IDENTITY CONFLICT IN BULGARIA: THE DYNAMICS OF NON-VIOLENCE

by

Osman Koray Ertaş
A Dissertation
Submitted to the
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in Partial Fulfillment of
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of
Doctor of Philosophy
Conflict Analysis and Resolution

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Date: _____________________________ Fall Semester 2016

George Mason University
Fairfax, VA
Identity Conflict in Bulgaria: The Dynamics of Non-Violence

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Fall Semester 2016
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my dear sons Burak, Alp, and Kagan.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank many friends and supporters who have made this happen. The biggest credit should go to my advisor, Prof. Karina Korostelina, who patiently assisted me during this long and difficult period.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Aggressive manifest conflict process......................................................... AMCP
Basic human needs.................................................................................... BHN
Bulgarian Communist Party.......................................................................... BCP
Bulgarian Socialist Party.............................................................................. BSP
Conflict Analysis and Resolution ............................................................... CAR
Council of Europe ....................................................................................... CoE
European Union .......................................................................................... EU
International Relations .............................................................................. IR
Movement for Rights and Freedoms......................................................... MRF
Non-governmental organization ................................................................. NGO
Non-Marxist Radical Thought .................................................................. NMRT
North Atlantic Treaty Organization .......................................................... NATO
Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe ............................ OSCE
Protracted social conflict............................................................................ PSC
Union of Democratic Forces ...................................................................... UDF
ABSTRACT

IDENTITY CONFLICT IN BULGARIA: THE DYNAMICS OF NON-VIOLENCE
Osman Koray Ertaş, PhD
George Mason University, 2016
Dissertation Director: Dr. Karina Korostelina

After the end of the Cold War, unlike the aggressive manifest conflict processes in former Yugoslavia, identity based conflict in neighboring Bulgaria remained latent and did not escalate into manifest forms. Despite the policies of assimilation as well as deportation campaigns against minority Turks, the Bulgarian identity conflict ended without direct violence. While neighboring Yugoslavia was torn apart by conflicts, Bulgaria remained peaceful, despite certain similarities. This relative success led many to argue the existence of a “Bulgarian ethnic model.” Despite the human suffering marked by forceful deportations and assimilation campaigns, no major war, no genocidal explosions, and no mass killings occurred. This research seeks the answers to the questions of “why did this conflict not escalate into direct violence?”
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Throughout the Cold War international relations (IR) theorists and practitioners, who had been overwhelmed by the Realpolitik paradigm, tend to see the international system in terms of internally “undifferentiated, monolithic states” (Avruch 2002, 28). The field was preoccupied by power politics and struggle among states, which are assumed to be rational actors. While states had been regarded as the main unit of analysis in international relations, the differences within the states had largely been dismissed. It is therefore not surprising that IR theorists paid little attention to different forms of communal conflicts, including the ethnic ones until 1990s (Lumsdaine 1996; Brown 1993).

The initial days of the post-Cold War era were marked by optimism and euphoria about the future of global politics. This positive mood was soon replaced by caution, if not pessimism both at the world of academia and politics. The expectation of a new world order under pax Americana did not materialize, leading to pessimism, as ethnic

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1 Like Morgenthau, the father of classical realism in IR theory, Mearsheimer (2001), one of the leading neo-realists of our age, posits that state remains the principal actor in world politics.

2 The arguments declaring an “end of history” (Fukuyama 1992) and other similar views by neo-liberal theorists as well as their optimism about the linear developmental future of the societies are challenged by scholars ranging from neo-Marxists to post-modernists, from dependency theorists to world systems theorists, such as Wallerstein (2005), Kellner (2002), and Mason (2003).

3 While, the Charter of Paris adopted by 34 European heads of state and government in 1990 was declaring the “liberation of Europe from the legacy of the past,” “opening of a new era of democracy, peace and unity in Europe,” and “dawning of a new era” in the continent, the same body of states, i.e. the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), adopted a Charter on preventing terrorism in 2002, followed by a new “Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the 21st Century” in 2003 (OSCE 2011).
conflicts erupted and concentration camps emerged in Europe and Africa (Avruch 2009, 241). The new era also witnessed a shift from the Clausewitzian type of warfare into intra-state conflicts (Kaldor 1999; Levy 2007; Ryan 2009). The increase in the number and intensity of intra-state conflicts was one of the markers of the post-Cold War era (Dwan and Holmqvist 2005; Hewitt, Wilkenfeld, and Gurr 2010; Holsti 1996). Rapid globalization and increase in communication technologies brought these “new” conflicts to the attention of many in various parts of the world. Hence, by mid-1990s the focus shifted towards internal conflicts (Brown 1993).

Among these intra-state conflicts, the war in former Yugoslavia, in particular, frustrated the international community (Zagar 2009). The reemergence of concentration camps in Europe gave rise to an increased interest in the Balkans among European and North American academics and policy makers.

Fortunately, not all interstate conflicts in the Balkans erupted into genocidal violence. Unlike the aggressive manifest conflict processes (AMCP) (Sandole 1998; 1999; 2002b; 2007) in former Yugoslavia, identity based conflicts in Bulgaria remained latent and did not escalate into manifest forms.

In the Bulgarian case, despite the policies of assimilation as well as deportation campaigns against minority Turks, the identity conflict ended without direct violence and “negative peace” (Galtung 1996) had been achieved through a much less violent process. While neighboring Yugoslavia was torn apart by conflicts, Bulgaria remained peaceful, “despite similar religious divides, severe economic hardships, and massive social and political changes that followed the arrival of democracy and free markets” (Ghodsee
This relative success led many to argue the existence of a “Bulgarian ethnic model,” which has become a commonly referred term by the Bulgarian political elite as a success story (Rechel 2007).

That said, the conflict in Bulgaria, like many other intra-state conflicts, is a complicated one with complex underlying causes and fractured relationships. Despite the dramatic positive changes which occurred after 1990, it is still difficult to talk about the existence of a positive peace in the Galtungian sense (Galtung 1996) or the achievement of a “genuine resolution” in the sense that Avruch (Avruch 2002, 26) put forth.

During my four year stay in Bulgaria as a diplomat, I had the opportunity to observe everyday interactions and intergroup relationships between majority Bulgarians and minority Turks and Muslims. Then, as a PhD candidate, I am exposed to philosophical and theoretical visions and explanations of conflicts on various levels. With this dissertation, I will analyze factors that impeded the violent eruption of the identity conflict in Bulgaria.

Chapter 2 presents an overview of the existing literature on the causes of conflict and non-violence. It also explains the research question. In order to have a comprehensive mapping of the existing literature on causes of conflicts, I analyzed the factors by dividing them into individual, structural, political, economic, cultural, and social identity related ones. All conflicts at all levels have one or more causes that will be explained here. As for the literature on non-violence, in addition to particular theories, I

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4 “Bulgarian ethnic model” has been promoted as a “valuable export commodity” by the former U.S. President George W. Bush, who argued that “Bulgaria’s ability to form interethnic coalitions makes it not only a model, but also a world leader in the peaceful solution of ethnic and religious problems” (FocusNews Agency, 17 October 2005 in Kavalski 2007, 26).
focused on the theories of collective action, aggression, and globalization. However, there might be intrinsic, local, or micro-cultural factors in various parts of the world where direct violence does not occur despite the existence of certain causes of conflicts. Therefore, additional research focusing on different cases is necessary to have a comprehensive list of factors that impedes direct non-violence.

This research’s contribution to the literature will thus be twofold. First, the dissertation will focus on a relatively less studied domain of the CAR field: Instead of focusing on the causes of a conflict, it will research the causes of non-violence. Second, although there are studies on Bulgarian ethnic relations and conflict by scholars from other branches of social sciences, CAR scholars have paid very little, if any, attention to the Bulgarian case. A study on the Bulgarian issue has the potential to contribute to CAR literature by addressing a missing piece through a fertile case. The research will also contribute to the literature on Bulgarian identity conflict, as there is hardly any academic study on the subject matter that utilizes the multi-disciplinary approach that the field of CAR proposes. It will also have contributions in the Bulgarian context, as it will inform politicians and scholars about the strengths and weaknesses of the Bulgarian ethnic model. Therefore, the research has the potential to contribute to the general literature on identity based intra-state conflicts, as well as to the literature on the Bulgarian case.

In Chapter 3, after a review of the literature on Bulgaria, the conflict is analyzed with the help of different theories used in the Conflict Analysis and Resolution (CAR) field. Here, I will shed light on the underlying complex root causes and relationships in the Bulgarian case with a multilevel analysis framework. Later, again using a multi-level
analysis framework, the study will build a theoretical model and offer theory driven preliminary answers to the research question. The preceding chapters, i.e., the literature review and theoretical analysis of the case, will inform the propositions. The analysis in this research will concentrate on three levels: elite, domestic/societal, and international. I argue that the absence of direct violence is a result of complex interplay of factors that were present at all these levels. Chapter 4 provides a summary of the methodology and research design. This chapter explains how the theory informed propositions were tested in the field. It outlines the rationale behind the case study approach, the main theoretical foundation (symbolic interactionism), sampling (purposive sampling), data collection (semi-standardized expert interviews and archival work), and data analysis (thematic analysis) strategies. Ethical and logistical issues regarding the research - such as issues of reliability, validity, and the protection of informants are also reviewed here. Chapter 5 provides the results of the research and research-based answers to the initial question.

Overview of Demographics and History

To start the journey, a short account of demographic facts is given below, followed by an overview of the historical background of the conflict.

The minorities in Bulgaria comprise mainly Turks, Pomaks, and Roma. According to 2011 census results, 8% of the population is Turkish, 4.4% is Roma (CIA 2013).

Pomaks live in the southern rural part of the country, mostly along the border regions with neighboring Greece. Since 1934, the number of Pomaks is not officially recorded in Bulgarian censuses. Estimates on the number of Pomaks vary. Crampton
argues there is a population of around 200,000 (Crampton 2007, 439) and Hammarberg recalls estimates between 160,000 to 240,000 (Hammarberg 2010, 28). The 2001 census recorded “131,531 persons of Bulgarian ethnicity practicing Islam,” which corresponds to 2% of the total population (Trankova 2012c, 35).

While the distinguishing characteristic of Pomaks is their ascription to Islamic faith, the ethnicity of this group is a matter of discussion, a clear example of how the issue of identity is so contentious and has a lot to do with political agendas. While to Bulgarians, Pomaks are “Bulgarian Mohammedans forcefully converted into Islam during the Ottoman rule,”⁵ they are “Pomak Turks” for the Turks, “Helleno-Pomaks” for the Greeks, and “Muslim Macedonians” for the Macedonians (Konstantinov 1993; Trankova 2012c). There are even those who argue that Pomaks are descendants of Arabs (Ghodsee 2010). This controversy apparently creates a serious identity problem for this unique group (ibid).

There is also a large Roma minority in Bulgaria. According to 2001 census, the number of Roma is 370,305, however Roma NGOs argue that about a million Roma live in Bulgaria (ECRI 2009, 80). Some of the Roma people identify themselves as either Turkish or Bulgarian depending on their religious affiliation, due to “decades of negative approaches and pressure” (Georgieff and Trankova 2012, 52).⁶ According to the estimates based on the 1965 census, 22% of Roma were Turkish speaking Muslims

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⁵ In his ethnographic study, supported by the Imperial Russian Academy of Sciences, Stoyu Shishkov attempted to “prove the Bulgarian-ness of this partially Turkified and Islamicized group (Neuburger 1997, 4).

⁶ Apparently, because of negative stereotyping of Roma, some Roma minority members decline the “negative individual identity,” to join a “better” group, to satisfy their “esteem needs” a phenomenon described by Tajfel (Tajfel 1978 in Korostelina 2007, 135).
According to 2001 census, 47% of Roma identify themselves as Christian, while 18% say that they are Muslim (Babali 2013, 243). As in many parts of Central and Eastern Europe, the Roma minority face serious problems of discrimination and “structural violence” (Galtung 1969; 1996), which would be a subject of a separate study. Indeed, Roma “face discrimination in all spheres of life in Bulgaria, including employment, education, housing and access to public goods and services… and surveys have shown a significant degree of anti-Roma prejudice” (Rechel 2007, 1206).7

The Turks are mostly located at the southeastern and northeastern parts of Bulgaria alongside the border with Turkey and Greece, mostly in rural areas. (See Figure 1, below; a map of Bulgaria and the surrounding countries.) There are regions where minority Turks are the majority population (McIntosh et al. 1995). The majority of Turks earn their living from either tobacco farming or working in the manufacturing sector (Vassilev 2002).

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7 For the current issues facing the Roma minority see: 2012 Human Rights Report by the U.S. State Department (U.S. Department of State 2012), Report by Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, following his visit to Bulgaria from 3 to 5 November 2009 (Hammarberg 2010), European Commission against Racism and Intolerance 2009 report (ECRI 2009).
In this paper, the term “Turkish-Muslim minority” is used to describe Turks, Pomaks, and the portion of Roma minority of Islamic faith. In his extensive study on the minorities in Bulgaria, Dayioglu (2005, 17) uses the term “Muslim-Turkish minority” as, he argues, the Muslim minority does not only comprise ethnic Turks, but also Muslim Roma and Pomaks, and as Islam plays the role of a common denominator among these three different ethnicities. He also adds that in Bulgaria, as in all Balkans, being Turkish and Muslim are often used interchangeably for different groups on different occasions,
and it is difficult to differentiate between minorities, who define themselves with different identities depending on external circumstances.

