



Figure 1: The messiah Boyko Borisov walking on water (Source: The God Borisov, n.d.)

Political messianism in Europe

The case study of Bulgaria

Bachelor Thesis

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A luxurious cruise ship hit an iceberg and quickly went down. Only three of the passengers survived in a lifeboat: Jesus, the Pope and Boyko Borisov. When the boat approached land, suddenly Jesus went out of the boat and began walking on the water until he reached the bank. Boyko Borisov did the same. The Pope tried, too, but he drowned. Jesus, watching the scene with a sorrow face, told Boyko Borisov: "Don't you think we should have told him about the stones under the water that surface at low tide?" Boyko Borisov, confused and not understanding, went: "What stones?"

Bulgarian political joke

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I. Introduction

1. Background information

After 1989 Bulgaria entered a transition from a communistic and totalitarian regime to a democracy and from a centrally-planned economy to a market economy. Until 1989 the party system consisted only of a centralist party and afterwards hundreds of new parties were established. The new multi-party system was too unstable while trying to adapt to the new political environment. Having little experiences and trying to develop their programmes for a short time, the new parties faced many challenges. On the one hand, they have to avoid the former socialist influence. On the other hand, they have to base their ideas on democratic principles. Further, they have to represent specific social interests but the social structure is still developing. The parties, therefore, have no stable social base and often are represented not by their political platform and ideas, but by their leader. The leader becomes more important than the ideology (Skolkay, 2000).

During the same time a new phenomenon was born. We could name it “political messianism”. It is characterized by the voter`s expectations that the political leader of the country (namely the Prime Minister) will solve messianically all the present problems. The main feature of the phenomenon is the adoption of politics as redemption. It develops as a process and seems to be something normal and typical but also politically damaging for Bulgaria. It represents a symptom of problems and crisis of democracy (Jones, 2007, Todorov, 2007). It is interesting to examine if there is crisis of democracy in Bulgaria or rather lack of stable democratic life because of different conditions. On the other hand, the populism itself is hindering the development of democratic stability. The topic becomes more important after 2007 when Bulgaria became a member of the EU and faced the challenge of accepting the European values whereas democracy is the most significant one. Furthermore, the state of the economy, which is mostly used from the political messiahs in their electoral campaigns and is defining the voting process, is facing transition, European and also global challenges. Thus, the delivery of new messiahs is encouraged even further.

The objective of the thesis is to describe and explain the political messianism as a variation of populism. Thus, I am applying existent literature about the populism in order to develop narrow insights on the Bulgarian case. Whereas Mudde is writing about the populist Zeitgeist in Western Europe (Mudde, 2004) or is defining different types in Eastern Europe (Mudde,

2000), Canovan is distinguishing between redemptive and pragmatic face of democracy (Canovan, 1999) and other authors are dividing the populist parties according to their left-right position (Ucen, 2007). Although it is possible to characterize the concept according to different criteria, there are some main common features that are applicable to all cases. While distinguishing those main features, I am examining the specific Bulgarian characteristics that are making the Bulgarian case different. Such a research is useful in order to add more insights on a specific East European populism. Additionally, it could be related to further studies on other cases with similar features, for example other post-communist states in transition.

2. Formulation of the problem

The idea of my thesis is to describe the phenomenon, to prove how it has developed, what are the main conditions encouraging it and finally, how its occurrence could be interpreted. I am applying an already existing literature about the populism in Western democracy and in East European countries and also research about the relation between populism and democracy. The analysis and conclusions of my thesis is relevant for understanding the harmful transition from a sociological point of view. It is interesting to find out why during a transition the parliamentary elections in Bulgaria are characterized with a thirst for messianic leaders and if the phenomenon of “political messianism” could be interpreted as a typical feature of the Bulgarian post-communist transition.

The main question of this research is: **Is the “political messianism” a typical feature of the Bulgarian transition?**

In order to answer this question, three sub questions are answered first:

1. How can the phenomenon of “political messianism” be described?
2. How has it developed in Bulgaria?
3. How can its occurrence be interpreted?

To answer the main research question it is important, firstly, to describe the phenomenon of “political messianism”. Thus, the answer on my first sub question concerns the theory of the populism. I am analyzing existent literature about the topic in order to identify the Bulgarian phenomenon and to find some relevant conditions for its existence.

As a complement to the first question, I examine the second one describing the development of the process of messianism with regard to the messianic Prime Ministers in Bulgaria:

Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha and the recent one Boyko Borisov. I am using the theoretical background to prove empirically the Bulgarian case.

The answer of the last question is the concluding one. It aims to introduce narrow insights on the Bulgarian variation of populism on the basis of the first two sub questions and to provide an answer to the main research question.

3. Structure of the thesis

Chapter 2 provides us with the theoretical framework. It is based on the existing research about the populism in Western and Eastern democracies. After defining the concept of populism, the “political messianism” is introduced as the Bulgarian variation of the concept. For the purpose of understanding its existence and development important theoretical arguments about the relation of historical, economical and democratic condition and the populism are included.

Chapter 3 is the methodology section of the thesis. It introduces the research approach, strategy, method of data collection and analysis. Basing the research on the method of the descriptive and explanatory embedded single case study (Yin, 1994), my objective is to empirically answer the research questions. For that purpose, an analytical scheme is developed according to the theoretical chapter and both qualitative and quantitative data is collected.

Chapter 4 is the actual analysis of the thesis. It is based on both the theoretical and the methodological chapter. After a short introduction in the political background of the state, the sub cases of both messianic Prime Ministers are introduced according to some main groups of keywords based on the analytical scheme. After explaining the phenomenon of political messianism, the thesis provides explanation of its development and finally, a discussion about the relation between the historic, economic and democratic conditions in post-communist Bulgaria and the existence of populism. Examination of those conditions provides us with the answer on the last sub question and interpretation of the phenomenon.

Chapter 5 is the conclusion of the thesis. It includes the answer to the main research question and a short summary of the whole thesis. The chapter introduces possible policy implications in the context of the EU membership and a discussion about interesting and significant directions for further research on the topic.

II. Theoretical framework

The objective of this chapter is to provide us with a theoretical framework and to distinguish the political messianism as a specific type of populism characterizing the Bulgarian transition. The theory of the populism is used to indicate its features and apply them to the Bulgarian case. Thus, a theoretical answer to the research questions is given and the phenomenon is theoretically described and explained. Using theories about the populism in Western Europe and research about the post-communist states, my goal is to develop narrow insights on a specific redemptive variation of populism characterizing the Bulgarian transition.

1. *Defining populism*

There is a lot of scientific literature about the populism and a lack of concrete theory about it. Mudde is defining populism as “an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, the “pure people” versus “the corrupt elite”, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonte generale* (general will) of the people” (Mudde, 2004, p.543). Canovan (Canovan, 1999, p.3) is identifying it “as an appeal to “the people” against both the established structure of power and the dominant ideas and values of the society”. Further, there are various types of populist ideologies distinguished in the scientific literature. Mudde is writing about a populist *Zeitgeist* in the Western democracies (Mudde, 2004, p.562) and distinguishes between economic, agrarian and political populism in Eastern Europe (Mudde, 2000, p. 39-50). Other authors are describing an ideology of new populism in Eastern Europe and distinguish between radical left, radical right and other populist parties (Ucen, 2007).

Most of the authors are unanimous about several features. The populism differentiates between the ordinary people and the corrupted elite (Mudde, 2004, Canovan, 1999, Smilov, 2008). In the case of Bulgaria the corrupted elite are mostly the established parties and the new populist party is representing the general will of the people. Simeon II and especially Borisov with his campaign against Stanishev claims to fight against the corruption of the previous governments.

Secondly, the populist leaders create a new party (Mudde, 2004, p.546) and claim to be different and independent from the previous political life. Simeon II created his own party and registered it several months before the parliamentary elections as also Boyko Borisov did.

There is definitely a trend to establish a rather right-wing to centralist party (Mudde, 2000, p.44, Ucen, 2007). The parties which are more democratic and western oriented gain more positive response and are more successful politically than the radical one (the radical rightist party ATAKA is a good example). With the establishment of his right-wing centralist movement Simeon II did manage to “end a pattern of bipolar competition” (Ucen, 2007, p.58) and “opened the space for the massive influx of populist parties” (Christova, 2010, p.228).

One of the most important features is the charismatic personality of the leader (Canovan, 1999, p.6). The style of talking and the way of presenting himself play a big role. Simeon II is famous with his symbolic way of speaking and Borisov with his closeness to the ordinary people.

Further, both Simeon II and Borisov do not have a coherent programme, but rather are promising to realize people`s expectations for what should be done (Smilov, 2008, p.17). They focus on some problematic issue and put it on their agenda. For example, Borisov is famous with his fight against the corruption and the organized crime (Christova, 2010, p.228). However, all political messiahs are using social issues based especially on poverty as a focus of their political regime (Christova, 2010, p.228).

2. Political messianism

The Bulgarian populism after 2001 could be defined as “political messianism” due to several features that are typical particularly for Bulgaria.

Concerning the theory of Canovan about the two faces of democracy (Canovan, 1999), I suggest that in the Bulgarian politics the redemptive vision is notably consolidated. The new leaders are promising salvation, which is possible when people, seen as the only source of legitimate authority, are taking charge of their lives (Canovan, 1999, p.10) i.e. voting for the charismatic leader. In this relation the populist leaders define themselves as messiahs, coming from outside of the recent political life and offering salvation through their election. Further, they convince the voters that they are appropriate to take the role of a saviour in a very emotional style.

