represents an ethnic minority has to do with respective positions of the "homeland" of the ethnic minority and the country where it lives in the enlargement process. As both countries are in the same position or not, the interplay between inward-looking and outward-looking factions is more or less tightened within the party which represents the ethnic minority. Hence, negotiations with the big governing parties is more or less easy.

Bulgaria and Turkey are in a rather similar position *vis à vis* the European Union. As a consequence, factions are slightly differentiated within the party supported by the ethnic Turks of Bulgaria. An alliance with all big governing parties is possible as it does not require too many concessions from the outward-looking faction. As Hungary is in a much better position than Romania, the

factions are sharply differentiated within the political party which represents the Magyar minority of Transylvania. The outward-looking faction being strong, its demands are to be taken into account by the direction of the party and that impede an efficient collaboration with big governing parties.

Parties which represent an ethnic minority in Central and Eastern Europe are engaged in complex dynamics, but it is possible to analyse them within a global theoretical frame. The only point is to admit that the local dynamics are not self-explanative but are interconnected with the European Union's enlargement policy.