The relations between Bulgarians and Turks go back to the 14th century when the Bulgarian Kingdom was taken over by the Ottoman Empire. From the 1360s onward, Ottoman Turks began to take control of most of Bulgaria and in 1396 with the Battle of Nicopolis, they took over the entire Bulgarian Kingdom (Crampton 2005; Hupchick 2001). The Ottoman rule lasted for five centuries and the seeds of the conflict had been sown during these 500 years, a short account of which will be given in Chapter 3.

The 18th century marks the start of Bulgarian “national revival process” against the Ottoman rule. The century was dominated by uprisings, which were suppressed harshly. The events triggered by the latest and the strongest uprising in April 1876 resulted in the quasi independence of Bulgaria with the intervention by Russia. Following the 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish War, Bulgaria became fully independent in 1908.

From 1878 to 1944, until communism’s arrival in Bulgaria, the rights of the Turkish minority were generally observed (Sabev 2012, 16; Ozlem 2013; Zhelyazkova 2001). Bulgaria fell under communism following World War II. During the communist rule, the policy towards minorities changed depending on “the evolution of the views on the nature of the Bulgarian socialist state” (Lozanova et al. 2007, 28). However, during the communist period, despite occasional periods of relief, the Turkish-Muslim minority suffered a “slow process of cultural assimilation” (McIntosh et al. 1995, 942), which resulted in migration waves of minority Muslims from Bulgaria to Turkey (Trankova 2012b).
In the second half of 1950s, the Communist Party leadership changed its policy of communist solidarity of peoples regardless of their ethnic or religious affinity and adopted a policy to create an ethnically homogenous socialist nation. The change in the doctrine resulted in the curtailment of various minority rights, recognition of different identities, and name change campaigns against Pomaks in 1960s and 70s (Sabev 2012; Trankova 2012b; Crampton 2007, 436–37; Zhelyazkova 2001, 62–63).

The assimilation campaign reached its peak in early 1985, when minority members were forced to change their Turkish-Islamic names with Slavic ones. With this policy, the communist regime targeted one of the strongest markers of the Turkish-Muslim identity. In her extensive study on Bulgarian nation-building, Neuburger (2004) devotes a full chapter on the name change campaign, which, she argues, is central to understanding the Bulgarian – Muslim encounter. As she puts, in the Balkans, names are the major marker of difference between the self and the other, as there is no racial-color difference. Naming in Bulgaria is “the mode through which identities were performed, negotiated, and continue to be refashioned” (Neuburger 2004, 168). Therefore, they became major markers of the identity.

The last communist government under the leadership of Todor Zhivkov named this inhumane process as “vuzroditelskiat protses”, which is translated into English as a "regeneration" (Vassilev 2002), “rebirth” (Riis 2002; Neuburger 1997), “revival” (Kavalski 2007), or “regenerative” (Crampton 2007) process. As will be explained in the coming chapter, the communist regime tried to brand this inhumane process with a positive connotation. To Zhivkov, those who think that they belong to a different ethnic
group were actually Bulgarians who were forcefully converted in the past. Due to this “outright attempt to assimilate the Turkish and Muslim minorities within the larger Bulgarian population” (Vassilev 2002, 105), over 300,000 minority members left Bulgaria for Turkey in the second half of the 1980s (McIntosh et al. 1995; Riis 2002; Kavalski 2007), following Zhivkov’s notorious televised speech calling for “Bulgarians with Turkish self-consciousness” to leave for Turkey if they wish to do so (Trankova 2012b, 159). The campaign also turned violent after 1984 when police on separate incidents fired at Turkish protestors (Dayıoğlu 2005; Petkova 2002; Lütem 2000).

In late 1989, the Bulgarian communist leader Zhivkov was removed from office by public protests. This enabled Bulgaria to step into the 1990s as a young democracy. The end of the totalitarian regime and the advent of democracy also meant the end of the assimilation campaign and a new positive era for minorities.

Prominent leaders of the minority founded their own political party, Movement for Rights and Freedom (MRF) in 1990 under the leadership of Ahmed Dogan, who had remained in prison from 1986-89 for his struggle against Zhivkov’s assimilation campaign (Neuburger 1997). For the last two decades, MRF has become a key actor in Bulgarian politics, becoming the third strongest party in Bulgaria, and occasionally participating in the Bulgarian governments as a junior coalition partner.

Against this brief historical background, one can summarize the Bulgarian–Turkish conflict by using the different stages of a “simple conflict life cycle” (Ramsbotham, Miall, and Woodhouse 2005, 11). Following the Ottoman control over Bulgaria in the 14th century, latent forms of conflict were witnessed between the
Bulgarians and the new privileged subjects of the Empire, the Muslims. With privileges granted to Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire, Turkish-Muslim immigration to Bulgaria, and conversions from Christianity to Islam, the conflict had escalated, polarization had occurred, and the conflict became manifest. Parallel to the rise of nationalism in Europe and nationalist independence movements against the Ottoman rule in the Balkans, the conflict reached its violent stage in 18th century. With the Turkish-Russian War of 1877-78, the conflict cycle reached its peak. The war ended with agreements (San Stefano and Berlin Treaty), achieving a temporary “negative peace.” The conflict re-escalated into a violent form in the second half of the 20th century, reaching its peak during the so called “regeneration process.” From 1990 onwards, with the fall of Communism and Bulgaria’s transition to democracy, the conflict has de-escalated. Measures for normalization and reconciliation to achieve “positive peace” (elimination of root causes of the conflict; while “negative peace” simply refers to lack of direct violence and hostilities. See: Galtung 1969) have been introduced.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

As explained above, there was human suffering marked by forceful deportations, assimilation campaigns, and incarcerations in the Bulgarian case, but no major war, no genocidal explosions, and no mass killings. My research answers the important question of “Why did the conflict not escalate into direct violence?” It looks into the factors that deterred an aggressive manifest conflict. In this formulation, lack of direct violence is the dependent variable. I looked into the factors that impeded a violent eruption of the conflict.

King, Keohane, and Verba (1994) point out two criteria for a good research question: the question should be important for the real world issues, and it should make a specific contribution to the existing literature.

I believe that this research question is significant on both counts. First of all, intra-state ethnic conflicts are on the rise after the Cold War, causing tremendous human suffering. Understanding the dynamics that led to war as well as those that prevented a direct violence are important for real world issues. Second, the Balkans have been a strategic region throughout the world history. It has unfortunately been a stage for ethnic conflict and violence. Not only was the World War I sparked by an incident in Sarajevo, but also the last genocide in Europe occurred in this region. Despite the positive dynamics of the EU and NATO integration processes, the underlying causes of ethnic and
religious conflicts in the region have not been eliminated. Hence, it is difficult to argue the case for the existence of a Galtungian “positive peace”.

Third, given that many conflict-plagued nations in the world have ethnically mixed populations, understanding majority – minority relations and factors that affect direct violence are of fundamental importance not only for the Balkans, but also globally. Understanding the dynamics of ethnic tolerance - which is a vital factor in transformation of a latent conflict turning into a violent one - is important not only from the CAR perspective, but also for the general realm of politics and the social sciences.

This research is also expected to make a contribution to both the literature in the field of CAR by focusing on causes of non-violence, and the literature on the Bulgarian identity conflict. Below is a review of the available literature on the causes of ethnic conflict, non-violence, and the Bulgarian identity conflict, followed by a section on the contribution this research makes to both literatures.

2.1. Literature on the Causes of Ethnic Conflict

The existing literature outlines various factors as causes of ethnic conflicts. To draw the list of causes, scholars made a distinction between root causes and proximate causes (triggers or catalytic factors) (Brown 2001; Evera 2001), between personal / human nature related sources and situational / structural sources (Rubenstein 2008), between real / concrete sources (Coser 1956) and sources based on perceptions (Pruitt and Kim 2004), or between psychoanalytic and human needs approaches (Rubenstein 2008).
There are other approaches which analyze theories about sources of conflict as internal (sources of conflict are within the nature of parties – e.g. ethnological or anthropological theories), relational (sources are in relations between parties – e.g. theories in behavioral sociology or social psychology), and contextual (sources are outside, in the structures – e.g. Marxist or neo-realist theories) (Ramsbotham, Miall, and Woodhouse 2005, 79). Finally, some scholars adopt a systemic multi-level approach to analyze causes of conflicts at individual, societal, international, and global / ecological levels (Sandole 2007).

While Lewis Coser (1956) presents a realistic view of conflict, Pruitt and Kim (2004) talk about conflicts based on perceptions and beliefs, rather than on concrete issues. As Avruch (1998, 24–25) explains, the first approach sees conflict as a struggle over values and introduces scarcity, where values or material goods (status, power, resources) are assumed to be scarce. In this understanding of conflict, opponents are assumed to aim to neutralize, injure, or eliminate their rivals.

The second approach, on the other hand, underlines the importance of perceptions and divergence of interests, and does not see scarcity as a given fact. They characterize conflict by perceived divergence of interests or a belief that the parties’ aspirations are incompatible.

These two main approaches represent a philosophy based on realism and a materialistic view in the former approach, and a philosophy based on constructivism in the latter. The two approaches result in two different ways or attempts to conflict management and conflict resolution. If one takes the first materialistic, zero-sum view as
a departure point, the parties try to eliminate each other as there is scarcity of the resource that causes conflict. Therefore, conflicts might be managed, yet could never be resolved. According to the second approach, on the other hand, there are many conflicts, which are not realistic but which are essentially about beliefs and perceptions. Therefore, integrative solutions and win-win results are within reach.

The common thread of these two approaches is that they are both free of any notions of levels. In other words, the two approaches focus on conflicts generically at all levels (i.e. international, inter-personal, community, etc).

In fact, the dynamic evolution of most conflicts will force us to take into account both of these two approaches. Conflict is a dynamic process and issues may change as it evolves. Therefore, as Mitchell (1989, 46) argues any static analysis, which ignores change, is incomplete and misleading. Indeed, conflict might be triggered by concrete economic issues, however as it evolves and escalates new issues and factors are introduced. Therefore, a specific conflict that might start because of an economic factor could eventually become an intractable one involving socio-psychological factors. Pruitt and Kim’s (2004) structural change model provides a useful account of how, as conflict escalates, groups may develop hostile attitudes (psychological changes) and parties may enlarge while communities become polarized (structural changes).

Analyzing conflicts requires a holistic approach. Favoring one approach and excluding others might result in missing important interrelated aspects of a given conflict. With this in mind, the causes of conflicts will be analyzed under five categories: structural, economic, political, cultural, and identity related causes. However, there are
theories that do not entirely fit into one of these categories. For instance, relative deprivation theory (Gurr 1970) is related to both economic and identity related sources of conflict. Basic human needs (BHN) (Burton 1990a; 1990b) and frustration-aggression theories (Dollard et al. 1939) also provide useful explanations under different categories. Therefore, there will be repeated references to these theories under the different sets of causes below.

2.1.1. Individualist vs. Structural Arguments

Theorists have different views about whether conflicts have individual or situational causes, which essentially form the basis of nature vs. nurture discussions. While to individualists, aggressiveness is a basic instinct for humans (Lorenz 1966), other theories, such as frustration-aggression (Dollard et al. 1939), psychoanalytic (Freud 1957), and human needs (Burton 1990b; Burton 1990a; Maslow 1987) theories underline the centrality of situation and structure in producing destructive conflicts.

Rational choice (Neumann and Morgenstern 2007; Rapoport 1974) theory is based on individual decision-making. The commonly used prisoner’s dilemma model demonstrates that individual rational behavior (which is to defect from a cooperative solution) results in a worst outcome for both parties. This is the conundrum of not only the rational choice theory, but also any social theory based on rational behavior at the individual level. If one departs from this assumption, what is good for the individual can be disastrous for the entire system. Concern for self first can result in a failed system. The major concept of “Tragedy of Commons” introduced by Garrett Hardin (1968) became the symbol of this rather pessimistic proposition.
One major weakness of the rational choice theories and game models based on rational actor presumptions is that it ignores the social context, including the culture. An action, which might seem rational at a particular context, might not occur in other contexts. In the prisoner’s dilemma game, if the actors are, say, two brothers, the expected results might well be different. Therefore, understanding the social realities solely through mathematical formulas or any model, including the verbal ones, might not explain the whole picture.

Some theories of aggression, to which scholars like Freud ascribe to, underline the centrality of human’s nature and see aggression as a basic instinct (Lorenz 1966). According to this narrow and limited view of conflict, man is aggressive by nature; therefore a Leviathan is required to manage the society.

Hermann places the individual (the leaders) as her main unit of analysis in analyzing conflict, where she makes distinctions between the typologies of the leaders and their effects on the conflict outcome (Hermann 1995). Accordingly, leaders can be classified as strategists, advocates, and cue-takers, and advocates are more likely to lead conflict situations.

In his multilateral framework for violent conflict, Sandole specifies 8 potential independent variables at the decision-making level that affect the likelihood of conflict (Sandole 1999), including dogmatism, authoritarianism, political cynicism, personal cynicism, political efficacy, as well as leaders oriented towards achievement, affiliation, or power. He tries to underline the relationship between leaders having different tenets and the conflict outcome. Hence, the more dogmatic the leader is, the more likelihood of
an external / foreign conflict. Similarly, he argues, if there is a diminished political
efficacy, this leads first to political cynicism and then to personal cynicism, which then
leads to the incidence of aggressive behavior.