As a compulsory condition to be new and independent and to represent the general will of the ordinary people, it is preferable that the political messiahs have no or very little political experience (Canovan, 1999, p.14). Further, distinguishing themselves from the corrupt politicians and encouraging distrust in previous governments, the political messiahs support a

technocratic way of government and involve experts in their government (Mudde, 2004, p.547). Most of these experts are young educated Bulgarians from abroad who have less experience.

Last but not least, the role of the public media determines the success of a charismatic leader (Smilov, 2008, p.19). The way the leader is communicating through the media and is presented by it is a defining feature. In the Bulgarian case the media helps shaping the messianic vision of the new leaders.

To sum up, there are some compulsory theoretical conditions to define someone as a populist. In the Bulgarian case the redemptive character is playing a significant role and thus, the Bulgarian variation could be named political messianism.

3. The political messianism and the lack of democracy

If we want to identify the democratic development in Bulgaria, a deeper look in the historical background is necessary. From 14th till 19th century Bulgaria falls under Ottoman rule and remains separated from the Western part of Europe. While the democratic traditions are developing, the Bulgarians are leaving under slavery. They were free again after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878 when Russia fought against the Ottoman Empire. Bulgarians welcome Russians as saviours and till nowadays call them “brothers” and are grateful about the salvation. After battles for independence and autonomy, Balkan Wars and World War I and II, Bulgaria falls again under foreign influence: the Russian one. Till 1989 the country is existing under communist rule. Under these historical conditions no viable democratic traditions could have been established. As Kopstein and Reilly argue (1999, as cited in Skolkay, 2000) the geography of the state has an important role. Bulgaria is influenced by its neighbours as any other country and the geographical isolation from the West and the proximity to Russia may have played a significant role in its non-democratic development. Further, Carpenter argues (1997, cited in Skolkay, 2000) that historical experience does play a significant role in the development of populism. According to him Bulgaria’s populism is rather national than social one and could be characterized with the long-term levels of foreign dominance.

The post-communistic transition after 1989 is the time of development of democratic principles. This is a long and hard process due to the lack of democratic traditions and experience. Bulgarians have lost their social and economic stability which the totalitarian

regime had offered. From an organized communist society the state starts to develop a civil society. The economy undergoes transition from centrally-planned economy to a market economy and at the same time faces the challenge of the globalization and the global capitalism. In this environment teeming of challenges and with a lack of political experience it is even harder to achieve a high level of economic development. As Georgi Yankov writes (2001) one of the main characteristics and a principle of democracy is the level of economic development and the economic system (p.37). According to Lipset (as cited in Yankov,2001): “The richer one nation is, the more chances it has to develop democratically”. Therefore, the populists are using the despair of the people giving unrealistic promises for economic improvement and fight against the poverty, which they fail to realize. Mostly, they aim their campaign at non-voters who represent the disappointed people.

In this relation, an important condition for the birth of a new messiah is exactly the high level of political disaffection which is characterized by the low level of political trust. The political messianism as a process including, inevitably, the phase of a disappointment and denial of the government. As Kenneth Newton explained (2001): “political trust seems to be...an evaluation of the political world. This makes trust scored a litmus test of how well the political system is performing in the eyes of its citizens. Low trust suggests that something in the political system – politicians and institutions, or both- is thought to be functioning poorly” (p.205).

Generally, the political trust is related to the social trust. There is plenty of research about the level of their relation. The social trust is one of the main components of the social capital which is the main feature of a stable democratic and political life. The level of social trust in Bulgaria is one of the lowest in the EU. This could be explained as Letki and Evans did with the communist history of the state. The theory of social capital assumes that trust and social interconnectedness are the components of a democratic political culture, but low levels of social trust seem to be an inevitable heritage of fifty years of communist rule and further, interpersonal trust appears to be a product of democracy rather than a cause of it (LETKI& EVANS, 2005, p.517). In the case of Bulgaria it is hard to be achieved due to the undemocratic conditions as explained above.

4. Conclusion

This chapter provides us with the theory of populism concerning the political messianism. The defining features of the populism are distinguished: distinction between the ordinary people and the corrupted elite, creation of a new rather right-wing centralist party with a lack of a coherent programme and a charismatic leader using an emotional style of communication. Further, the Bulgarian case includes some typical features: the symbol of salvation through the politics, the lack of political experience and the role of the media.

As an explanation of the phenomenon the historical and geographical background could be applied as conditions which are hindering the development of democratic traditions. Second condition for the existence of a stable democratic life is the economy, which in the Bulgarian case is undergoing also a transition and is facing global challenges. At least these conditions are leading to a low level of a social capital and a high level of political disaffection which favour the development of populism and the vote for a messiah promising salvation from the hard transition.

This discussion helps answer the research question: “How can the “political messianism” be described?”, gives some theoretical explanations of the development of the phenomenon and introduces a narrow insight on a specific Bulgarian variation of populism, which is characterized by a more redemptive concept. Thus, this part presents the theoretical background on which the empirical chapter of the thesis is based.

III. Methodology

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the methodology used in the study. The chosen research approach and strategy are introduced and the chosen data method and analysis are clarified. Further, an analytical scheme is developed on the basis of the theoretical framework and according it the suitable data and technique of analysis is proposed.

1. Research approach and strategy

There are three main types of research approaches: exploratory, explanatory and descriptive approach (Yin, 1994, Tellis, 1997). Describing the phenomenon on the base of existing

theories and finding a possible explanation is giving a deeper insight on the topic and thus, descriptive case study is often combined with explanatory one (Tellis, 1997, Yin, 1994, p.3).

Therefore, using an existing theoretical work about the populism, I am aiming to describe the Bulgarian case and considered it in a new way: the phenomenon of political messianism (Gerring, 2007, p. 40). Testing the existent theories and focusing on a specific case is providing the deductive character of the thesis (Gerring, 2007, p.39). For that purpose distinguishing between both messianic Prime Ministers is useful in order to research the main characteristics of the Bulgarian populism which. After finding the answer on the first sub question, the answer on the second one is provided through study on the main phases of the phenomenon. It is hard and insufficient to interpret a phenomenon only on the basis of description. It is interesting to find out why this phenomenon is typical for the Bulgarian case. Is the lack of democratic traditions an important condition for the redemptive vision of politics or the economic situation is playing a significant role?

In conclusion, in order to apply the theoretical basis and provide a combination of description and explanation of the phenomenon, the most suitable approach should be chosen. Taken into account the aim of the thesis to consider the political messianism as a variation of populism, i.e. in a new way (Gerring, 2007, Hartley, 2004, Yin, 1994), suitable approach is the case study design (Yin, 1994). The focus of the phenomenon are the subunits of both messianic Prime Ministers and thus, an embedded design (Tellis, 1997, Yin, 1994, p.44) seems to be the most suitable research strategy.

2. Data collection and analysis

As already mentioned the data analysis of the thesis is based on the theoretical framework from chapter 2. Using the existing theories I am aiming to develop new insights concerning the Bulgarian case (Yin, 1994, p.103) and build and explanation about the phenomenon (Yin, 1994, p.110).

On the basis of the theoretical part, from the concept of populism, political messianism and the democratic conditions, concrete features are distinguished. The representation of the general will of the people against the corrupted elite (Mudde, 2004, Canovan, 1999, Smilov, 2008), the establishment of a new right-wing to centralist party (Mudde, 2000, 2004, Ucen, 2007) and the role of the charismatic leader (Canovan, 1999) are three main features defining the populism. Further, concerning the political messianism and its redemptive character there

are: the symbol of salvation (Canovan, 1999), the lack of political experience (Canovan, 1999, Mudde, 2004) and the role of the media (Smilov, 2008). Finally, the lack of democratic traditions, the economic transition and the political and social distrust are defining the background conditions which encourage the development of the phenomenon. How can data be collected from those concepts? A good solution is to develop concrete key words characterizing those features. Concerning the concept of populism and the first two features, I am developing the key words: “fight against corruption”, “new party” and “right-wing to centralist party”, “attracting experts and young people from abroad” and “identification with the ordinary people”. Concerning the feature of charismatic person: “self confidence” and “communication of high expectations”. The phenomenon of political messianism is identified with the key words: “religious identification”, “identification with saviour”, “lack of political experience” and “introducing as a messiah from the media”. Finally, the keywords: “communistic heritage”, “low level of economic development”, „political disaffection” are introduced. In order to clarify the data collection and analysis, I am introducing the analytical scheme based on the theoretical framework (Figure 2).

Two Prime Ministers are considered to have the main populist features and to be recognized as messiahs. Seen as two subunits they definitely could be compared and also distinguished from each other. Therefore, it is useful to be analyzed separately. For that purpose four different groups of the keywords are formed and presented in the analytical scheme in different colours (red, yellow, blue, green, black). An analysis of both Prime Ministers according to the first four groups of keywords will provide the answer on the first sub question: How can the phenomenon of “political messianism” be described?. To answer on the second sub question (How has it developed in Bulgaria?) description of the process of development is given and finally, data is collected according the last black group of keywords with the aim of explaining the phenomenon and interpret it, in other words, to deliver answer on the main research question.

It is important to use multiple sources of evidence as a main principle for collecting the data and to achieve better reliability of the study (Yin, 1994, p.90). Therefore, both quantitative and non-numerical data is collected. For example, the data which is collected according to the first three keywords group is qualitative: printed and published online articles, speeches and party frames and declarations. To understand deeper the social part of the phenomenon, I am applying also popular jokes and caricatures. Then, to analyze better the process, I am using quantitative data from one of the most popular Bulgarian agencies for social research

ASSA-M and Gallup International and finally, in order to explain the political messianism I again have used quantitative data from the Legatum prosperity index. As followed I am building my empirical part on the basis of a secondary and not primary data.