As a matter of fact, while most theories in the social sciences focus on the
structure and outside factors, psychologists mostly focus on the individual as the main
unit of analysis (Druckman 2008). For individualists, what matters is the person, leaders,
enemy figures, and personality, whilst for structuralists it is outer factors like context,
culture, situation, and social psychology that are the underlying causes of the outcome.
Rubenstein (2008) outlines three social sources of destructive conflict, all of which are
related to social change and globalization: socioeconomic transformation which generates
class conflicts, political transformation which generates identity conflicts, and cultural
transformation which generates worldview conflicts.

Galtung identifies structural violence (1969; 1996) and rank disequilibrium
(1964) as causes of conflicts. Accordingly, when groups (notably minorities) are denied
access to institutions and fulfillment of their needs, structural violence occurs this then
leads to conflict under certain conditions. While making a distinction between direct and
structural violence, Galtung argues that individuals might be subjected to violence even
without the use of force, when existing structures deny their basic needs, repress them
from fulfilling aspirations, depriving them from reaching their potential. Therefore,
structural violence can occur due to existing political/ideological, economic, and social
structures that limit equal access to resources and institutions. Later, Galtung coined the
term “cultural violence” (1990) to describe the use of cultural dynamics, such as language, religion, symbols, and science to justify the two other forms of violence.

The theory favors the dominance of structures over agency. The Galtungian approach to conflict forces us to look at the deep underlying structures that feed conflicting processes. His seminal distinction between negative and positive peace is also valuable in having a long-term structural and cooperative approach to conflict resolution.

Arguments of schools of political realism and other major paradigms including political idealism, Marxism, and Non-Marxist Radical Thought (NMRT) also help us in understanding conflict reality (Sandole 1999, 111–12). Realistic IR theories flagged by Morgenthau (1973) reflect the pessimism of WWII era, which had witnessed the failure of Wilsonian principles and institutions like the League of Nations. In fact, Realpolitik has been a strong paradigm long before Morgenthau. The famous statement attributed to the Athenians during their war with the Melians still resonates strongly: “The strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must” (Thucydides 1951, in Sandole 2007, 331). Morgenthau’s vision of the world is based on the assumption that human beings are essentially flawed. However, when we talk about societies, we assume that there is some kind of Leviathan, be it in the form of morality (i.e., religion), law, or kinship. When we step up from the societal level to the international level, morality disappears. There is no overwhelming moral structure, hence no Leviathan.

The IR work of Morgenthau in the 1940s was an endeavor to study the state. He saw no moral balance, where power matters. Therefore, the realist school argues that anarchical society requires power for states to protect their national interests (Morgenthau
Overall, realism has a gloomy view of IR (Mearsheimer 2001, 17–22) and realpolitik’s view of the world is a “bleak” one preaching competitive, power-based, confrontational, zero-sum based processes (Sandole 1999, 111).

Idealpolitik, which emerged as a response to realpolitik, is against the assumption of “human nature problem” and preaches cooperative conflict handling mechanisms and structural change. Liberal IR theorists believe that cooperation is possible through monitoring mechanisms, normative international institutions, increased information flow, and learning (Beriker 2009, 257). To achieve national goals, the realist IR school offers power-centered tools, whilst a liberal paradigm preaches cooperation (Beriker 2009).

There are three main theories of liberalism (Mearsheimer 2001, 16–17): The first argues that economic interdependence reduces the likelihood of war among states. The second theory, i.e. democratic peace theory, argues that democracies do not fight with each other. The third theory underlines the importance of international institutions in preventing wars.

Marxism is similar with realpolitik in its pessimistic view of the world, but different as it does not see human agency as a fixed reality, but dependant on the overarching structures and environment. It resembles idealism in its quest for structural change and encourages revolution for bringing change in the ownership of means of production. Finally, NMRT also puts emphasis on structural change like idealism and seeks structural change through competitive processes (Sandole 1999, 111–12).
Many ethnic conflicts have underlying structural causes, including state weakness, ethnic geography, ethnic demography, and transnational affinities. When states are weak, the governments cannot cater the needs of the people that in turn creates conditions for people to look for alternative ways, including rebellion, to alleviate their suffering. Weak state is one of the four key factors of Edward Azar’s theory of Protracted Social Conflict (PSC), which is further discussed in Chapter 3. Azar (1986; 1991; 1990), together with Burton (Azar and Burton 1986) introduced the concept of PSC. By this, he meant prolonged and often violent struggle by communal groups for such basic needs as security, recognition, acceptance, fair access to political institutions, and economic participation.

Weak states create conditions for conflicts since they are unable to establish law and order. When “domestic conflict crosses the Rubicon and becomes a violent struggle for control of the state” the role of law and order as well as security sectors become vital (Ramsbotham, Miall, and Woodhouse 2005, 102).

The weak state also creates a political opportunity in the sense that Tarrow (2008) put forth for those who want to rebel to reach their objectives. In addition, since weak states do not have the ability to address the needs of the people through proper structures and institutions, they tend to perceive every demand of the people - be it political, economic, or cultural - as a threat to their existence. This perception often results in the
use of coercive tactics against people, which in turn creates permissive conditions for conflict.  

Ethnic geography and demography related factors constitute another set of causes of conflicts at the structural level. First, countries with minorities are more prone to conflicts (Evera 2001; Posen 1993). Second, if minorities inhabit along the border regions, the likelihood of conflict is greater (Evera 2001).

Third, intermingling, proximity, and contact also increase the likelihood of conflict and hostility, rather than alleviating it (Evera 2001; Brewer 2000, Brown 2000, LeVine and Campbell 1972, Sherif 1966, Taylor and Moghaddam 1994 in Korostelina 2007, 139). Esses et.al (1998) also underlines the negative impact of proximity and contact over intergroup hostility especially during competition over scarce resources. In addition, the more intermingled the demographic lineup, the greater the ethnic security dilemma that fuels violence (Kaufmann 2001).

The nature of the borders is the fourth factor. If the borders are not easily defensible and do not follow ethnic lines, the risk of war is higher (Evera 2001). Fifth, transnational affinity is another important structural factor. Existence of a strong kin state

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8 The Bulgarian communist regime was certainly weak in that sense, especially during the 1980s when the entire communist world were witnessing a steep decline while the western world was on the rise. Meanwhile, communist leader Todor Zhivkov felt isolated as his relations with Gorbachev’s Moscow became strained (Crampton 2007, 382–88; Lütem 2000, 1:492–93). The economy was also ailing (Crampton 2007, 370–75; Lütem 2000, 1:124). This power decline made him extremely sensitive to foreign and domestic “threats.” NATO member Turkey and the large Turkish minority in the country constituted sources of major threat perception. Therefore, it was not surprising that the minority’s identity and security needs were met by coercive tactics by the ailing regime.

9 Turkish-Muslim minority is located at the bordering regions between Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece.

10 Intermingling was present in the Bulgarian case. Although there are few homogenous towns and villages populated by the minority members, minorities generally live in ethnically mixed population centers, where contact was common.

11 In the Bulgarian case, the southern borders are neither easily defensible nor are in accordance with ethnic lines.
neighboring a country with an ethnic minority of the same ethnicity might increase the likelihood of conflict (Lake and Rothchild 1998). However, in some cases rescue factor could play an opposing role. Accordingly, if the kin state is close and can rescue the minority, this could deter abuse of that particular minority (Evera 2001).

Sixth, diasporas also play an important role in conflicts. Scholars like Collier stress the importance of handling their influence in dealing with conflicts (Ramsbotham et al. 2005).

Finally, regional spillover effects of conflicts emerge as another source of contemporary conflicts. While internal wars have external effects through refugee influx, economic disruption, and spread of terrorism, regional instability has internal effects on states through cross border movements of criminal networks, spread of arms, and movement of people and ideas (Brown 2001; Ramsbotham, Miall, and Woodhouse 2005, 99–100).

To sum up, in every conflict, both individual and structural factors could well play a role. But as Rubenstein (2008) puts forth it is important to figure out which factors are more important in a given conflict. For individualists, the person is the main unit of analysis in reading the conflict, whilst it is the situation and context for the structuralists. Some scholars argue that elite level causes are one of the most important factors in the course of conflicts (Brown 1996; Brown 2001). Indeed, elites and leaders play a critical role in mobilizing identities, triggering social movements, setting their

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12 This is the case in the Bulgarian conflict as Turkey is a large kin state neighboring nation.
13 See discussion in Druckman's article (2008) between Hermann’s individualistic approach to conflict and the approach putting situation at the center.
targets, dividing groups, and increasing mistrust among groups (Korostelina 2007, 150–51). However, every individual operates in a setting, context, situation, or structure. Focusing solely on the tenets and qualifications of the elites without the indispensible effects of the structure on them will not provide a full picture.

Moreover, having a structural view also allows us to talk about conflict resolution. While it is difficult to change fixed personal traits, it is possible, in principle, to change the outer factors. If a given conflict is because of a state denying a basic need of a minority group, a policy change could well help alleviate that conflict. If a conflict’s cause is ascribed to or read through the tyranny of a given leader, this conflict could only be managed, and not resolved. Analysis of a conflict should therefore not only look into the individual actor, but more so into the context in which this individual operates.

The following clusters of conflict causes, i.e. political, economic, cultural, and social identity and socio-psychological factors, are mostly related to the structural dynamics.

2.1.2. Political Causes

The type and nature of the political system in a country are important factors for igniting or alleviating conflicts. Azar (1990) and Horowitz (2000) cite fragile and authoritarian governance, disputed sovereignty, and exclusionist ideologies as sources of armed conflicts. Authoritarian political systems are more prone to conflicts as opposed to democratic systems, which enlarge the political space for minorities and allow their participation in the governance of the country.
The government’s legitimacy is also an important factor for conflict situations (Brown 2001; Evera 2001). The more legitimate the government, the less likely the conflict. Illegitimate governments are likely to resort to conflict prone instruments, such as using historical myths, creating fictitious enemies, and mobilizing identities to secure their grip on power.

The existence of discriminatory political institutions creates conditions for conflict (Brown 2001) and conflict occurs even in democracies when one community perceives that state power is captured by the “other” (Ramsbotham, Miall, and Woodhouse 2005, 101).

The policies and actions of political leaders, or “political entrepreneurs” (Lake and Rothchild 2001, 139), are among major causes of conflicts. A Human Rights Watch field research concludes that “governmental exploitation of communal differences” is the deciding factor in unleashing violence (Ramsbotham et al. 2005, 103). Leaders can also construct and use ethnicities for economic and political gains (Brass 1991).14

To conclude, the type of governance and the legitimacy of the leadership are important factors in various conflict situations. Legitimate governments are less likely to face societal explosions, as people will not feel being excluded from the government. Liberal democracies are less likely to experience violent social uprisings as they offer peaceful means for people to voice their demands. Illegitimate leaderships, on the other hand, are more likely to resort violence and suppressive tactics against even reasonable demands of the society, which in turn triggers a violent conflict. Finally, as democratic

14 This was basically what old communist leader Zhivkov was doing to preserve his grip on power.
peace theory (Brown, Lynn-Jones, and Miller 1996) suggests, democratic regimes do not wage wars with each other, hence a region with democracies are less prone to external conflicts.

### 2.1.3. Economic Causes

The available literature on economic causes of conflicts focuses on, inter alia, economic agendas and interests of rebel groups (Collier 2007), underdevelopment or uneven development (Paffenholz 2009; Ramsbotham et al. 2005), rapid modernization and unequal access to economic resources (Rubenstein 2008; Wallerstein 2005), and relative deprivation (Gurr 1970).

Collier (2007) introduced an economic perspective on the causes of intra-state conflicts. In his view, empirical research suggests that rather than social grievances, economic and financial issues are main causes of conflicts. He argues that violent conflicts are initiated mostly by rebel groups, which are financially able to carry out a struggle. Therefore, the “financial viability of rebel organizations” is the central factor in civil wars (Collier 2007, 197). He uses sound arguments about how rebel groups, in an effort to conduct a good PR campaign and to justify their cause might argue that their struggle is a response to oppression, discrimination, or subjugation by a corrupt regime. Therefore, he calls on observers not to reach conclusions based solely on the narratives of the rebel groups, since they might not provide an accurate picture. To him, the discourse of grievance is a tool to achieve support and create conditions for its endurance. However one chooses to label the conflict group, i.e. a criminal group, freedom fighter, terrorist, or
rebel, each of these are indeed organized groups that need a mechanism of financial support to further their causes.

The strength of Collier’s argument is derived from his empirical research, which suggests that most intra-state conflicts from 1965 to 1999 occurred in economically deprived countries that earn a substantial part of their income from commodity exports. However, there are deficiencies in Collier’s argument as well. Ignoring human grievance as a possibly fundamental cause of an intrastate conflict fails to provide a comprehensive picture. If this was true, there should not be conflicts in places like Ireland, Spain, and the UK. In each of these examples, economic factors are not occupying the central place among conflict dynamics. In fact, Collier also admits that an exclusively economic interpretation of conflict causes is insufficient, as he mentions that economic opportunities, historical experiences, ethnic and religious composition, and inequalities also affect conflicts. He also advises policies that will strengthen minority rights, democratic principles, and equal opportunity conditions. In fact, by mentioning these factors, Collier also dilutes his exclusive approach based on economic factors.

Relative deprivation is cited as a cause of conflict by political psychologist Tedd Gurr (1970). Like Collier, Gurr also holds the view that grievance rarely leads to rebellion (Ramsbotham, Miall, and Woodhouse 2005, 96). Although, the relative deprivation concept was used before Gurr by Stouffer et.al (1949) and Runciman (1966), it was Gurr who made powerful linkages between deprivation and social action.

Gurr outlines three types of deprivation, which include, decremental deprivation, where individuals are angered over the loss of what they once had; aspirational
deprivation, where value expectations are rising but value capabilities remain stable; and progressive deprivation, where value expectations and capabilities both decrease, but the latter remain stable at a certain point.

Gurr argues that the likelihood of violent conflict is greater when group members experience increasing discrepancy between their expectations and the system’s ability to satisfy them. Davies (1962) too underlines linkages between rising expectations and the likelihood of collective action. To Gurr, economic deprivation is the foremost underlying cause that leads to revolution, while he does not dismiss similar effects of deprivation related to security, communal values, participation, and status. Social comparisons between “we” and “they” are also important sources of conflicts. This particular issue will be addressed under the social identity section below.

Although rapid transformation into market economy created stability and strengthened civil society in some countries, they had the opposite effect by “removing job security from the middle and lower-middle classes in many other societies, thus aggravating social tension” (Kinnvall 2004, 743). Rogers and Ramsbotham (1999, 749) argue that “wealth – poverty disparities and limits to growth is likely to lead to a crisis of unsatisfied expectations within an increasingly informed global majority of the disempowered.” Therefore it is not surprising to see the rise of nostalgia for communist era policies in Eastern Europe that is particularly visible among the older population, which benefited from the social welfare state and now lives in dire economic conditions (Ekman and Linde 2002). As Kinvall (2004, 743) argues, going back to an imagined past
is used as a response to destabilizing effects of globalization and the lost sense of security.

In short, different theories underline the role of economic factors in triggering conflicts. However, the relationship between economic integration and conflict are subject to scholarly debate. While some theorists argue that greater economic integration and interdependence create favorable conditions for peace between and within states, others underline negative effects of globalization over internal conflicts (Paczynska 2008). Either way, economic factors might play an important, if not central, role in both internal and external conflicts.

2.1.4. Cultural Perspective

The focus on culture in analyzing conflicts was quite limited until the end of the Cold War. For realistic IR theorists, power politics and maximizing interest are the core elements in conflicts, while culture is largely dismissed. Similarly, social psychologists, human needs theorists, and rational choice theorists presumed that individuals, regardless of the context and culture, think and reason in similar ways (Avruch 2009).

The neglect of culture in conflict resolution theory and practice received criticism from Avruch and Black (1987; 1991). After the Cold War, culture based explanations of the conflict increased. Huntington (1993) introduced culture in his pessimistic “clash of civilizations” paradigm. He argues that conflict is over civilization and that civilizations are real, fundamental, and primordial. Primordial attachments such as language, ethnicity, culture, or religion are given too much weight in his arguments, highlighting a pre-modern sense of identity. Kaplan (1994) too joins Huntington in his views highlighting
the rise of primordial identities. However, he adopts a more micro-civilizational approach, arguing the eruption of conflicts over multiple factors. They both take a very deterministic view of culture.

Building upon the Geertzian understanding of culture (Geertz 1973), Avruch (1998; 2008; 2009) criticized these deterministic and primordial perceptions, and offered powerful arguments about the linkages between culture and conflict. Accordingly, culture is learned, is passed down within social groups, is constructed, and can change in time and place. Unlike Huntington, he argues that culture alone “rarely” (2008, 170) or “never” (2009, 250) causes conflict. However, culture is fundamental for conflict phenomenon, as it operates as a “lens” through which differences and conflict are perceived. This is because “culture frames the context in which conflict occurs” (Avruch 2008, 170).

To Avruch (ibid) culture is related to conflict through its relationship with social identity and social categories, like ethnic or religious groups and therefore ethnic, religious, or class conflicts are “intercultural.” (I will elaborate on social identity related issues in the following section.)

On the other hand, Evera cites cultural discrimination among the causes of conflicts (Evera 2001). When minorities are denied their right to education, use of minority language, and religious freedom, and when cultural assimilation is in place, the likelihood of conflict is greater. This premise is also related to the theories of BHN and protracted social conflict, as denial of certain cultural needs can trigger conflicts.
Meanwhile, available literature suggests that members of collectivistic cultures are more prone to discriminate against and be hostile to the outgroup (Korostelina 2007; Fukuyama 1995, Leung 1988, Triandis 1990 in Pruitt & Kim 2004; Triandis 1995, Morales, Lopes-Saez, Vega 1998 in Korostelina 2007). While group membership determines conflict readiness in collectivistic cultures, individual calculations play a stronger role for conflict readiness for individualists. This is mostly because individualists view themselves as independent actors, while collectivists view themselves as interdependent with others (Pruitt and Kim 2004, 56). While individualists prefer confronting conflict, they tend to blame the other, pay less attention to the other side’s interests, and are more likely to “exhibit an egocentric fairness bias,” collectivists prefer avoiding conflict and tend to assign themselves responsibility (ibid., 59). In addition, in collectivistic societies relationships are vertical, unlike the horizontal relations in individualistic societies (ibid.).

Although there are different views on how culture operates in various conflicts, it is certainly a fundamental factor that should be taken into account to understand conflict and how parties perceive the other and the conflict situation. It plays an important role in individual’s and societies’ attitudes, behaviors and choices (Pruitt and Kim 2004). Hence, without a proper understanding of how culture operates in a given setting, we will have an incomplete picture about conflict.

2.1.5. Social Identity Related Causes of Conflict and Socio-Psychological Arguments

Social identity related theories are increasingly used in the CAR field. Indeed the Handbook of CAR (Sandole et al. 2009) has at least six chapters that have a specific
focus on identity and conflict. Concepts like categorization (Tajfel 1982; Turner et al. 1987), boundaries and boundary formation (Tilly 2005), and prototype (Turner et al. 1987) are useful tools that are used to analyze many contemporary conflicts.

There are two main approaches to identity and conflict (Korostelina 2009). The primordial approach sees identities as given, genetic, and pre-existing phenomena. It dismisses the important role of such dynamics as context, culture, leaders, or historical experiences. The instrumentalist approach does not see identities as fixed/given structures, but affected and manipulated by economic and political interests. As Bekerman (2009, 147) argues, research suggests that prejudice seems to be learned and there is, if any, a small role for genetics.

To understand the role of identities in conflicts, Cook-Huffman (2009) offers four theoretical approaches:

- BHN and identity: Identity is among the non-negotiable and universal human needs. Therefore, conflict erupts when individual or group identities are denied or threatened. As highlighted above, Burton (1990a; 1990b) and Azar (1990) argue that if basic needs, such as security, recognition, identity, acceptance, and fair access to institutions, which are ontological and non-negotiable, are not satisfied, people act and fight to the end. From the BHN theory perspective, “the most explosive source of conflict in the modern era is the desperate need experienced by members of socially and politically disempowered groups for a recognized and defensible group identity” (Rubenstein 2008, 67).
- PSC and identity: As explained above, PSC theory argues that conflicts occur when weak political systems fail to respond to basic needs related to identity. Fisher (in Korostelina 2009, p.98) also argues that the frustration of basic needs related with identity along with a denial of human rights leads to social conflicts.

- Ethnic/communal conflict and identity: Rothbart and Korostelina (2006) explain how does collective axiology\textsuperscript{15} play a role in conflicts. Accordingly, collective axiology creates the system, which defines value commitments, the right and the wrong actions for group members. It also shapes the perception of “we” and “them.” It is through collective axiology that groups search for permanence based on the heroic events of the past. Using the genocide in Rwanda as an example, Rothbart and Cherubin (2009) explain the causality in identity based conflicts: First, high salient identity creates a Moralpolitik of difference, which creates strong myths about self and others. These myths are preserved through intergenerational storytelling. Second, axiology of differences is used to justify future violent actions through creation of an ideology and future order. Hence, logical/mythic frame is created to justify the actions for a future project. Once violence erupts, conflicts deepen, and identities are solidified, creating a “cognitive blindness” that prevents a sound inquiry about violence and human suffering.

- Social identity and social categorization theory: Social identity provides a sense of security, esteem, and protection. Social identity establishes who one is and who one is not. Therefore, individuals often tend to view each other as members of a group, rather than as individuals. According to the social identity theory, the desire for positive

\textsuperscript{15} Collective axiology is a system of value-commitments. It determines what is right and what is wrong. It also dictates the right action for the sake of “good.” (Rothbart and Korostelina 2009, 86)
intergroup distinctiveness may lead to intergroup conflict under certain conditions. After a series of experiments, Tajfel and his colleagues (Tajfel and Turner 1979) concluded that individuals, who are randomly put into two separate groups, tend to discriminate in favor of the ingroup and at the expense of outgroup. Hence what is important is not the similarity with other members of the ingroup, but just membership of a group. The mere awareness of the presence of an out-group is sufficient to provoke intergroup competitive or discriminatory responses on the part of the ingroup. Individuals in a particular ingroup, even in peaceful communities, have negative perceptions of outgroup members, associated with stereotypes and belittling the culture of others (Korostelina 2009, 99). Groups with strong collective axiology (Rothbart and Korostelina 2006) tend to view others as simplistic and homogenous groups with fixed values. This is called collective generality, which determines the way in which group members categorize and view others (Rothbart and Korostelina 2009). Therefore members of a religious cult, for instance, are likely to view others as a fixed and unified, because of their own high level of collective generality.

Various causes of conflicts are related to social identity to some extent. Socio-psychological processes such as negative feelings and emotional antagonisms, mutual fear and hostility, prejudices, perceptual distortions, over-simplification, selective recall, victimization, de-humanization, tunnel-vision, stereotyping, transfer, projection (Mitchell 1989; Volkan 1990a; Volkan 1990b; Kelman 2009), problematic group histories, outgroup threat, collective fears (Lake and Rothchild 1998; Lake and Rothchild 2001),
security dilemma (Posen 1993), and fundamental attribution error (Ross 1977) are factors that could be found among the root causes of various conflicts.

Vamik Volkan introduced psychoanalytic approaches to macro-contexts. In “Bloodlines” (1998), Volkan analyzes such modern conflicts in the Balkans, the Middle East, Cyprus, and Baltics through psychoanalytic paradigms. He argued that if wounds and traumas of an ethnic group are not dealt with and the mourning never takes place, it gets passed on from generation to generation. He calls this “transgenerational transmission,” where collective traumas are passed on collectively and are not forgotten.

History of intergroup relations is an important factor in conflicts. Evera (2001) calls the past conduct of people towards each other, whether they committed crimes against each other, the other party remembers it, and the perpetrator party acknowledged its responsibility or not as “political and environmental” factors that cause conflicts.

Kelman (2009) outlines psychological processes promoting conflict in two clusters: normative and perceptual processes. Accordingly, normative processes include formation of “collective moods,” which are strong public perceptions based on historical traumas and are available for manipulation by leaders; mobilization of group loyalties, which is used by leaders to garner support and increase ingroup solidarity; restrictions on decision-making processes which prevent decision-makers from considering alternative solutions and force them to stick to the status quo imposed by the conflict; serious limitations on negotiation and bargaining processes, which equate outgroup’s loss with an ingroup gain; structural and psychological commitments, which emerge as conflicts offer
gains and sources of profit for a small group, thus creating vested interests for some in the perpetuation of the conflict.

Perceptual processes, on the other hand, include mirror image formation and resistance to contradictory information. During protracted conflicts, parties project onto each other the same negative parallel images. Volkan (1990a) uses the psychoanalytic term “projective identification” to explain this phenomenon, which refers to the projection of attributes onto others to whom it then attributes what has been projected.

Resistance to contradictory information is a psychological process to achieve cognitive consistency during conflicts. To achieve acceptable levels of psychological stress during conflicts, individuals ignore or reject information about the events which contradict beliefs (Mitchell 1989, 79).

There are many mechanisms that are used to resist and dismiss contradictory information, such as selectivity, consistency, self-fulfilling prophecy, selective recall, over-simplification, suppression, fundamental attribution error, and tunnel vision (Kelman 2009; Mitchell 1989). Through self-fulfilling prophecy, the enemy other is seen to behave in accordance with one’s expectations. Through fundamental attribution error, while negative actions are disproportionately attributed to the enemy, positive actions are dismissed and regarded as contextual. Through selective recall, one picks up past events that fit in with the current images of a conflict. Through selectivity and tunnel vision, individuals concentrate on few issues and ignore others, which are not conforming to the existing self-images.
Behavioral psychologist John Dollard (1939) and others known as “The Yale School” introduced the best-known version of frustration – aggression arguments. In its simple form, if an individual cannot achieve the goal, there is frustration, which then leads to aggression. Dollard et.al hypothesized that frustration always lead to aggression. They argue that the difference between the desired outcome and the actual state of affairs is an important factor in the magnitude of frustration and aggression. They also posit that frustration may well be projected onto other actors, which are not actual causes of the frustration.

Frustration – aggression theory received criticism for predicting that individuals will give the same response to frustrations in all cultures, under all circumstances (Dugan 1994). Gurr (1970) also tried to explain aggression on the communal level based on Dollard et.al’s theory. Building upon the frustration – aggression theory (Dollard et al. 1939), Gurr (1970) argues that social comparisons create frustrations, which then lead to aggression and violence. BHN theory is also related to frustration – aggression as well as relative deprivation theories. Accordingly, if individuals’ needs are not met by the governments, this creates frustration, which triggers aggression. Similarly, if basic needs of the individuals are violated, they experience a relative deprivation, which triggers conflict. Korostelina (2007, p.133) argues “the perception of possible loss or expectations of decreasing status” can also cause relative deprivation.