Analytical scheme			
№	Concept	Concrete features	Key words
1	Populism	<p>3. Representation of the general will of the people against the corrupted elite</p> <p>4. Establishment of a new party: right-wing to centralist</p> <p>5. Charismatic leader</p>	<p>3. Corruption in the previous government</p> <p>4. New party</p> <p>5. Right-wing to centralist party</p> <p>6. Self confidence</p> <p>7. Communication of high expectations</p> <p>8. Attracting experts and young people from abroad</p> <p>9. Identification with the ordinary people</p>
2	Political messianism	<p>6. Lack of political experience</p> <p>7. The symbol of salvation</p> <p>8. The role of the media</p>	<p>10. Lack of political experience</p> <p>11. Religious identification</p> <p>12. Identification with saviour</p> <p>13. Introducing as a messiah from the media</p>
3	Democratic background	<p>2. No democratic traditions</p> <p>3. Economic transition and challenges</p> <p>4. Social and political distrust</p>	<p>14. Democratic conditions</p> <p>15. Communist heritage</p> <p>16. Low level of economic development</p> <p>17. Political disaffection</p>

Figure 2: Analytical scheme

3. Conclusion

This chapter discussed the methodology used in the thesis. It could be summarized as follows: case study is conducted as a combination of both explanatory and descriptive deductive approach. As a suitable design is introduced the single-case study. On the basis of the theoretical framework is developed analytical scheme with keywords and the subunits of both messianic Prime Ministers is studied separately according to four groups of keywords. For that purpose and in order to achieve better reliability both qualitative and quantitative secondary data is collected from different sources.

IV. Empirical part

This chapter represents the empirical part of the thesis and is based on the analytical scheme from the previous chapter. In order to provide clear description and explanation of the Bulgarian populism, the political background in the state after 1989 is introduced. Short introduction of the political environment is useful with the aim of understanding the time and the political conditions during the appearance of the political messianism. For the purpose of answering the first sub question the cases of the two Prime Ministers is described according to the first four groups of keywords. I assume that the comparison between two subunits according to an ordered system of keywords, will deliver clearer answer.

Further aim of this chapter is to recognize the main phases of the phenomenon and describe them, in order to provide answer to the second sub question. An explanation of the phenomenon is significant for interpreting it and therefore, discussion about the relation between the lack of democratic conditions and populism is provided. It is interesting to study who is voting for the messiah and if the role of the economic development exercises some influence.

1. The political environment after 1989

After 1989 the political system of Bulgaria is strongly bipolar. There is a constant political rivalry between the socialist party BSP and the democrats UDF. While the former is oriented to the past of the country and is for an orderly transition, the later is appealing to immediate change in the economic system – privatization and limited government. In the chaos of the new political situation, the charisma of individual politicians has no central role in contrast to the division between the ideas of the ex-socialists and the new democrats.

Then in 1997 the elections were won by the financier and most popular democrat – the Prime Minister Ivan Kostov. Still he does not represent the real political messianism but some features of populist politics. At the beginning of the year 1997 Bulgaria falls into deep financial crisis. The state is facing hyperinflation and major cities are covered by protests that have blocked roads and streets. While the biggest concerns of Bulgarians are the living standards and the economic situation, Ivan Kostov is a financier ready to cope up exactly with those problems. He is a symbol of a new democratic regime and fights against the corrupted communists. In this relation he is representing the general will of the people against the

corrupted elite (Mudde, 2004, p.543). Further, as most of the populist parties he is right-wing oriented and in the case of Bulgaria – representing the right politics.

Like any other populist the Prime Minister wins the elections with majority, enjoys high level of trust and after two years of government begins to lose the political approval. His government and family are associated with the mafia and the speculative affairs involving it. Still during his government till nowadays he turns to be a byword of “corruption”. The President and ex-leader of BSP Georgi Parvanov labels him with the popular citation that Ivan Kostov is the “Ideology and an engine of corruption and clientelism” (Wikiquote, n.d.). In the time of a total loss of trust in the Prime Minister and his government because of corruption and after the financial crisis in 1997, Bulgarians are losing their faith and are especially emotional in their political views. This process could be characterized with the political triumph of the Bulgarian Tsar Simeon II. Consequently, the government of Ivan Kostov could be conceived as a favourable environment of the appearance and development of the Bulgarian variation of populism – the political messianism.

2. The political messiahs

In order to answer the first sub question and understand the Bulgarian populism, a description of the cases of the two political messiahs: Simeon II and Boyko Borisov is useful. For that purpose, both Prime Ministers are studied according to four groups of keywords from the analytical scheme: **New right-wing to centralist party fighting the corruption**, **Self confidence and communication of high expectations**, **Lack of political experience, identification with the ordinary people and attracting experts and young people from abroad in the political life** and the last one - **Religious identification and identification with a messiah and saviour**, which is main characteristic of the political messianism.

2.1. The return of the Bulgarian Tsar Simeon II

In 1946 after a referendum Tsar Simeon II and his family were forced to flee Bulgaria. After fifty years of exile in 2001 he returns in Bulgaria and despite of some deliberate hindrances from Ivan Kostov, he manages to win the election with his party with 42,74% (Central electoral commission, 2001, p. vii) after his popular appeal on 6 April 2001, which is one of the most popular appeals in the whole Bulgarian political life.

An analysis of the speech from 6 April 2001 (Saxe-Cobourg-Gotha, 2001) and the manifesto of the party (NMSS Manifesto, n.d.) according to the main key words applies a suitable description of the Bulgarian case.

New right-wing to centralist party fighting the corruption

Both in the speech from 2001 and in the manifesto of party NMSS the keywords: “new party”, “corruption”, “right-wing” are uncovered.

As Simeon II states: “It is neither morally nor politically acceptable that, by European standards of living, the majority of Bulgarian people, including those residents in the countryside and small towns, are in misery, while some politicians live in inexplicable opulence” (Saxe-Cobourg-Gotha, 2001). With this statement he claims to defend the general will of the people and differentiates between the ordinary people and the corrupted elite (Mudde, 2004, Canovan, 1999, Smilov, 2008). As ordinary people he calls the “majority of Bulgarian people” and as corrupted elite – “some politicians”. Further, he declares three main principles of government and one of them is exactly against the corruption: “introducing new rules and institutions to eliminate corruption, which is the major enemy of Bulgaria” and finally, “I have always insisted on evaluating people by their competence, and I do not believe in giving positions based on kinship or party affiliation.” (Saxe-Cobourg-Gotha, 2001), which further declares his position according to the fairness of government. The citations above illustrate the presence of one of the main populist characteristics – fighting the corruption in a new order.

As most of the populist leaders Simeon II also creates a new party (Mudde, 2004, p.546) and appeals to a “moral politics” and defines his party as a “movement” (Mudde, 2000, p.47): “The political system and its morals need immediate change. There must be integrity, integrity in everything!”, “Today I want to declare my goal to found and lead a movement in the name of new ethics in politics”, “By this address, I set the beginning of the “Simeon II National Movement,”” (Saxe-Cobourg-Gotha, 2001). These parts of his speech illustrate his readiness to create new party with new ideas and values as for example – integrity in the politics.

The movement of Simeon II is introduced in the manifesto as a “representative of centre-right liberal values” (NMSS Manifesto, n.d.) , ends the fight between the right and the left political

parties (the UDF and the BSP) and points out the tendency of foundation rather right-wing to centralist party (Mudde, 2000, p.44, Ucen, 2007).

According to the citation of the speech and the manifesto the first group of keywords is existing and introduces Simeon II as having some concrete features of the concept of populism.

Self confidence and communication of high expectations

The second group of keywords is introducing some features of the charismatic leader. The main focus of the political agenda of Simeon II, declared in his speech, is the poverty: “the cry for help of hundreds of my countrymen who had been living on the border of human existence”, “the majority of Bulgarian people... are in misery” and confidently states to fight against all the problematic issues: “I am resolute, as never before, to fulfil my historical duty to Bulgaria” (Saxe-Cobourg-Gotha, 2001). Additionally, he often uses the phrase: “Believe me!” which remains main characteristic of his symbolic way of speaking. The use of the phrase “historical duty” could be seen as using nationalistic elements and “Believe me” as religious element, which both are major features of populism as Skolkay (2000) argues.

The most popular and cited part of the speech from 6 April 2006 remains till nowadays the promise of high expectations: “I am ready to propose a system of economic measures and partnership, which within 800 days ... will change your life.” and further, the first aim of his policy: “immediate and qualitative change in the standards of living” (Saxe-Cobourg-Gotha, 2001). The statement with the 800 days is a complement to the previous citations. After he declares understanding, he promises salvation from the poor living situation. The 800 days-promise is one of the most exact and accurate one in the Bulgarian political life. Every day of this period is strictly followed and assessed from the publicity. Simeon II wins the election with this statement and after the 800 days encourages the political disaffection and denial of the people: “On April 6, 2001 people were waiting for a messiah. Two years later it became clear that Bulgarians had high expectations” (Petrov, 2003). As Petrov considers, Bulgarians vote for the political messiah, who promises them economic miracle. Finally, they realize that this is an unrealistic promise.

According to the citations following the keywords, Simeon II seems to be a charismatic person. The most remarkable issue is the accurate promise of salvation, which remains widely popular.