Korosetlina’s (2007, 2009) 4C model provides a useful instrument to analyze the dynamics of the identity conflicts and the relationship between identity and interests. The
4C model offers the stages of comparison, competition, confrontation, and counteraction to explain the evolution of identity based conflicts:

During the comparison stage, individuals compare their groups with outgroups for various reasons, including need for distinction, and positive/favorable social comparisons. And making relative assessment between self and other leads to relative deprivation. During the competition stage, different groups compete for shared resources or power. During the competition stage, identity salience and negative images attributed to the other increase.

In the confrontation stage, social identity is used as a tool to increase ingroup loyalty and enhance negative outgroup images, and to justify the struggle against a “lofty” cause. It is the stage when politics become heavily involved in conflicts and leaders employ chosen glories and traumas to mobilize masses. To Kelman (2009), mobilization of group loyalties, which is used by leaders to garner support and increase ingroup solidarity, is a normative psychological process promoting conflict. When there is lack of legitimacy, elites use the ethnic card. As the conflict intensifies, the civic nature of nationalism transforms into ethnic nationalism (Brown 2001).

Counteraction is the final stage in conflicts involving social identity issues. At this stage, conflicts transform from realistic competition over material interests into intractable ones where identity, traumas, and socio-psychological processes are involved in the process. The primary issue in the conflict is no longer getting control of a material good, but destroying the enemy other, which constitutes a direct threat to the ingroup and deserves to be punished.
To conclude, identity group conflicts, where concepts like, inter alia, stereotyping, transferring, projecting, scapegoating, and dehumanizing are at play, are recognized to be the most difficult ones (Black 2008). Therefore, tools offered by social identity related theories are widely used to analyze conflicts of various kinds in the CAR field. As Korostelina (2007, 2009) argues, social identities do not necessarily lead to conflicts. They do not arise as a result of conflicts, either. However, conflicts have the impact of transforming identities, increasing their salience, mobilizing groups, and thickening the borders among the groups. And once identity is involved in interest-based or instrumental conflict, the conflict tends to become protracted.

2.2. Literature on the Causes of Non-violence

The existing literature largely focuses on the causes of conflicts, whereas research on the causes of non-violence is limited. As Nordstrom (1998) argues, there is a widespread tendency in popular culture to focus on war and violence, and not on peace. Indeed, as she highlights, while we speak of many “wars,” we do not talk about “peaces.”

One logical inference about the factors that prevent violence would be to argue that if the above-mentioned factors that cause conflicts are not present in a given case, violence is less likely to occur. For instance, if the existence of minorities in states is a potential source of conflicts, we could then argue that countries with homogenous populations are less prone to violent ethnic conflicts. Therefore, demographic
homogeneity is a factor that decreases the risk of ethnic conflict. Similar inferences could be made for all of the factors that are argued to be the sources of conflicts.  

Tilly (1978) and Horowitz (1985) argue that the smaller the size of domestic ethnic groups, the higher the possibility of conflict (in Korostelina 2007, p.136). Therefore, one can argue that if the size of a minority in a given country is large, the possibility for a violent ethnic conflict is smaller. Others cite the existence of unity of purpose, encompassing national targets, as well as a shared non-controversial history as factors that affect the likelihood of a violent conflict (Evera 2001). Therefore, unity of purpose among, and existence of encompassing national targets for, different identity groups are expected to decrease the likelihood of conflict in heterogeneous societies. Similarly, the less controversial the past conduct of groups towards each other is, the less likelihood of current conflicts.

The available literature offers relatively fewer insights about concrete factors that prevent violent eruption of conflicts. Van Evera (2001) lists four attributes of a given nationalism. If these attributes are benign, she argues, the nationalism poses little danger of war. Accordingly, if the particular group attained statehood, the kin state does not pursue an annexationist strategy vis-à-vis the national diaspora, the particular nation does not follow hegemonistic goals towards other nations, and the state does not oppress minorities, the situation is less prone to a violent conflict.

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16 I will use this strategy of looking at the possible causes of conflict at every level and try to find whether the muted presence or complete non-existence of certain factors played a role in preventing a violent eruption of the Bulgarian conflict.
Mueller (2001) argues that sound and sensible policies by the government as well as a strong and sensible police force are essential to provide order, to prevent “thugs” and spoilers from dominating the conflict. He even argues that “because of sound political policies, ethnic violence has been avoided in Bulgaria and Romania even though these countries are hardly more developed than Serbia or Bosnia” (Mueller 2001, 124).

Bandura offers social learning theory as an explanation to aggression (Bandura 1973). Accordingly, if individuals or groups observe that other groups are achieving their goals through contentious tactics, they will also tend to use such tactics because of the process of “learned aggression” or “learned violence.” Therefore, aggression is not inherent, and while some societies are less prone to resort to aggression, others are more prone due to their past experiences. Given Dugan’s (2004) division of theories about aggression into 3 schools – i.e. aggression as a basic instinct, aggression as a reaction to a stimulus, and aggression as a learned behavior – the “determinism” of Freud is “partially challenged” by Dollard and his colleagues, and “refuted” by the social learning theory of Bandura (Ramsbotham, Miall, and Woodhouse 2005, 304).

Some theories of social movement and collective action also provide explanations about the factors behind non-violence. Sydney Tarrow (2008), for instance, argues that social contention is mostly related to political constraints and political opportunities. Political opportunities are resources that allow people to “escape their compliance.” Therefore, a weakness at the governmental level or a disagreement among power holders is an opportunity that could allow a social movement to unfold. Political constraints, on
the other hand, are factors that discourage people from resorting to contentious actions against the powerful rulers.

Dennis Chong (1991) also argues that repression and effective mass counter-mobilization discourages collective action. Both Tarrow and Chong approach social movement theory through the rational actor perspective. Hence, individuals make calculations about the usefulness of the collective action. If they do not see chances to win, despite their grievances, they refrain from risking their lives by collectively revolting against the state.

Neo-liberal theories on globalization as well as democratic peace theory (Brown, Lynn-Jones, and Miller 1996) might also offer additional thoughts on causes of non-violence. According to democratic peace theory, democracies do not fight with each other, hence “a world containing only democratic states would be world without war” (Mearsheimer 2001, 16). Arguments by Fukuyama (1992) and Modelski - Thompson (1999) are examples of the neo-liberal assumptions about globalization and the direction that things move forward. To Fukuyama (1992), liberal democracy will win over all other ideologies as the best available model of governance. Modelski and Thompson (1999), mirroring Fukuyama’s optimism, also argue that democracy will spread, as it is an effective problem-solving instrument. Just like Fukuyama, they view the supremacy of market economy as the best instrument to address economic problems.

There is also a strong critique of this linear developmental model foreseen by the optimistic and deterministic assumptions of the neo-liberals (see: Kellner 2002; Schmid
1968; Wallerstein 2005). The democratic peace proposition also received criticism as various new democracies were plagued by conflicts.

Mason (2003, 26–28) outlines the reasons why this “theoretically sound” proposition does not commensurate with the realities on the ground. Accordingly, many new democracies did not consolidate democratic principles. In some cases, such as in Peru or the Philippines, transition to democracy occurred during an ongoing conflict. In other cases, ethnic divisions presented major impediments for the expected positive outcomes of democratization. Finally, the ability of leaders in addressing economic problems played an important role in the consolidation of democracy. Moreover, as Mason (2003, 32) argues some of the factors that make civil wars less likely would also make the mobilization of opposition social movements easier. Finally, as Keen (2005) argues, market liberalization can lead to conflict, and not to democracy and peace. However, despite such weaknesses, the strengthening of democratic processes offers more opportunities for different ethnic groups to pursue their agendas without having to engage in violent methods.

2.3. Conclusion on the Causes of Conflicts

Because of the complexity of the conflict phenomenon, any analysis of its causes requires a comprehensive, interdisciplinary, and multilevel analysis. Given the foregoing section about causes of conflict and factors that lead to non-violence, I have created Table 1, below, that clusters the factors that contribute to conflict and to peace.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual factors</th>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Peace</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elites / Leaders</td>
<td>Weak, illegitimate, opportunistic, ideological driven, authoritarian, achievement-power seeking, responsive to political limitations,</td>
<td>Legitimate, democratically elected, responsible, affiliation seeking, less responsive to political constraints</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structural / Situational / Relational factors</th>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Peace</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State structure</td>
<td>Lack of political legitimacy, weak states (BHN, order), no powerful institutions, incompetent administration,</td>
<td>Legitimate government, representative regime, accountability, functioning state institutions, strong state, able to cater the needs of the people,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic structure and geography</td>
<td>Heterogeneous, size of minority small, controversial history, intermingling, stateless minority, borders don’t follow ethnic line-up, nation-dividing borders, nationalistic policy towards diasporas, less defensible and less legitimate borders, disposition of kin state, structural violence</td>
<td>Homogenous, size of minority large, less intermingling, minority having a state, political / ethnic borders similar, cultural embracing of diasporas, defensible and legitimate borders, disposition of kin state,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political factors</td>
<td>Authoritarian governance, lack of legitimacy, exclusionist ideologies, ethnic nationalism, weak institutions, countries in transition, discriminatory political institutions, minorities are oppressed,</td>
<td>Representative systems, legitimate, civic nationalism (citizenship), strong institutions, rule of law, minority rights respected, encompassing national targets, unity of purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic factors</td>
<td>Weak economy, relative deprivation, discriminating system, corrupt regimes, criminal networks (drug rings), uneven development, rapid modernization,</td>
<td>Strong economy, equal access, empowering mechanisms, equal development,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural factors</td>
<td>Cultural discrimination, collectivistic cultures,</td>
<td>Respect to multiculturalism, individualistic culture,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social identity related /</td>
<td>Problematic group histories, agonies not mourned, myths (malign history teaching)</td>
<td>Non-controversial history, grievances mourned, repentance shown, civic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are various independent variables in this table that are likely to affect any given conflict or lack of it. Certainly, in every conflict situation there are different factors at play. First of all, the table does not have an exhaustive list of possible conflict causes or triggers. These factors are not fixed either. Globalization or alliances, for instance, can contribute to both conflictual and peaceful results in different cases, under different settings. Therefore, they are both listed in peace and conflict columns. Alliances can help deter foreign conflicts, but might increase internal conflicts. In addition, the existence of various conflict factors might not trigger an actual conflict, either because of the existence of different peace factors or contextual differences. Portugal might endure economic problems but its ethnic homogeneity and democratic nature could be more effective in deterring a conflict. Indonesia might have an ethnically mixed population, but its economic success might play a role in preventing a violent eruption.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-psychological factors</th>
<th>mirroring, strong collective axiology, mutual fear, victimization, selective recall, stereotyping, projection, de-humanization, threat perception, security dilemma, collective fears, high identity salience,</th>
<th>education, civic nationalism, low identity salience,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Systemic factors</td>
<td>Difficult neighborhood, contagion effects, spread of terrorism, difficult international economy, sudden migratory changes, alliances, globalization</td>
<td>Peaceful neighbors, alliances, globalization, international institutions,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The preceding summary of the available literature on causes of conflict and those of non-violence shows that the focus has predominantly been on the former. Since the existence of different identities does not necessarily trigger violent conflicts, ethnic conflict theorists try to understand how different identities cause conflicts, and as Rothbart and Korostelina (2009, 85) argue, there is need for more research to understand how groups rely upon their collective axiology in their readiness to resort to violence.

In any case, conflict is a complex phenomenon and there are no fixed definitions of causes that are valid under every circumstance. Therefore, with the help of the existing theories on the causes, any given situation should be analyzed separately to see which factors in the particular case played a role in causing or preventing a conflict. That is actually what this research attempts to do.
CHAPTER THREE: ANALYSIS OF THE BULGARIAN IDENTITY CONFLICT

This chapter first focuses on the available literature on the Bulgarian identity conflict and then offers an analysis of the conflict, informed by conflict theory.

3.1. Literature on the Bulgarian Identity Conflict

There are very few, if any, academic studies which focus on the factors that prevented a violent eruption of the Bulgarian identity conflict. That said, there are academic works, which focus on the history of Bulgarian – Turkish relations, various studies on Ottoman history in the Balkans and in Bulgaria, as well as the current dynamics of relations between the two ethnic groups, which provide useful information in analyzing the identity conflict and preliminary answers about those factors of non-violence.

While some Bulgarian scholars regard 17th century as the “Dark Times” in the history of Bulgaria (Hupchick 1993; Riis 2002; Georgieff 2012), some Turkish historians draw a positive picture in which Turks and other Balkan nations co-exist peacefully for 500 years (Akgunduz 2005).

During the long years of communism, the academy was used by the regime as a tool, including through history writing for political objectives, to justify certain policies. Beginning from 1950, for instance, the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences was entrusted to prove the Bulgarian origins of Pomaks (Trankova 2012c, 37). In 1964, Anton Donchev
wrote “Time of Parting,” a popular novel based on the idea that Bulgarian Muslims were descendents of the Bulgarians forcibly converted by the Ottomans (Trankova 2012b, 161). The novel was later the basis of a movie in 1987. The use of academia to justify the assimilation campaigns continued in 1980s as “academics were used to justify forced name changes among the Muslims by claiming that Bulgaria’s Turks were not ethnically Turkish but, rather, descendants of ‘forcibly’ converted Ottoman-era Slavs” (Hupchick 2001, 428). Bulgarian history writing is based upon mythic narratives against Ottoman “oppression” and this has become an identity creating tool in the official “historiography” (Riis 2002). Accordingly, the official historiography portrays the Ottoman rule as dark times that literally halted Bulgarian progress and the legacy of Ottoman Turks and negative mythic history are still dominant in the formation of Bulgarian national and religious identity (ibid.).

The reality about the historical relations between the Bulgarians and the Turks and the Ottoman rule in Bulgaria seems to be in the middle of these two politically motivated edges. One of the most important foreign scholars on Bulgarian history, Richard Crampton, argues

“The vigorous but self-righteous Christians of the Victorian era created the impression that their co-religionists under Ottoman domination had suffered continual persecution for five hundred years. It was not so… It would be unwise to imagine the Ottoman empire as some form of lost, multi-cultural paradise, but on the other hand it would also be wrong to deny that at some periods in its
history the empire assured for all its subjects, irrespective of religion, stability, security and a reasonable degree of prosperity” (Crampton 2005, 29).

Another historian Dennis Hupchick also argues that the precepts of Islamic civilization and Turkic traditions offered its Christian subjects a “certain measure of religious toleration, administrative autonomy, and economic well-being that was exceptional for non-aristocratic society in the rest of Europe” (Hupchick 2001, 99). He also argues that the destabilization of the Ottoman society beginning from the 17th century as a result of Western European advancements inflicting military defeats and economic hardships on the Turks resulted in the worsening in the situation of the non-Muslims. He also posits that given the fact that the main purpose of the Ottoman system was to ensure a stable source of revenues, as long as the non-Muslim subjects paid their taxes, they were “generally free to conduct their mundane affairs as they saw fit” and “rather than suffering oppression, the Balkan non-Muslims led relatively autonomous lives” (Hupchick 2001, 143). Indeed, the millet system (Hanioglu 2008, Goodwin 1998, İhsanoglu 2001, Ortaylı 2008) of the Ottoman era created a space for Bulgarians, along with other non-Muslim subjects, to enjoy a certain degree of autonomy to protect their different identities.

However, it is a fact that the majority of the Bulgarian society regarded the “Turkish rule” as a “yoke” (osmanskoto igo) (Georgieff 2012; Sabev 2012). The complicated relationship to Muslim “others” plays a central role in the construction of Bulgarian national self and nation building in Bulgaria required defaming of and negating all belonging to “Orient within Bulgaria,” notably the Ottoman rule and the existence of
Muslim minorities in the country (Neuberger 2004). Neuburger’s (1997) earlier study, “Bulgaro-Turkish Encounters and the Re-imaging of the Bulgarian Nation” analyzes the creation of Bulgarian national identity based on historical enmities between Bulgarians and Turks. She explains how “blood metaphors” and anti-Turkishness have played an important role in the rhetoric of Bulgarian nationalism by giving examples from different periods of history, with a special focus on post-Communist period. Below under the analysis section of the conflict, the available literature on the complicated history of Bulgarian – Turkish relations will extensively be used.

Apart from the historical interplay of relations, there are studies focusing on certain tenets of Bulgarian society. While some scholars, including Vassilev (2002) and Zhelyazkova (2001), a renowned Bulgarian scholar and activist, a founding member of Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, cite the positive cultural and historical elements in Bulgarian society being central to the existing successful ethnic relations, others underline opposite tenets. In their field work focusing on the determinants of ethnic tolerance in Bulgaria and Romania, McIntosh et.al (1995) outline a number of empirically verifiable implications arguing that there is a correlation between various social background factors and tolerance. Drawing from the literature on tolerance, they articulate hypotheses about the determinants of the majority group’s tolerance for minority rights. They argue that there are various achieved or ascribed statuses, such as age, community composition (whether one lives in an ethnically mixed region), education, urbanism, and gender that help determine the level of tolerance. In addition to their direct effect on tolerance, these five statuses and social background factors also
influence perceptions of political ideology / reformism, threat perception, and democratic values ascribed by the individuals. The study argues that Bulgarians have a very low threshold of tolerance of minority rights and level of support for minority rights in Eastern Europe.

There are also opposing views about the nature of the Bulgarian identity. Given Bulgaria’s refusal to expel Jews during World War II, Reicher et.al (2006) and Zhelyazkova (2001) underline a civic nature of the Bulgarian identity. However, others, such as Brustein and King (2004) and Todorov (2001), question this proposition, which will be discussed later.

Available literature offers many possible factors that were at play in recent history – after 1990 – that are helpful in identifying factors of peace. Many Bulgarian politicians, and even former U.S. President George Bush, speak highly about the concept of Bulgarian ethnic model, as a successful model of interethnic relations in the Balkans. Some contemporary scholars (Zhelyazkova 2001, Vassilev 2002, Palchev 2002) support that notion. However, others question the validity of the positive notion of Bulgarian ethnic model. Bernd Rechel’s (2007), for instance, lists three factors that make Bulgarian political elite use this positive term: Bulgaria’s peaceful transition to democracy as opposed to Yugoslavia; political participation of Bulgarian Turks after the end of communism; “traditions of ethnic and religious tolerance” in Bulgarian society, i.e. lack of racism. Indeed, based on her field research, Zhelyazkova (2001) argues the centrality of history of successful cohabitation and “culture of religious tolerance” as strong factors behind the positive ethnic model. However, based on statements by politicians and survey
results, Rechel argues that there is considerable racism and discrimination in Bulgaria. She also argues, by citing specific examples, that there are factors like socio-economic exclusion of minorities, non-existence of positive minority rights as well as popularity of nationalist parties. Emilian Kavalski’s (2007) work also challenges the arguments of Bulgarian ethnic model by analyzing anti-Turkish and nationalist discourses of Ataka members, which is also quoted in this dissertation. He explains how anti-minority and anti-Turkish rhetoric increased in 2000s and how Ataka’s policies normalized extreme visions of minorities. Moreover, reports of international human rights organizations, including the EU, Council of Europe, U.S. State Department, and Amnesty International offer useful information on current issues at play regarding the statuses of minorities.

Studies on recent history (Crampton 2007, Dayioglu 2005, Bakalova 2006) provide valuable information on the role of political actors, notably the first democratically elected President of Bulgaria Zhelev, as well as the denunciation of past mistakes against the minority, in averting a violent conflict. Scholars disagree on the role of Ahmed Dogan and the MRF political party on the ethnic relations. While for some (Rechel 2007, Bakalova 2006, Vassilev 2002, Palchev 2002, Zhelyazkova 2001) MRF played a fundamental role in ensuring peace at critical moments after 1990, Kavalski (2007) criticizes MRF for deliberately preventing the development of Turkish minority for political purposes.

The existing literature also suggests certain dynamics on the international–systemic level. Lozanova et.al.’s (2007) study assesses the positive impact of European integration policies on the status and perception of the Turkish-Muslim minority.
Lozanova and four other researchers carried out their field study in Kurdzhali and Smolyan districts, which inhabit compact masses of Bulgarian Turks and Pomaks. The study provides useful account of, inter alia, the legacy of the Bulgarian state policy towards minorities during the 19th and 20th centuries, the impact of political and economic policy changes after the advent of democracy, and that of EU membership process. It also presents useful data on socio-economic situation and cultural mobilization of the minorities.

The available literature (Petkova 2002, Dayioglu 2005, Lütem 2000) also underlines the relationship between the status of Turkish minority and Turkish – Bulgarian bilateral relations. They provide insights how the bilateral relations between Sofia and Ankara have largely played on the minority issues in Bulgaria.

To conclude, the available literature provides useful arguments for analyzing the causes of both the conflict and the peace. The following two sections refer to them. Based on the literature, the study first analyzes the conflict sources on the relational level, issues specific level, and international - systemic level. On the relational level, the study focuses on the impact of historical experience and the socio-psychological processes. This section has an extensive focus on identity formation processes from the Ottoman era to the communist period. Then the study focuses on specific issues, mostly originating from state policies that fuel the identity conflict. Finally, it looks into systemic level factors that stand as causes of the conflict.

After the analysis of the conflict and its causes, the study offers a theoretical model for the research question with the help of literatures in both the CAR field and
about the Bulgarian issue. It first offers prepositions on elite level factors, focusing on the roles of Ahmed Dogan and MRF, as well as the first democratically elected President of Bulgaria, Zhelyu Zhelev. The study then looks into possible factors of peace at the societal level, including the lack of direct communal violence, communism’s role of a scapegoat of past wrongdoings, acknowledgement of past mistakes, creation of redress mechanisms, and the nature of Bulgarian and Turkish identities. Finally, the research focuses on international – systemic level factors, including EU integration, relations between Sofia and Ankara, and the dynamics of the Cold War.

3.2. Analyzing the Conflict through Theory

A systematic approach to any particular conflict requires looking at the causes at every level, including individual, societal, international, and global. The Bulgarian conflict will be analyzed with the help of two different theoretical models: Dugan’s nested model (Dugan 1996; 2001) and Azar’s protracted social conflict (PSC) model (Azar and Burton 1986; Azar 1986; 1990; 1991). The use of these models will be helpful in making a comprehensive, multi-level, and multi-dimensional analysis of the conflict. Theories on basic human needs (BHN), structural violence, social identity, and social psychology will be utilized to analyze the conflict at every level.

Dugan’s Nested Model theory is one of the well-known tools in the CAR field to untangle the complexity of conflicts. It allows us to have a comprehensive view of various conflicts of different kinds. The model drives us to look for the level at which the conflict sources lie. Dugan argues that in search of the sources of conflicts, we need to

look for issues-specific, relational, structural/sub-systemic, and structural/systemic levels. The model is called “nested” since sources at these separate levels interact and affect one another. Therefore, the theory, which is operationally tested by Pearson and Olson (2009), argues that a conflict, which seems to arise from a specific issue, can well have underlying causes arising from relational or larger systemic dynamics.

Dugan (1996, 12) sees conflict as an “integral part of life, necessary for growth and change.” Implicit in this perception of conflict is the understanding of using conflicts constructively to produce positive change. Since “conflicts will always have manifestations on the levels nested within” (Dugan 1996, 16), without changing the structures we cannot eliminate the manifestations of structural conflict on relational and issue-specific levels. Similarly without changing relational patterns that are nested in the larger structural levels, we cannot genuinely address the issue-specific manifestations. Therefore, to Dugan, addressing solely the issues-specific level conflicts, without looking at larger relational and structural levels, resemble “applying a Band-Aid to the cancer” (Dugan 2001, 367).

Azar’s PSC Model also provides a valuable tool for a comprehensive, multi-level analysis of various protracted conflicts. In the 1970s, Azar directed his focus on the conflict dynamics within states, while the then dominant trend in IR field was focusing on interstate and larger systemic dynamics.

Indeed, Azar, unlike his contemporaries, argued that in understanding conflict dynamics the focus should be on the identity group as the unit of analysis, rather than the state (Cook-Huffman 2009, 21). This made him a visionary scholar, who, unlike his
contemporary colleagues, adopted a comprehensive approach to conflict decades ago and is hailed as one of the strongest theorists by Ramsbotham et.al (2005).

There are four variables in Azar’s definition of PSCs (Cook-Huffman 2009): The first variable is the communal groups, or identity groups as we call today, such as ethnic, religious, or racial groups. By communal groups, Azar meant groups whose ties were affected emotionally with common history.

The second variable in Azar’s theory has to do with basic human needs (Burton 1990a; 1990b). Azar, who came to the field of CAR outside the IR field, met with Burton and they developed the theory together. Azar had a systemic-structural theory of conflict. He focused on governance issues, such as security, recognition, and access. These were all related to states. Azar was talking about state dysfunction, when states fail to deliver the political good to the people. However, he was not making it clear why failure to carry political goods by the state did not result in violence and PSCs in certain cases. Burton introduced BHN at this point. The two reached the conclusion that people act when states fail to satisfy their non-negotiable BHN. To Azar, when “identity groups” are denied “physical and economic security, political participation, and recognition from other groups, their distinctive identity is lost, they will do whatever is in their power to regain it,” which causes the PSC (Azar 1991, p. 95).

Burton was not a political scientist. He was a practitioner – a former diplomat. With his BHN theory, Burton provided the missing link in explaining why issues of state dysfunction evolve into PSCs. While developing the BHN theory, Burton was influenced by Maslow’s ideas about hierarchy of needs.
For Burton, the unit of analysis is the individual and the identity group of the individual, rather than the states and institutions. Refusing the theories based on inherent human aggression, Burton argues that although humans are not aggressive, they have universal and non-negotiable needs which need to be fulfilled (Cook-Huffman 2009, 20). He defines these ontological needs as transcending race, class, culture, and gender (Sandole-Staroste 2009, 233). As Kelman (2007) articulates, the ethnic conflict is typically driven by non-fulfillment or threats to the fulfillment of basic needs.

Although the basic human needs theory receives criticism for different reasons, Burton’s work is revolutionary as he calls us to do archeology and to find out the violated human needs that are lying deep in the roots of the conflict.

The third variable in Azar’s theory has to do with the structure of states. This was also related to governance. Hence weak states, quasi states, states controlled by a small ethnic minority, and those controlled by a majority suppressing the minority are all possible causes of PSCs.

Finally, Azar introduced international linkages in his theory. It was Azar who introduced the phenomenon of “conflict within states” into IR. Things that happen within the system later destabilize other states through international linkages. When these linkages spread, the conflict attracts the attention of great powers.

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18 The assumption of the existence of BHN universally for everyone, everywhere received criticism from those, who argue that there are no fixed universal needs and these can vary depending on the cultural differences (Avruch 2002). Also, the issue of hierarchy among the needs, their nature (static or dynamic), and their applicability in different cultures are also subject to discussion. Finally, the theory receives criticism for dismissing the gender dimension. Sandole-Staroste (2009, 233–35) criticizes Burton’s understanding of human needs, which might be reflecting a masculine understanding. Indeed, as she argues, need for security, for instance, might be different for women, men, girls, and boys. Despite these weaknesses, BHN theory has various advocates in the CAR field and could be useful in understanding dynamics of various conflicts.
I argue that the identity conflict in Bulgaria has sources and driving dynamics present at all the different levels put forth by both Azar and Dugan. I interweave the two models to explain the Bulgarian conflict at three different levels: relational / communal level, issues-specific / BHN level, and systemic / international level.