Lack of political experience, identification with the ordinary people and attracting experts and young people from abroad in the political life

The third group of keywords again is presenting concrete features of populism but also the lack of political experience as a characteristic of the political messiah. Although the Prime Minister is a tsar, he claims to be close to the ordinary people and to express the general will (Mudde, 2004) with the following statements: “I have suffered, as you”, “unifying the Bulgarian nation along historical ideals and values” “The Movement will target exclusively the real daily problems of the Bulgarian people.” (Saxe-Cobourg-Gotha, 2001). Bulgarians are seen as the only source of legitimate authority and are encouraged to take charge of their lives (Canovan, 1999, p.10): “By voting for the Movement, you will become its real founders and will elect deputies who are fully committed to its purposes and ideals.” (Saxe-Cobourg-Gotha, 2001). The citations present his identification with the ordinary people and more specifically – that he is suffering with them.

As Simeon II is levelling with the ordinary people, he is also attracting young people from abroad in the political life and is supporting the idea of involving educated individuals with political experience in the government (Mudde, 2004): “I rely, especially, on highly qualified young people as my potential strongest ally in achieving the changes I propose. I also rely on thousands of Bulgarians abroad who care for Bulgaria and want to help her.”, “will also invite individuals who have been involved in politics for their skills and experience” (Saxe-Cobourg-Gotha, 2001). As an answer to the lack of political experience, the citations show his strategy to attract people with experience and young educated Bulgarians.

Most important, he tries to encourage everybody to vote, even those who do not want to participate in the elections: “It is my strong desire to motivate those of you who do not plan to vote on June 17 or will vote driven not by new incentives for change but by stereotypes or fears of returning to the past.” (Saxe-Cobourg-Gotha, 2001). Those are mostly the people who vote for someone independent and new, i.e. the messiah.

According to the citations Simeon II does not have political experience and has suffered with the ordinary person which is strengthening his messianic profile. On the other hand, he is ready to cooperate with educated young people.

Religious identification and identification with a messiah and saviour



Figure 3 : Simeon II kissing the cross
(Source: King Simeon II, 2010)

The most significant group of keywords is the following one. It introduces the messianic character of the Prime Minister.

Simeon II begins his speech with the strongly religious statement: “For decades, I have been driven by my duty to serve you. For decades, I have suffered, as you, our unhappy

fate.”(Saxe-Cobourg-Gotha, 2001). The citation illustrates his symbolical identification with a messiah, who has suffered with the ordinary Bulgarians and has the mission to save them. The religious identification and the identification with a messiah and saviour go further: “During this period there was nothing more hurtful, for me, than the cry for help of hundreds of my countrymen who had been living on the border of human existence. I did what I could and to the extent to which I was allowed.”, “I have chosen the most difficult path, because this is the only way to launch a new Bulgarian spiritual and economic revival.” and ends his speech with: “May God help us!”(Saxe-Cobourg-Gotha, 2001). As could be followed in his statement, there are a lot of symbolical words as: “suffer” “fate”, “fear”, “mission”, “spiritual revival”, “following me”, “hope”, “God” and as already mentioned, he often uses the phrase “Believe me!” Obviously, the Tsar is aiming to attract the Christians in the state whereas the main religion in the state is the Bulgarian Orthodox and the majority of people are Christians. Does the type of Christianity play a significant role in the development of the phenomenon? Deeper studying in the difference between populism in West European and East European democracies could include those religious differences as well.

Additionally, to increase the religious symbolism, the Tsar is sworn in as Prime Minister of Bulgaria in the presence of the Bulgarian Patriarch Maxim. The picture of him kissing the cross remains one of his popular ones (Figure 3). It is debatable if the gesture of kissing the cross is just a religious symbol or includes the nationalistic one as well (Skolkay, 2000). Influenced from Byzantium, where there is deep and stable relation between the tsar and the patriarch, Bulgaria is adopting this relation as well. Further, the definition of the word “tsar” means the “monarch of Russia or Bulgaria” (Dictionary of the Bulgarian language, 1997) and is recognized from the Orthodox Church. In this relation, kissing the cross in the presence of the Bulgarian Patriarch could also be seen as reminding the Bulgarian historical traditions and as nationalistic symbol.

Through his symbolic way of speaking and presenting himself, the media labels the Tsar as a messiah. There are a lot of newspaper articles, claiming that he is the new messiah and that Bulgarians welcome him as a saviour. As Yordanova considers “Bulgarians welcome him as the new messiah...They expect that everything is going to be fixed like with a magic wand.” (Yordanova, 2009). Tadarukova cited the MRF party president “Dogan: Simeon appears as a messiah”, who further states that Simeon II “embodies hope” (Tadarukova, 2001) According to an article the disaffection is increasing: “Bulgarian people again disaffected from the current rulers vote for the new Saviour, Messiah and Leader” (We found the Messiah again!, 2009). The article emphasizes on the permanent search of Bulgarians for messiahs and saviours while describing Simeon II as the first messianic Prime Minister and Boyko Borisov as the last one. Further, the Prime Minister is illustrated as following “Simeon II as a “saviour in trouble”” because of his immediate establishment of new party and using the popular statement “Believe me!” (Israel, St., as cited in Simeon II as a “saviour in trouble”, 2001).

The introduced analysis gives better insight on the messianic character of the Prime Minister. The most significant finding is the religious identification expressed in his symbolic and messianic way of talking and additionally, the introduction of his relation with the church when he is sworn in as a Prime Minister, which could both be seen as a religious and nationalistic element. The last one could be explained in favour of the insight of Carpenter (1997, cited in Skolkay, 2000) that Bulgaria’s populism is a rather national one.

Realizing that Simeon II is not going to save them from the hard transition, Bulgarians fall in disappointment and denial of his governance and finally in political apathy. Thus, on 5 July 2009 the process begins again: Bulgarian vote for the new political messiah who promises salvation.

2.2.The political Superman – Boyko Borisov

After the failure of Simeon II, the voters fall in political apathy. There is no new messiah and the parliamentary elections are won from three parties: the NMSS, BSP and MRF. Two years before the last parliamentary elections the new messiah raises on the political agenda after winning the local elections and becomes a mayor of Sofia. Boyko Borisov, an ex-bodyguard and fireman wins with 53,58 % (Central electoral commission, 2009) the local elections and two years afterwards his party wins with 39,72 % (Central electoral commission, 2009) the parliamentary elections and he becomes the Prime Minister of Bulgaria.

New right-wing to centralist party fighting the corruption and the organized crime

The political party GERB is established on 3 December 2006 - one year before Boyko Borisov has won the local elections and became a mayor of Sofia. As new and young party GERB wins also the parliamentary elections on 5 July 2009 and Boyko Borisov leaves the Mayor's office to become a Prime Minister.

The party is defined as young right-wing political party and declares to work for a liberal democracy. According to the political frame of the party, its main purpose is the fight against the corruption and the organized crime: "we do not want the image of our country in the EU and the world to be associated with corruption, organized crime", "Our ambition is to erase from the image of our country the labels corruption and organized crime!" (Political frame, n.d.). Further, the party blames the previous government for not achieving these goals: they claim that the country has lost a lot of money because of the "corruption, incompetence and abuse of the government" and aim "to remove the shame inflicted by the current government" (Political frame, n.d.). Similar to the case of Simeon II, the citations from the Political frame of GERB illustrate the main populist feature – fighting again the corruption and additionally, fighting against the organized crime. The difference with the Tsar is that Boyko Borisov is putting strongly the blame on the previous government.

Key words as "right-wing" politics, "corruption", "organized crime" and the blame in the previous government are to be found also in the Declaration of the party on the occasion of one year of its founding on 03.12.2006 (2007) and the speech of the Minister of Interior and Deputy Prime Minister Tsvetan Tsvetanov after winning the parliamentary elections in 2009 (Tsvetanov, 2009): "the most influential political party and the main force in the centre-right political space", the party aims "to change and modernize the style of the Bulgarian right-wing politics, the fight against corruption", "institutions free from corruption", "Put on the agenda the fight against the corruption and the organized crime". These citations strengthen further the idea of fighting against corruption and organized crime and declare the party as a centre-right party.

The first group of keywords is uncovered also in the case of Boyko Borisov. It is interesting that the second political messiah is emphasizing more the fight against corruption and additionally, against the organized crime. Further, significant issue is that the corrupted elite are not just "some politicians" (Saxe-Cobourg-Gotha, 2001) like the case of Simeon II, but the previous government.

Self confidence and communication of high expectations

The charismatic character of Boyko Borisov is also expressed through self confidence and communication of high expectation. The self confidence of the Prime Minister is characterized with his way of speaking. Mostly, he begins his answers or speeches with the personal pronoun “I” or “we” (concerning his party) regardless of the truth of the statement. As already mentioned he is always comparing himself with the previous corrupted government as could be seen from the citation: “From the ashes left by the previous government, **we** are building highways” (Trifonova&Velcheva, 2011). He promises to make people’s dreams come true: “**We** will accomplish your dreams for building the highways.” (Boyko Borisov, 2011) and declares to be strict: “While **I** manage, there will be discipline!” (Borisov, 2011). Typical example of ascribing the mutual political success is his statement concerning the raise of the retirement pension: “**I** want to announce to all pensioners that this is due to **us**” (Tsoneva&Markova, 2009).

In contrast to Simeon II Boyko Borisov does not promise an end of the transition and the poverty in an exact period of time. The accent of his promises is as mentioned above: the successful fight against the corruption and the organized crime and also against the failures of the previous government.