Before moving into discussion, however, I would like to stress that some issues are multilevel by nature and for such issues there are not clear-cut borders among these different levels. In fact, these layers are not static, but interact dynamically and we should recognize the plasticity that exists between different levels. For instance, a chosen trauma, that is “the collective memory of a calamity that befell a group’s ancestors” (Volkan 1998, 48), at the communal level could be the result of the state sponsored violence like cleansing, deportation, or constructed famine. Therefore, the impact of a given practice at a certain level may have ramifications at another level. Therefore, I would mention, say “economic hardships” experienced by the minority, as a cause at the issue-specific level. That said, this phenomenon has its roots also at the sub-systemic and systemic levels as local and national governments have an important role in this particular outcome.

3.2.1. Relational Level (Dugan) / Communal Content (Azar)

The sources of the identity conflict in Bulgaria are abundant at the relational / communal level, where bitter historical interaction between the parties has led to the emergence of certain socio-psychological processes. The theories that will be used to analyze the conflict at this level include those related to social identity and social psychology.
“The political, economic, and cultural penetration of Islam into Bulgaria created both contacts and conflicts that would last for centuries” (Sabev 2012, 15) and the five-century long Ottoman rule over Bulgaria led to the formation of a strong Bulgarian national identity against the “occupiers” and their representatives, i.e. Muslim Turks.

Through a policy of settlement, the Ottomans brought Turkish populations from Anatolia to Bulgarian lands (Sabev 2012). In the meantime, local Christians were converted into Islam either by force or through social and economic incentives for their conversion (Riis 2002; MacDermott 1962; Sabev 2012; Crampton 2007), just as was done in Bosnia (Malcolm 2009). With the appearance of these new groups, which represent “a hated religious and political foreign domination” (Riis 2002, p.5), a new “outgroup” emerged for the Bulgarians. From the point of Tajfel’s social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979; Tajfel 1982) there were more than enough factors to make the Bulgarians and Muslim Turks as distinct “out-groups” for each other, including ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural differences. There were more than enough differences and incentives for the creation of a “we and they” mentality.

The Ottoman Empire was a “multireligious, multilingual, and multicultural conglomerate,” where “identity was corporate rather than individual” based on religious affiliation (Volkan 1998, 119). The administrative policy was based on the “millet” (nation) system, in which subjects of the Empire were classified based on their faith (Crampton 2005; 2007; Hanioğlu 2008; Hupchick 2001; Popov 2012). Under this system, Muslims were regarded as the “dominant one by virtue of the Islamic ideology of the state” (Hanioğlu 2008, 25) and enjoyed a privileged legal and social status (Crampton
2005). This led to new social categorizations (Turner et al. 1987) and social boundaries\(^{19}\) (Tilly 2005) between the Bulgarians and Muslims. A cultural modus vivendi, based on “ultimate Muslim superiority over but tolerance of other religions” was achieved (Crampton 2007, 7–8).

As “complete social equality was conditioned on being Muslim” (Riis 2002, p.93) and “subject Christians were reduced to second-class status” in the society (Hupchick 2001, 99), the privileged status of the Turkish-Muslims created an ample ground for intergroup comparison (Korostelina 2007; 2009)\(^{20}\) on the part of the Bulgarians.

Korostelina (ibid) lists asymmetrical status, history of an intergroup conflict, and existence of social minorities among factors that cause negative comparisons between the groups. These factors were obviously present in the Bulgarian case. The comparison done by the Bulgarians was visible on two accounts: between the past and present standing of the Bulgarians as well as between the present status of Bulgarians and that of the Muslims.

This difference between past and present statuses also caused a relative deprivation (Gurr 1970) for the Bulgarians. Their deprivation from their previous superior place in comparison to the second-class position in the society during the Ottoman rule caused collective anger over the loss of status. Indeed, one of the most prominent figures of the Bulgarian national revival in the 18th century, Paisii

\(^{19}\) Tilly describes a boundary as a “social space that establishes group cohesion, solidarity, and a sense of uniqueness. The elements of social boundary include distinctive social relations on either side of an intermediate zone, distinctive relations across this zone, and shared representations of the zone itself” (Rothbart and Korostelina 2009, 87).

\(^{20}\) Korostelina’s 4C model offers four stages (comparison, competition, confrontation, and counteraction) that occur during the evolution of identity conflicts. The model will be explained in Chapter 3, under subheading “Social identity related causes of conflicts.”
Hilendarski, in Crampton’s (Crampton 2005, 46) words, “seems to have become almost obsessed with the contrast between the present low standing of Bulgarian culture and its glorious past.”

Reading the Same Thing Through Opposing Angles and Myths

It is also noteworthy to see how parties in the Bulgarian conflict regard the Ottoman rule in Bulgaria almost from diametrically opposed angles. As Mitchell (1989) and Volkan (1990b) state, in conflicts, parties perceive and interpret the same external “reality” differently. This is quite visible in the Bulgarian case. For instance, Bulgaria honors its national day on March 3, the date when Bulgaria became quasi-independent from the Ottoman Empire. However, the Russo-Turkish war, leading to March 3, is called as “Great Defeat” (Koca Bozgun) by the Turks (Aganoglu 2001, 35). In a sense, a chosen glory for one party, stands as a chosen trauma (Volkan 1998) for the other.

From a CAR perspective, what is more important than the historical facts - if such facts do exist - is the way in which the parties perceive their shared history. After all, perceptions and myths play central roles in various communal conflicts (Volkan 1998). In that regard, a considerable portion of the Bulgarian society viewed the “Turkish rule” as a “yoke” (osmanskoto igo) and as a bitter period of history, during which Muslim Turks tried to subjugate Christian Bulgarians and forcefully converted part of the Bulgarian population into Islam (Georgieff 2012; Sabev 2012).

Bitter experiences and myths led to the emergence of strong “historical hurts” and grievances (Volkan 1990b). Todorova (2005, 152) argues that the Balkan nations have a “special propensity for myths, which according to the German historian Holm...
Sundhaussen, include the ‘golden’ pre-Ottoman period, the myth of the ‘Turkish yoke,’ the myth of the pure and organic nation, the myth of national rebirth, the Kosovo-myth, the haiduk-myth, and the victimization myth.”

*Bulgarian Identity Building Based on Grievances and Traumas*
Mack (Mack 1983) argues that historical experience of common hurts and wounds appears to be of central importance in creating a sense of national identity for people. Similarly, Korostelina (Korostelina 2009, 100) states that if the history of a community contains wars, violence, or conflicts, the identities of the groups are more likely to be salient, collective, and mobilized. Thus, one can argue that the negative perception of the long Ottoman rule and the increased cycles conflict following the 18th century have played a central role in the formation of Bulgarian national identity. Riis (2002), for instance, underlines how the depiction of the Ottoman period in the official Bulgarian *historiography* has become an identity-creating tool. Neuberger (1997), too, explains how Bulgarian nationalism is built on anti-Turkish sentiments.

The eighteenth century marks the beginning of Bulgarian “national revival process” against the Ottoman rule, dominated by uprisings against the state. Being among the pioneers of the national revival, Paisii Hilendarski, a monk who lived at the Hilendar monastery at Athos, wrote the seminal work on the Bulgarian history in 1762, in which he recalled the lost and great days of the mediaeval Bulgarian state and church (Crampton 2005, 46). In addition to creating a written form of a myth about the great Bulgarian heritage, Hilendarski also warned fellow Bulgarians about the dangers of hellenization and Greek influence. According to Ottoman historian Hanioglu, Hilendarski, who is
regarded in modern Bulgaria as the man envisioning the modern Bulgarian nation-state, can hardly be recognized as such during his time, and he was later turned into a heroic popular leader by nationalist reconstructions (Hanioğlu 2008, 26).

Paiisi’s efforts could be seen as an effort to create narratives about a distinct Bulgarian identity and as a primitive form of identity-building endeavor. He argued that “of all the Slav peoples the most glorious were the Bulgarians; they were the first who called themselves tsars, the first to have a patriarch, the first to adopt the Christian faith, and they it was who conquered the largest amount of territory. Thus, of all the Slav peoples, they were the strongest and the most honored, and the first Slav saints cast their radiance from amongst the Bulgarian people and through the Bulgarian language” (Crampton 2005, 46).

In a sense, Paisii attempted to strengthen the separate Bulgarian identity by drawing borders between Greeks and Bulgarians, by creating mythic narratives on the superiority of the Bulgarian identity. With his efforts, Paisii tried to erect a “canvass tent” (Volkan 1998) of a separate Bulgarian identity, in which Bulgarians feel secure, proud, and happy.

The advent of nationalism with the French Revolution of 1789 ignited the national independence movements against the Ottomans in the Balkans. Ethnic group awareness was almost absent in the daily lives of most Ottoman Balkan subjects until the end of 18th century and “one can speak of Albanians, Bosnians, Bulgarians, Macedonians,

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21 It is striking to see the similarity between the language used by Hilendarksi and by ultra-nationalist leader of Ataka after three centuries. In a public statement, Siderov said “The Bulgarian people have proved that they are true descendants of their forefathers, who have created the first nation-state, the oldest culture in Europe, and have subsequently civilized most parts of Europe” (Kavalski 2007, 28).
Montenegrins, Romanians, Serbs, and most Greeks in terms of regional habitation rather than ethnicity” (Hupchick 2001, 144) and there was “little or no evidence” for non-Muslim zimmi populations’ “developing any mature ethnonational awareness beyond millet identity by the opening of the 19th century” (Hupchick 2001, 211). Until 1860s, there was no concerted political action or armed riots against the Ottoman rule (Crampton 2005, 75). In 1860 onwards however, Bulgarian activists started concerted action, following the Serbian armed resistance against the Ottomans. Thus, the century witnessed what Korostelina (2007; 2009) called the “competition” phase of the identity conflict. The competition in this case was over control of territory and power.

Ivan Rakovski, a Bulgarian activist who participated in the Serbian resistance, was the pioneer of the Bulgarian political action (Crampton 2005, 75; Crampton 2007, 85–87). He was followed by historical Bulgarian figures such as Luben Karavelov, Vasil Levski, and Hristo Botev. “Virulent anti-Turkishness” dominated 19th century Bulgarian national cultural efforts, as illustrated by the seminal work of “the father of Bulgarian literature” Ivan Vazov with his famous novel Pod Igoto (Under the Yoke) (Neuburger 1997, 3).

Vasil Levski, captured and executed in Sofia by the Ottomans in 1873, has a special place among these figures. His ideas, his bitter end, and myths about him made Levski an icon and a group prototype (Turner et al. 1987) for Bulgarian national identity. The prototype in this case was an “aggressive” one, who fought against and was executed by the enemy. Hence, the role of the prototype in the Bulgarian case is not a civic constructive figure, but rather a hero, who struggled by force until the end. The execution
of Levski, who then became “Bulgaria’s most revered nationalist martyr” (Crampton 2007, 90), is one of the most traumatic episodes of the Bulgarian history. As a prototype, Levski’s life and writings are extensively taught in Bulgarian schools. His memory is honored with annual commemorations, his name was given to schools, libraries, main streets, and public buildings, and he has fan pages on Facebook. Just as the legacy of King Lazar is still kept alive in Serbia after some seven centuries (Volkan 1998), the legacy of Levski is also kept vivid in today’s Bulgaria.

The demise of Levski and events of the April uprising are also vivid in today’s nationalist rhetoric. It is noteworthy that the Bulgarian communists also used Levski as an important historical figure to motivate the public. In a sense, these events are “lifted above the tide of history” (Rothbart and Cherubin 2009, 59) through intergenerational story-telling. One can also argue that the existence of the Turkish-Muslim minority in today’s Bulgaria, as remnants of the “old enemy ruler,” is perceived as a continuous threat to Bulgarian national identity, which keeps Levski as a living icon.

In April 1876, uprisings had begun in some Bulgarian towns against the Ottoman rule. The uprisings were “put down with a heavy hand” (Hanioğlu 2008, 111) mostly by Ottoman irregular detachments, many of whose members were local Muslims (Crampton 2005, 80). The event sparked a strong reaction in the British and Russian media and

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22 The following words attributed to Levski were carved in huge letters on the monument outside the National Cultural Centre (NDK) erected as a signature building in Sofia in the 1980s: “If I succeed, I shall succeed for the whole nation; if I fail then I alone shall die” (Crampton 2005, 78).
23 Todor Zhivkov, for instance, in one of his historic speech calling for serious reforms quoted Levski’s words, “Either we live up to our times, or they will destroy us” (Crampton 2007, 381).
24 Since The Day of Vasil Levski witnesses a surge of nationalist rhetoric in the country, the Bulgarian Parliament adopted on February 19, 2014, a declaration on national unity, calling on citizens and political leaders not to allow any use of the Day for partisan and other purposes (Novinite 2014c).
public, publicized by the then opposition Liberal Party Leader Gladstone’s report of “The Bulgarian Horrors,” which is used against the Disraeli government that was supportive of the Ottoman government (Hupchick 2001, 263–64).

The suppression of the April Uprising constituted a chosen trauma for the Bulgarians. The forceful suppression of a struggle for Bulgarian independence by “converted Bulgarians,” i.e. Pomaks (Trankova 2012c, 36), left a deep mark on the Bulgarian identity, with strong feelings of anger, betrayal, and injustice. In the words of Crampton, the events had irreversibly changed the existence of Ottomans and of Bulgarian national consciousness (Crampton 2005, 81).