Lack of political experience, identification with the ordinary people and attracting experts and young people from abroad in the political life

In comparison with Simeon II, with Boyko Borisov there is a stronger identification with the ordinary people. He claims to represent characteristics of the mass of the people. The fate of his grandfather plays an important role in developing Borisov’s charisma. The Prime Minister even dedicates his success on the parliamentary elections to his grandfather who was killed by the communists (Lillov, 2009, p.18): “I dedicate this day of my grandfather who was killed on 9 September! The personal drama and success have never had a public meaning for me. I think this day was revenge, a rematch of the history for hundreds of thousands of people...” Like Simeon II he is reminding the historical importance of his government which could be seen as nationalistic symbol, the main emphasis is on the similar fate with the ordinary Bulgarians. He often claims to have been very poor like the other people from his time: “I ate toast with lard, my dad was an orphan, my mother - an orphan, and I grew up in the poorest way. Yes, I played with torn sneakers and ate a slice of lard” (Borisov and Ninova, 2011). Borisov is often defined as a man of the people (Boyko Borisov – a man of the people, 2009)

and his way of talking is very simple including personal experience and jokes. On 8 March 2011 protesting farmers appeal to the Prime Minister: “Boyko, come out, you are one of us, listen to us!” (Bojidarov, 2011). The citations illustrate not only his identification with the ordinary people, but also the identification of the ordinary people with him. The difference between the Simeon`s way of identification with the ordinary people and the Borisov`s one is particularly significant. The first one is emphasizing the spiritual similarities, the common suffering and spiritual fate and the second one is putting an accent on the material similarities and namely, the common poor living standard and economic situation. Borisov is strengthening this profile with the lack of political experience due to the lack of education: he was a fireman and bodyguard and thus, represents further the man from the people, who has suffered with them under the tough transition.

In comparison to Simeon II, Boyko Borisov is also attracting educated people from abroad. The most popular example is the Minister of Finance Simeon Djankov, chief economist on finance and private sector affairs at the World Bank.

Religious identification and identification with a messiah and saviour



Figure 4: Bulgaria`s superman (Source: VeleV, 2009)

As Simeon II Boyko Borisov also has the concrete features of the political messiah. According to the fourth group of keywords, as opposed to Simeon II in the case of Boyko Borisov the religious identification is not that strong but there is identification with a hero and saviour. The key words, which characterized his image, are “security” and “stability”. The financial crisis lead to higher level of fear among

Bulgarians and further loss of stability and confidence about their economic situation and therefore, the last elections are based on the “need of someone strong, who will stabilize the situation and provide if not prosperity then at least protection against further possible catastrophe” (Mirchev, n.d.).

The image of Boyko Borisov fits perfectly the image of the needed saviour. In his autobiography published in the internet site of the Sofia municipality (Borisov, n.d.), we can find the word “security” more than once. The Prime Minister has worked in the field of the



Figure 5: Borisov as a superman (Source: Blog masa, n.d.)

afraid of the dark, but because the dark is afraid of Boyko Borisov.”, “Boyko Borisov’s tears treat cancer. Unfortunately, he does not cry. Never.” etc.

The Bulgarian superman is also presented on different caricatures. On Figure 1 at the beginning of the thesis Borisov is in the image of a messiah, walking on water. On Figure 4 there is the classical presentation of the Prime Minister as superman. On Picture 5 there are the previous rulers named with red print: “the thief”, “the other thief” and “the tender soul”. Above the image of the new Superman Prime Minister is written: “Just one MAN can manage it!!!”. The last picture (Figure 6) presents Boyko Borisov as a messiah with halo around his head.

Like the case of Simeon II, Boyko Borisov is also labelled as a saviour and messiah from the media. The titles of many newspapers are associated with this image: “We found the Messiah again! This time it is Boyko. Let’s see how he will fight the corruption!” (We found the Messiah again!, 2009). The article describes the

police, fighting against criminals and providing security. Further, he was a professional competitor in karate and also was a bodyguard. His look complements his saviour image: always dressed in black, shaved head, athletic look and using street jargon while talking with the people (Smilov, 2008).

There are a lot of jokes that present Borisov as a superhuman, hero and God: “Many people wear Superman pyjamas. Superman wears Boyko Borisov pyjamas”, “Boyko Borisov uses night lamp not because he is

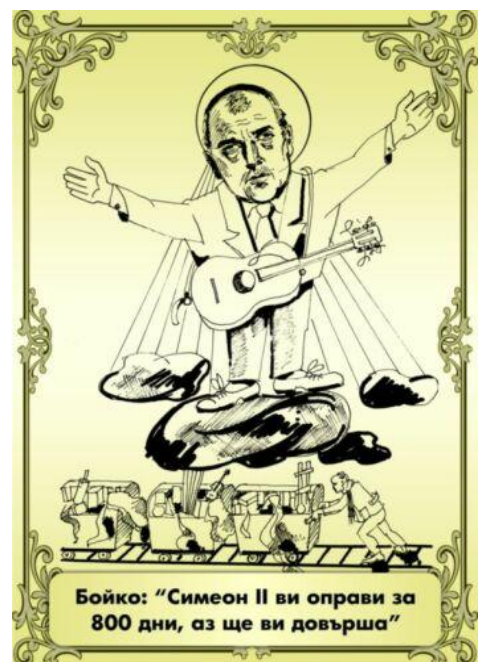


Figure 6: The messiah Boyko Borisov (Source: Dobrev, 2010)

Bulgarian tendency to search political messiah while mentioning the case of the first one - Simeon II and presents Boyko Borisov as the new one. The author is using the irony in order to criticize the mass of the people who are not realizing that there are making the same political mistake. The same purpose has also Todorov in his article where he calls Borisov as “The last saviour” (2008), another article named him just as “Messiah” (Messiah, 2006) and according to Reuters the elections in Bulgaria are the time to choose a saviour: “Reuters: Tired Bulgarians are waiting for their saviour” (2009). Those articles criticize the obvious political paradox. It is surprising that Bulgarians are making the same mistake. Could this mean that they are incapable of democracy? Maybe the historical background according to Carpenter (1997, cited in Skolkay, 2000) or the geographical one according to Kopstein and Reilly (1999, as cited in Skolkay, 2000) are particularly significant. Or maybe the difference between both political messiahs is considerable enough to deceive the voters to continue choosing saviours?

In conclusion, this subsection answered the first sub question and introduced description of the Bulgarian variation of populism. It could be characterized with the establishment of a new right-wing to centralist party fighting the corruption by a self-confident charismatic leader, whose style of communication is characterized with unrealistic promises. Moreover, the leader identifies himself with the ordinary people and because he does not have political experience, he is attracting educated people in his government. Finally, the most typical feature is his religious identification or identification with a messiah and saviour.

2.3. The fate of the political messiah

Seen as a process, the phenomenon includes several phases. Firstly, there is a recognition of a messiah and saviour, then – public disappointment and finally, political apathy and search for a new saviour. According to Mirchev (n.d.): “It is instructive that the brazen populism takes revenge surprisingly in a short time on the populists politicians”. Are those phases the same for both political messiahs or there are significant differences? A look at the political fate of both Prime Minister could be useful in answering the question.

Concerning the first messiah, the process of the phenomenon is to be seen on Figure 7. After the appearance of Simeon II and the recognition as a messiah, in May 2001 the rating of his party increases significantly (33%) and reaches the highest level during the parliamentary elections (41, 3%). After one year in government the rating falls sharply by 27, 3 % to 9 % in 2004 representing the public disappointment. During the campaigns for elections in May

2005 the rating experiences a small increase but comparing with the first one, the difference is more than significant. Since the second mandate in a coalition with BSP and MRF, Simeon II and his party enjoy not more than 2,4 % approval. The government of the coalition (between the NMSS, BSP and MRF) is to be concerned as entering into the phase of political apathy and thirst for a new saviour. Because of the different phases of development of the party, Mirchev (n.d.) named it “party-lightening” and the phases are: “rise”, “falling” and “become cold”.



Figure 7: Dynamic rating of NMSS for the period 2000-2009 (Source: ASSA-M, NCIOM, Alfa research, MBMD)

The second political messiah experiences the same rating tendency as the first one but slower (Figure 8). A possible reason is that he becomes active in the political life in the recent years and still is Prime Minister. However, after the establishment of the party in 2006 there is an increase in the political rating of GERB (from 10 % to 26 %) and the highest level again is during the parliamentary elections on 7 June 2009 (31, 7%). GERB wins the election with almost 10 % lower rating than the party of Simeon II, but the decrease is slighter than the one of NMSS. One year after the win of the parliamentary elections NMSS lost dramatically 27, 3 % approval and GERB only 3, 7 %. Although Boyko Borisov has lost political rating, he

still remains the most popular and approved politician, and Bulgarians continue to tell jokes about his super-human abilities and identify him as a messiah. Concerning those facts GERB could be the next “party-lightening” as NMSS or will become one of the well-established parties and compensate in the future for the lack of an active centre-right party (Mirchev, n.d.). The phase of political disaffection has started and some journalists warn that “The expectations for a new political messiah are growing dangerously” because of the increasing number of people who are not going to vote on the next parliamentary elections (Figure 9: 37, 8 % for April 2011).

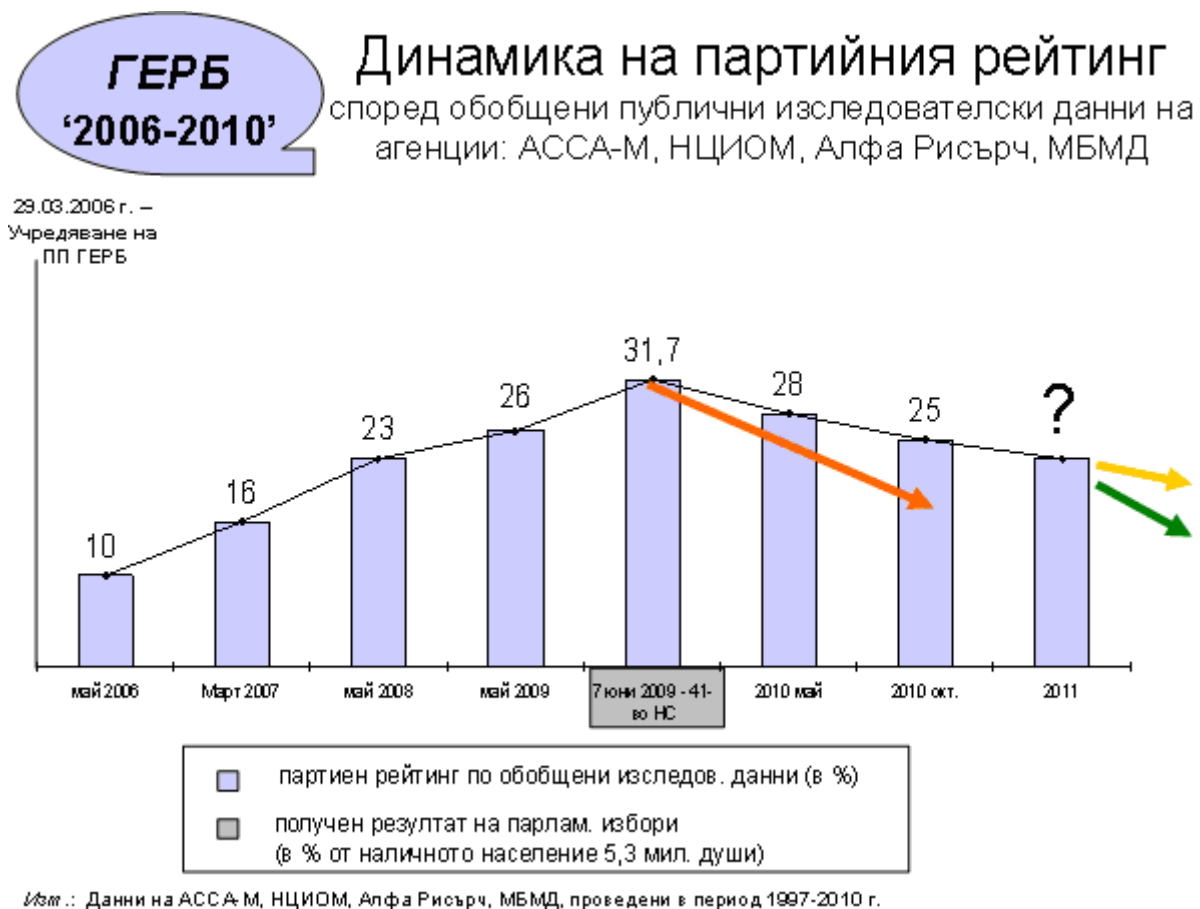


Figure 8: Dynamic rating of GERB for the period 2006-2010 (Source: ASSA-M, NCIOM, Alfa research, MBMD)

The voting attitudes also help to illustrate the present phase of the phenomenon (Figure 9). The percent of people who would vote for the present messiah is still high – 24, 5 % (April 2011) but with 15 % lower than the previous year (April 2010). However, most of the people would not vote - 37, 8% (April 2011) which is with 10,3 % higher than the previous year (April 2010). There is definitely a political disaffection of the present Prime Minister and his party and a phase of political apathy, which is characterized with the high percent of non-voters.

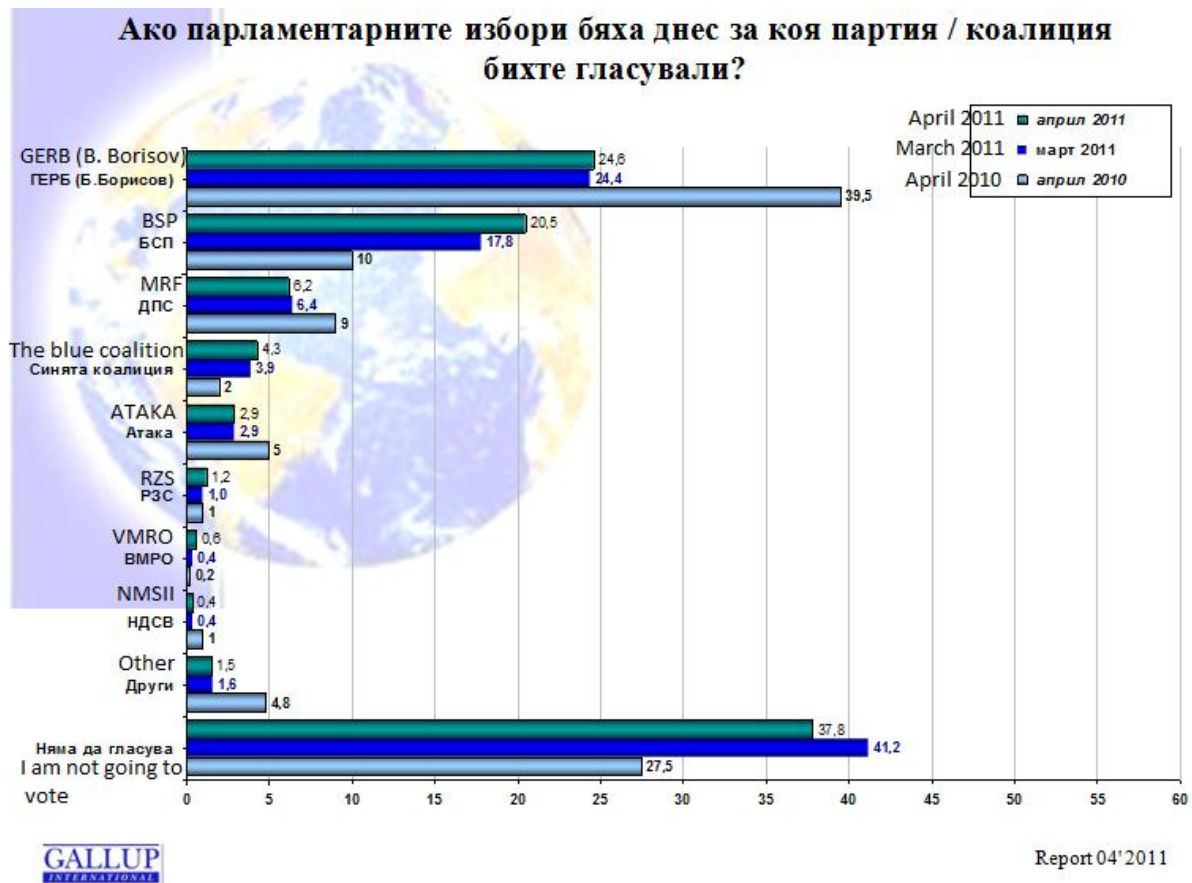


Figure 9: If the parliamentary elections were held today which party/ coalition would you vote for? (Source: Gallup international)

To sum up the answer to the second sub question, the political messianism starts its development after the 1989 with the appearance of Tsar Simeon II on the political agenda. The phenomenon represents a process which is following some main phases: the recognition of a messiah, gradual public disappointment and finally, political apathy and search for a new saviour. Finally, comparing the fate of the two political messiahs and their parties, the first one has walked through those main phases. It is interesting that the political life of the last one is developing slightly slower despite the similar tendencies. Additionally, it may be still early to draw conclusions because of the short period in government.

3. *Lack of democratic conditions*

The aim of the following subsection is to find possible explanation on the phenomenon in order to interpret it. Concerning the Bulgarian case and on the basis of theoretical relation between populism and democracy, an examination of the necessary conditions for a stable democratic life and for the appearance of populism is useful.

As Jones considers (2007, p. 44): “European populism is as much a symptom of problems” and according to Todorov (2007, p. 86) “a symptom of a crisis of democracy”. Taking into account that Bulgaria is a post-communist state in transition to a democratic regime and a hard transition, the development of the populism is a quite normal phenomenon. There are many-sided crises in the process of democracy: transition to democratic regime and to market economy (Perrineau, 2003, as cited in Todorov, 2007). And as Hausner considers (1992, as cited in Skolkay, 2000): “economic transformation in post-communist countries faces inner contradiction, which can result in a populist form of government.”

It seems that the appearance of the “political messianism” in Bulgaria is encouraged by the suitable conditions, mentioned above. On one hand, this is the lack of democratic traditions. According to Beetham (1992, as cited in Canovan, 1999) “many aspects of the liberal heritage are actually fundamental to the persistence of democracy itself”. In the case of Bulgaria due to the historic background there is no liberal and further, no democratic heritage, but a communist one. One of the most approved parties after the messianic one is the socialist party (Figure 9) which still is undergoing transition from a communist to social democratic party. Most of the BSP voters are elderly people living in nostalgia for the past. As mentioned in the theoretical chapter the geography of the state may play a significant role (Kopstein and Reilly, 1999, as cited in Skolkay, 2000). The proximity to Russia could be further seen in the denomination of the political leaders with family titles. The ex-communist Prime Minister Todor Jivkov is called with the diminutive for father “Tato” or brother “Bai”. The first populist Prime Minister after 1989 Simeon II is called again “father” and the last one Boyko Borisov “brother”. The relation with the family seems to play significant role in the political life of Bulgarians.

Secondly, the most important condition for the development of the “political messianism” is the economic situation of the country, where the high level of economic development is one of the main characteristics and principle of democracy (Yankov, 2001) and Bulgaria is experiencing economic transformation. Using data from the 2010 Legatum Prosperity Index, I am exploring some variables which give a better look at the economic situation in Bulgaria.

Variable	Bulgaria	Germany	Netherlands
Inflation	12.35	2.63	2.47
Employment Status	39.15	58.41	65.28
Satisfaction with Standard of Living	29.85	89.12	91.70
Expectations of the Economy	1.96	1.77	1.85
Government Effectiveness	0.10	1.65	1.8
Government Approval	31.47	56.59	64.27
Efforts to Address Poverty	12.09	50.07	50.31
Economy Sub-Index Scores	-0.70	2.23	2.92
Entrepreneurship and Opportunity Sub-Index Scores	-0.07	2.80	3.08
Governance Sub-Index Scores	-0.40	2.69	3.36
Social Capital Sub-Index Scores	-0.96	1.97	3.64



Figure 10: 2010 Legatum Prosperity Index. (Data is from World Development Indicators and Gallup World Poll and World Bank Governance Indicators and Own Calculations).

According to the Economy Sub-Index of Legatum (Figure 10¹), Bulgaria is on 75th place of 110 countries. As comparison the variables for the Netherlands, which is on 3rd place and Germany, which is on 13th place are given. The economy sub-index score, which measures the prosperity of the country according the performance in four areas, as also the one measuring the entrepreneurship and opportunity, are negative for Bulgaria. The percent increase of the inflation in Bulgaria is more than 12 % year-on-year, which is 10 % higher than the one in Germany and the Netherlands. Only 39, 15 % of the people claim to have a job or work and 29, 85 % are satisfied with the standard of living. There is around 60 % difference with Germany and 70 % difference with the Netherlands. Further, only 12, 09 % are satisfied with the efforts to deal with the poverty which is around 38 % lower than in

¹ Detailed definitions of the variables could be found in the Appendix.

Germany and the Netherlands. Therefore, main promise of the messiahs is improving the economy and the living standards. However, Bulgarians have greater expectations of improving the economic situation which characterize their hope and readiness to vote for a saviour who promises this improvement.

In order to investigate the phenomenon deeper and to prove the hypothesis that the economic development is related to the populism, the profile of the voter, who is voting for the populist parties and the political messiahs, plays a significant role. In the Appendix (Figure 11-19) I apply the distribution of voters, who have voted for Simeon II (according to ASSA-M research made in May 2002) and for Boyko Borisov (according to ASSA-M research made in December 2010). NMSS supporters are mostly: women, age of 35-49 and older, with secondary technical education, working in the industry, retirees or unemployed. Those who have voted for GERB are mostly: from big cities except the capital, working in the industry or unemployed, in the public administration and in business companies and with average income 241-480 leva (whereas the minimum wage is 240 leva), with secondary technical education and also higher education, age 35-49 and older. Comparing the distribution for both parties, there are basically similar. Bulgarians who support the messiahs are mostly working in the industry, receiving low wages, with lower education or retirees. The poorer someone is, the more likely he/she is to vote for a saviour. The most surprising issue according to the distribution of voters is in the case of the second messiah Boyko Borisov, who is approved also by higher educated people, working in public administration and in business companies. The last political messiah seems to be supported from different social classes, not only from poor workers with low living standards. This finding could also be explanation for the slower decrease in his rating.

The high level of political disaffection is another important condition for the birth of a new messiah and it presents one of the main phases of the phenomenon (disappointment and denial). In this relation significant role have the government performance, which is measured with the governance sub-index (Figure 10) and is a negative score for Bulgaria, as also the government effectiveness, which is almost with 2 scores lower for Bulgaria in comparison with Germany and the Netherlands. Concerning the low level of satisfaction with dealing with the poverty and the low percent of government approval (31, 47 %), the level of political trust is below the satisfactory. As another evidence of communistic heritage and lack of democratic conditions is also the level of social capital (Letki&Evans, 2005). Bulgaria is on 80th place of

110 countries with a negative score of -0,96, where Germany is on 16th and the Netherlands on 5th place.

Lastly, there are background conditions which explain and encourage the development of “political messianism” in Bulgaria. The main ones are the historical background, the transition to the democracy and the lack of stable democratic life, characterized with low level of political and social trust, as well as the transition to market economy and the unstable economic development of the country. Additionally, the mass electorate voting for the political messiahs is the working-class, with low income and low standards of living. Interesting fact is that Boyko Borisov achieves support also from higher educated people and workers in the public administration and in business companies. In this order, populism seems to be typical in countries where these conditions exist. Thence, the “political messianism” as a Bulgarian variation of populism, could be interpreted as a typical feature characterizing the hard transition of the Bulgarian society. Thus, an answer to the last sub question could be provided.

4. Conclusion

This chapter provides a description of Bulgarian populism and namely, the “political messianism” and thus, answers the first sub question. The self-confident political messiah, whose style of communication is characterized by unrealistic promises, who identifies himself with the ordinary people and is attracting educated people in his government, appears in the political life while representing new right-wing to centralist party fighting against the corruption. The ideology of the right-wing centralist parties is already established in West European countries, but in post-communist Bulgaria it is still developing, which often leads to cult of personality: the leader becomes more important than the ideology (Skolkay, 2000, p. 15). In the case of Bulgaria, the role of the leader is even more strengthened by a redemptive vision (Canovan, 1999), which is characterized with the religious and nationalistic identification of the Prime Minister (Simeon II) and identification with a saviour (Boyko Borisov). An interesting finding is that the messianic identification (identification either more religious one or with a hero and saviour) is related with the way of identification of the messiah with the ordinary people. In the case of Simeon II there is a spiritual recognition and therefore deeply religious identification. In the case of Borisov there is emphasis on the common material fate and therefore, identification with a saviour who is offering stability and security.

The answer to the second sub question is provided not only with the description of the two Prime Ministers, but also while tracing the fate of the political messiah. The phenomenon represents a process with main phases, such as: recognition of a messiah, public disappointment and finally, political apathy and search for a new saviour. The first Prime Minister presents the completed process and the last one is slowly following him.

The explanation of the phenomenon while examining the relation between the lack of democratic conditions and the existence of political messiahs are developing the answer to the last sub question. According to the theory, the rise of populism seems to be normal for post-communist countries, where there are no democratic conditions (for example, social and political trust, developed economy and high-level of living standards among the working class). The historical and geographical elements are also seen as important conditions. Therefore, the “political messianism” as the Bulgarian variation of populism, could be characterized as a typical feature of the Bulgarian transition.

V. Conclusion

The idea of the thesis was to examine the Bulgarian variation of populism and to interpret it answering on the main research question: Is the “political messianism” a typical feature of the Bulgarian transition? For that purpose three sub questions are developed. In order to find significant answers a case study is conducted. On the basis of existing theories about populism in West and East European countries from authors such as Mudde, Canovan, Jones, Christova, Smilov, Mirchev, Ucen, Todorov etc. an analytical scheme with five groups of concrete keywords is developed. By collecting secondary qualitative and quantitative data the thesis examines two subunits, which characterized the rise of the Bulgarian populism: the Prime Minister Simeon II and Boyko Borisov and thus, answer to the first sub question (How can the phenomenon of “political messianism” be described?). It could be characterized with the establishment of a new right-wing to centralist party fighting the corruption from a self-confident charismatic leader, whose style of communication is characterized by unrealistic promises. Moreover, the leader identifies himself with the ordinary people and because he does not have political experience, he is attracting educated people in his government. The political messianism does have the main features of the populist concept, the most significant issue that differentiates it is the redemptive character (Canovan, 1999) and namely, the view that salvation comes through the government of messianic Prime Minister. An interesting

finding is that according to the identification of the political messiah with the ordinary people, he develops his messianic identification. It is either on a spiritual and more religious level as Simeon II, or on a more material and economic one as Boyko Borisov.

In order to answer the second sub question (How has it developed in Bulgaria?) the fate of the political messiahs is traced. The phenomenon is seen as a self-sustaining process which is following main phases such as: recognition of a messiah, public disappointment and finally, political apathy and search for a new saviour. Both Prime Ministers are similar in their fate as political messiahs. The difference is that the present one is still managing and is going through each phase slighter and slower. This raises the question if he will follow the same fate as Simeon II or he will establish a real right-wing centralist party (Mirchev, n.d.) Further investigation on this question will be interesting.

The answer to the last sub question (How can its occurrence be interpreted?) is provided through an explanation of the phenomenon. For that purpose, the conditions which encourage the appearance of political messianism are examined. According to theories about the relation between the stable democratic life and populism, I apply quantitative example for Bulgaria while comparing it with two West European countries. To find further evidence about the existence of such relation, quantitative data about distribution of votes is collected and analyzed. This analysis confirms that the poorer someone is, the more likely is for him/her to vote for a political messiah. Thus, populism seems to be typical in post-communist state like Bulgaria which is experiencing political, economic and social transformation and where there is lack of democratic conditions (such as democratic traditions, political and social trust, developed market economy). Therefore, the “political messianism” could be interpreted as a typical phenomenon of the Bulgarian transition and the main research question is answered. With these findings the thesis adds further insight to the literature about populism and especially, provides a more concrete view on the Bulgarian case.

It would be useful and interesting to investigate the topic beyond this thesis and the case of Bulgaria. It is interesting to examine if the “political messianism” is a typical variation of populism not only for the Bulgarian transition but also for other countries with similar historical background and communistic heritage. Additional cases will provide more knowledge to the already existing theories and ideas of political implications in order to fight against the phenomenon, which, as already mentioned, seems to be a symbol of an unstable or undemocratic political, economic and social life. Further, it is useful to examine the

phenomenon from more religious point of view and compare its existence according to the West European Catholicism and Protestantism and the East European Orthodoxy. Could the political messianism be more applicable to Orthodox states or not? An interesting fact I discovered in the thesis is also the strong family significance in the political life of Bulgarians, which is taken from the Russian influence. A deeper study on this topic would be useful.

It is interesting to conduct a detailed comparison between the populism in the democracies in the EU according to the new challenges and the post-communist East European members. The thesis provides evidence that the political messianism is a symptom of an undemocratic political, economic and social life which is not reconcilable with the European values. To manage with those problems as a member of the EU, Bulgaria should take the necessary action to fight against the phenomenon. Because of the hard transition and the variety of challenges, cooperation with the EU and other international organizations is helpful. As Mudde (2000) considers the economic and political transition can only succeed with extensive help from Western states and international financial organizations as also from the EU. In return for the financial and political support, East European governments have to follow a rather strict policy that leaves little space for populism (Mudde, 2000). Therefore, possible solution is the establishment of strict control towards the last wave of EU members, which are experiencing hard post-communist transition.

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Appendix

Definitions for 2010 Legatum Prosperity Index.

Inflation. Percentage year-on-year increase. Annual change in consumer price index. [World Development Indicators](#). Most data is from 2008

Employment Status. Percentage who said yes. Survey: do you currently have a job or work (either paid or unpaid)? [Gallup World Poll](#). Most data is from 2008

Satisfaction with Standard of Living. Percentage who are satisfied. Survey: Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with your standard of living, all the things you can buy and do? [Gallup World Poll](#). Most data is from 2009

Expectations of the Economy. 1=getting worse, 3=getting better. Right now, do you think that economic conditions in the city or area where you live, as a whole, are getting better or getting worse? [Gallup World Poll](#). Most data is from 2009

Government Effectiveness. Numerical rating. This variable captures the efficiency and quality of bureaucracy, level of government stability and effectiveness with respect to the implementation of policies. [World Bank Governance Indicators](#). Most data is from 2008

Government Approval . Percentage who said yes. Survey: do you have confidence in the National Government? [Gallup World Poll](#). Most data is from 2009

Efforts to Address Poverty. Percentage who said yes. Survey: In the country where you live, are you satisfied with the efforts to deal with the poor? [Gallup World Poll](#). Most data is from 2009

Economy Sub-Index Scores. Sub-Index Score. The Economy sub-index measures countries' performances in four areas that are essential to promoting prosperity: macroeconomic policies, economic satisfaction and expectations, foundation for growth, and financial sector efficiency. Own Calculations. Data is from 2010

Entrepreneurship and Opportunity Sub-Index Scores. Sub-Index Score. The Entrepreneurship & Opportunity sub-index measures countries' performances in three areas:

entrepreneurial environment, innovative activity, and access to opportunity. Own Calculations. Data is from 2010

Governance Sub-Index Scores. Sub-Index Score. The Governance sub-index measures countries' performances in three areas: effective and accountable government, fair elections and political participation, and rule of law. Own Calculations. Data is from 2010

Social Capital Sub-Index Scores. Sub-Index Score. The Social Capital sub-index measures countries' performances in two areas: social cohesion and engagement, as well as community and family networks. Own Calculations. Data is from 2010

Source: World Development Indicators, Gallup World Poll and World Bank Governance Indicators and Own Calculations of Legatum.

Distribution of votes

Distribution on the basis of 379 people, who claim to have voted for NMSS in 2001, Mai 2002

SEX ПОЛ?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1 мъж	184	48,5	48,5	48,5
2 жена	195	51,5	51,5	100,0
Total	379	100,0	100,0	

Figure 11: Sex: 1 male, 2 female

AGE_RR ВЪЗРАСТ?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1 18-24	20	5,3	5,3	5,3
2 25-34	68	17,9	17,9	23,2
3 35-49	142	37,5	37,5	60,7
4 50+	149	39,3	39,3	100,0
Total	379	100,0	100,0	

Figure 12: Age

EDU_1 ЗАВЪРШЕНО ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ? - лично

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 под основно	22	5,8	5,8	5,8
	2 основно	56	14,8	14,8	20,6
	3 ПТУ	41	10,8	10,8	31,4
	4 ср гимн	57	15,0	15,0	46,4
	5 ср техн	121	31,9	31,9	78,4
	6 полу в исше	28	7,4	7,4	85,8
	7 в исше	54	14,2	14,2	100,0
	Total	379	100,0	100,0	

Figure 13 : Education: 1 below the primary, 2 primary, 3 professional school for technical education, 4 secondary school, 5 secondary technical school, 6 college, 7 university

ZAN ВАШАТА РАБОТА?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0 неотг	6	1,6	1,6	1,6
	1 раб.-промишл.	38	10,0	10,0	11,6
	2 раб.-търговия	30	7,9	7,9	19,5
	3 занаятчия	9	2,4	2,4	21,9
	4 земеделец	6	1,6	1,6	23,5
	5 служител-д-вна админ.	11	2,9	2,9	26,4
	6 служител-фирма	11	2,9	2,9	29,3
	7 частен предприемач	2	,5	,5	29,8
	8 частен бизнес	4	1,1	1,1	30,9
	9 техн. интелигенция	5	1,3	1,3	32,2
	10 лекар	2	,5	,5	32,7
	11 учител	9	2,4	2,4	35,1
	12 преподавател	1	,3	,3	35,4
	13 адвокат	2	,5	,5	35,9
	15 икономист	8	2,1	2,1	38,0
	16 агроном	1	,3	,3	38,3
	19 худ. интелигенция	1	,3	,3	38,5
	20 управител	3	,8	,8	39,3
	21 ел. техник	12	3,2	3,2	42,5
	22 строителен техник	3	,8	,8	43,3
	23 мед. работник	5	1,3	1,3	44,6
	24 агент	1	,3	,3	44,9
	27 охранител	5	1,3	1,3	46,2
	28 шофьор	16	4,2	4,2	50,4
	30 готвач	5	1,3	1,3	51,7
	31 учащ	7	1,8	1,8	53,6
	32 пенсионер	86	22,7	22,7	76,3
	33 майчинство	3	,8	,8	77,0
	34 общ работник	5	1,3	1,3	78,4
	36 домакиня	4	1,1	1,1	79,4
	96 няма-безработен	78	20,6	20,6	100,0
	Total	379	100,0	100,0	

Figure 14: Job: 0 no answer, 1 worker in the industry, 2 worker in trade, 3 craftsman, 4 farmer, 5 worker in the public administration, 6 worker in company ... 32 retiree, 96 unemployed

Distribution on the basis of 276 people, who claim that if the elections are held today, they will vote for GERB, December 2010

NM_R Населено място?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1 София	34	12,3	12,3	12,3
5 Друг голям град	150	54,3	54,3	66,7
6 Малък град	46	16,7	16,7	83,3
7 Село	46	16,7	16,7	100,0
Total	276	100,0	100,0	

Figure 15: Place of residence: 1 Sofia, 5 Other big city, 6 Small town, 7 Village

SOCGR Социална принадлежност?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1 раб.-промишл.	61	22,1	22,1	22,1
2 раб.-търговия	61	22,1	22,1	44,2
3 земеделец	5	1,8	1,8	46,0
4 служ.-д-в на админ.	44	15,9	15,9	62,0
5 служ.-фирма	43	15,6	15,6	77,5
6 ч.предприемач с наети	12	4,3	4,3	81,9
7 частен бизнес	15	5,4	5,4	87,3
8 техн.интелигенция	6	2,2	2,2	89,5
9 ху м.интелигенция	29	10,5	10,5	100,0
Total	276	100,0	100,0	

Figure 16: Social identity: 1 worker in the industry, 2 worker in the trade, 3 farmer, 4 worker in the public administration, 5 worker in company, 6 entrepreneur with hired workers, 7 private business, 8 working in the field of technical science, 9 working in the field of humanitarian arts

EDU Завършено образование?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2 начално	5	1,8	1,8	1,8
	3 основно	15	5,4	5,4	7,2
	4 ПТУ	20	7,2	7,2	14,5
	5 средно техн	94	34,1	34,1	48,6
	6 средно гимн	51	18,5	18,5	67,0
	7 колеж	13	4,7	4,7	71,7
	8 у ниверситет	78	28,3	28,3	100,0
	Total	276	100,0	100,0	

Figure 17: Education: 2 below the primary, 3 primary, 4 professional school for technical education, 5 secondary technical school, 6 secondary school, 7 college, 8 university

AGE_R2 Възраст?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 18-24	30	10,9	10,9	10,9
	2 25-34	58	21,0	21,0	31,9
	3 35-49	102	37,0	37,0	68,8
	4 50+	86	31,2	31,2	100,0
	Total	276	100,0	100,0	

Figure 18: Age

DOH_1R Доходът месечно-личен?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	65	23,6	23,6	23,6
	1 1-240	36	13,0	13,0	36,6
	2 241-480	74	26,8	26,8	63,4
	3 481-691	56	20,3	20,3	83,7
	4 692+	45	16,3	16,3	100,0
	Total	276	100,0	100,0	

Figure 19: Personal income per month

Source: ASSA-M