The Ottoman control over Bulgaria ended with the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78. Defeated by the Russian forces, the Ottomans agreed to sign the Treaty of San Stefano (March 3, 1878), which created an autonomous Bulgarian principality with large territories including Thrace and Macedonia - stretching from the Danube to the Aegean coast (Crampton 2005; Hupchick 2001). San Stefano is so important for the Bulgarian conscience, as the day of the agreement, that March 3 is still celebrated as the National Day of the country.

However, out of fear of an immense Russian influence in the region, Britain and Austria-Hungary stepped in. With their intervention, the Treaty of Berlin replaced the San Stefano agreement (Crampton 2007; Hanioğlu 2008; Hupchick 2001; Akgündüz and

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25 18th and 19th centuries witnessed a long struggle between the Ottomans and Russians, who would like to reach warm waters through the Turkish Straits. From 1700 to 1860, Russia and Turkey fought seven wars that involved battles on Bulgarian soil (Chary 2011, 26).

26 19th century witnessed a struggle between Russia, who tried to control Slavic nations in the Balkans, and Britain and Austria-Hungary, who tried to resist this Pan-Slav endeavor, while Ottoman Turkey gradually lost its might and influence in the region (Lütem 2000, 1:17).
Öztürk 2011), as a result of which Bulgaria lost a bulk of the territory that it gained earlier. With this change, Bulgarians experienced a relative deprivation, since the Bulgarian territory envisaged by the Treaty of Berlin was 37.5% of the size of that foreseen by San Stefano. “For every Bulgarian the real Bulgaria remained that of San Stefano,” which created “a burning sense of injustice” (Crampton 2005, 83). Lozanova et al. (2007, 27) argued that the “belated and unfinished restoration, from the viewpoint of the national ideal, of the Bulgarian state within its ‘historical’ boundaries incorporating all territories inhabited by Bulgarians, left a grave imprint on the domestic and foreign state policy in the late 19th and the first half of the 20th century.” Figure 2 reflects the changes in Bulgaria after the San Stefano and Berlin treaties.
End of Ottoman Rule and Change of Majority – Minority Roles

As discussed earlier, the defeat of the Ottomans was perceived as a glory by the Bulgarians but a trauma by the Turks and Muslims. While the end of the Ottoman rule over Bulgaria marked a new beginning for ethnic Bulgarians, it represented the start of a difficult period for the Turkish-Muslim minority. Interestingly, the process was reversed, while the Turkish-Muslim population gradually became a minority\(^\text{27}\) and were subjected

\(^{27}\) The Russian – Turkish war of 1877-1878 resulted in the flee of large numbers Turks and Muslims from Bulgaria and the Balkans (Eminov 1999; 2000; Sabev 2012).
to structural violence. This created a sense of relative deprivation on the Turkish-Muslim side, as no longer were they the privileged subjects of the past.

In 1908 Bulgaria declared its full independence, and following World War II it fell under communism. During most of the Communist period, Turks and Muslims had unequal access to such resources as justice, employment, and education (Lütem 2000, 1:71–84). Ethnic Turks faced a “stringent assimilation campaign” and restrictions were imposed on education, language, and religious rights (McIntosh et al. 1995, 942–43). In the second half of the 20th century, though, assimilation of minorities became visible.

Beginning from the 1950s, the Communist regime tried to separate the “Bulgarian Mohammedans” from the Turks, and in 1953 some 80,000 Pomaks were forced to register as Bulgarians in the newly issued ID papers (Trankova 2012c, 37). In the late 1960s and early 1970s, long before the Turks, the Pomaks were required to adopt Slavic names, resulting in violent clashes in some instances (Trankova 2012c; Crampton 2007, 375198; Lütem 2000, 1:82–83). In 1974, 500 of the 13,000 inmates of the notorious Belene labor camp were Pomaks. They resisted pressure to change their names (Crampton 2005, 199).

**Use of Identity Politics as a Tool to Secure Grip of Power**

The 1980s witnessed the crumbling of communism in Europe. The events that were toppling the authoritarian communist regimes were also signaling an existential threat for the last communist leader, Todor Zhivkov. The developments during the final years of the Bulgarian communist regime further worsened the negative socio-psychological dynamics on the relational / communal level. During this period, the
Communist regime used bitter historical experiences and threat perceptions to garner popular support.

In an effort to secure his authoritarian rule, Zhivkov used minorities as a tool to mobilize popular support for his ailing regime by creating, if not re-inventing, a fictive enemy and threat. Turkey’s NATO membership was an opportune instrument to fuel the threat perception.

“In nationalism, Zhivkov saw the way to save the regime” (Kalinova and Baeva 2002, 244 in Bakalova 2006) and in an effort to “shore itself up by manipulating the Bulgarian majority's nationalist sentiments” the regime “created a polarizing conflict along ethno-religious lines by subjecting the Muslim Turkish minority in Bulgaria to a campaign of cultural and linguistic assimilation” (Vassilev 2002, 103).

Listing the possible motives behind the regeneration process, Crampton, too, argues that the process might have been seen as a “mechanism to crank up the regime’s waning support by beating the nationalist drum” (Crampton 2007, 377). Hupchick is clearer in that regard as he argues that “Zhivkov decided to intensify anti-Muslim assimilation efforts to foment the Slavic majority’s traditional anti-Turk nationalist sentiments in his favor” when his regime was on the brink of losing governing validity given the economic stagnation and decline in living standards (Hupchick 2001, 428). This period represents Korostelina’s (2007; 2009) “confrontation” phase of the identity conflict, as identity was employed by a leader in his fight for power.

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28 For problems in the economic sector see: (Crampton 2007, 370–75; Lütem 2000, 1:124).
As part of its campaign, the Zhivkov government targeted the strong markers of Turkish-Muslim identity, such as names, traditional dress, religious rituals, holidays, sites, and symbols (Ghodsee 2010; Crampton 2007; Riis 2002; Eminov 1999; 2000; Poulton 1993; Dayıoğlu 2005). The government prohibited age-old Islamic practices, such as, male circumcision, Hajj, and washing of the remains of the deceased (Crampton 2005), Ramadan fasting, collecting religious contributions (fitre) (McIntyre 1988). These were direct assaults against the “shared reservoirs” (Volkan 1998) of the Turkish-Muslim identity.

Socio-psychological Processes at Play

Korostelina (2007; 2009) underlines that during the confrontation stage of conflicts, leaders choose to use collective traumas and glories to increase the salience of identity and mobilize public support. Bitter historical experiences and threat perceptions were widely used by the Bulgarian regime to mobilize support and create certain psychological processes. These processes include, among others, negative feelings and emotional antagonisms, fear and threat, prejudices, transfer, over-simplification, selective recall, victimization, de-humanization, stereotyping, and self-fulfilling prophecy (Mitchell 1989; Volkan 1990b; 1990a; Kelman 2009).

Negative stereotyping has been visible during the five centuries of living together. While for Muslims the Christians were kafir (infidels), Christians used pejorative adjectives for Muslims, including “Ishmaelits, Saracens, and Black Arabs” (Sabev 2012, 16). Stereotyping is visible in folk songs, poems, sagas, etc on both sides.

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29 The first public circumcision ritual, which is performed like a wedding ceremony, was allowed in 1998, after 50 years of ban (Eminov 2000, 145).
During the forceful name-change campaign, applying over-simplification, Bulgarian communist leadership declared that there are “no Turks in Bulgaria” (Eminov 2000; Riis 2002; Ghodsee 2010) and Muslims in the country were actually Orthodox Bulgarians, who were forcefully converted into Islam by the Ottoman Turks (McIntyre 1988; Vassilev 2002; Riis 2002; Sabev 2012; Zhelyazkova 2001).

The communist period’s Speaker of Parliament Todorov’s speech made in Sliven in 1985 was striking in that regard. Todorov argued that the Bulgarian nation had a bitter destiny. Foreign enemies took vital parts of the country, and strategically important regions were forcefully Turkified. Young Bulgarian girls were abducted from their homes; young boys were taken to Ottoman janissary corps, hence large segments of the nation were forcefully Turkified. However there were many imprints in the daily lives, including the folklore, language, and clothes of the Bulgarian Muslims, and their solid belief that they are the grandchildren of Bulgarians (Lütem 2000, 1:297).

The propaganda used by the regime was the “main ideological justification” for the campaign, trying to portray it as “voluntary and as a ‘revival process’ to restore Bulgarian national identity obliterated under Ottoman rule” (Sabev 2012, 18). This rhetoric, which was made with references to the bitter historical experiences and myths, was part of an effort to achieve cognitive consistency through over-simplification, victimization, and dehumanization in the face of a normally inhumane practice against minorities.

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30 Former Bulgarian Ambassador to Ankara Argir Konstantinov made press statement following his visit to then Turkish Foreign Minister Mesut Yılmaz on February 19, 1985. Ambassador Konstantinov read a written statement, obviously approved by Sofia, and argued that there were no Turks, but only Muslims in Bulgaria and name change campaign was voluntary (Lütem 2000, 1:235).
Zhivkov regime’s declaration that those claiming to be minority Turks were actually ethnic Bulgarians descended from ancestors who had been forcibly converted to Islam was also an attempt to rationalize a normally unacceptable policy to achieve cognitive consistency. In Eminov’s (2000, 141) words “By changing the names of people and through other means the authorities said they were helping to restore these people to their proper roots.” Simply put, Zhivkov tried to portray his policies as a just tool to undo the errors of the past.  

When the name-change campaign triggered mass resistance in mid 1989, the Bulgarian state, after spending “a decade convincing its citizens of the ‘Bulgarian-ness’ of local Turks,” suddenly launched a massive campaign, including a television address by Zhivkov, asserting that Turks ‘...are infidel to the Bulgarian state and should leave forever’” (Neuburger 1997, 6). With his historic call, Zhivkov dehumanized the Turkish-Muslim minority to achieve cognitive consistency among majority Bulgarians.

“Transfer” was another psychological process that was at play. Since the Bulgarians could not direct their anger towards the Ottoman Turks, they directed this anger towards the Turkish-Muslim minority. Indeed, Bulgarian Muslims were regarded as the “living heritage” of the Ottoman Empire (Lozanova et al. 2007, 27), and the Muslim populations represented a “legacy from the hated Ottoman rule” (Riis 2002, 608:5).

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31 In his argument on the name-change campaign against Pomaks, Chary states “Bulgarian governments going back to 1878 had all tried to bring the Pomaks back into the nation, so the Communists efforts were not new” (Chary 2011, 147).
This tendency to associate minorities with the “dark times of the past” continued even after communism. The following lines from Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) leaning newspaper Misul in 1991 are striking in that regard:

“We believed that the cloud of our dark past would never return. But it has returned. Who can make us give up pretty little Yana to the Turkish faith? ... In our national assembly there are now people with a Turkish national consciousness who want ... to decide our fates and step by step to return our nightmarish past ... ‘Rights and Freedoms’ (MRF) sets out to trace the steps of the ancestors, Suleyman the Magnificent and Sultan Bayezid” (Neuburger 1997, 12).

More than a decade later, ultra-nationalist Ataka leader Siderov, too, claimed that “nowadays, we are being governed by the posterity of those that brutally butchered our ancestors when we were under the Ottoman yoke” (BTVnews, 19 February 2005 in Kavalski 2007, 31) apparently referring to Turkish MRF members in the government.

This perception of minorities as the living remnants of the bitter past and former enemy transformed them into an imminent threat and “negative shared reservoir” (Volkan 1998) for the Bulgarian majority, both to project negative thoughts as well as to strengthen the “we-ness” feeling by opposing to the outgroup. In a way, “Bulgarian Turks played the dual role of victim and perpetrator of Ottoman ‘historical injustices’ against the Bulgarian nation” (Neuburger 1997, 6).

Fear and threat were other socio-psychological processes often employed by the communist regime. Since, “memories of former domination of an outgroup and attribution of the desire for revival are factors that contribute to the perception of
outgroup threat” (Korostelina 2007, p.209), the threat perception from the Turkish minority has been a suitable element to be used by various leaders, including contemporary ones. For example, in 1948, the then Communist Party leader, Georgi Dimitrov, told a plenum of the Communist Party Central Committee that “Turks living near the border with Turkey were an ‘ulcer’ for national security” (Sabev 2012, 17; Trankova 2012b, 160). More than five decades later, in 2005, Petar Beron, the then Deputy Speaker of Parliament and a member of nationalist Ataka party, said “if there is no one to restrict the MRF, Dogan is going to turn Bulgaria into a vilayet (Turkish for province), in the same way as our country used to be for five-hundred years under the Ottomans” (NovaTV, 14 August 2005 in Kavalski 2007, 30).

Meanwhile, since outgroup threats increase intergroup prejudice and lead to conflict prone attitudes to outgroup members (Korostelina 2007, p.209), increased threat perception from the Turkish minority have fed negative perceptions about them. Neuberger (1997) explains how during democratic transition Bulgarian elite and “popular images of the nation” used salient categories of “European-ness vs. Asian-ness, East vs. West, civility vs. barbarity” to separate Bulgarian from Turk and define Bulgarian nation.

It should also be underlined that collective fears of the future are one of the main causes of the ethnic conflicts (Lake and Rothchild 1996). Fears of the Bulgarians include disintegration due to secession, irredentism, the rise of Islam in Bulgaria, the threat from NATO member Turkey, and at the far end, re-domination of Bulgaria by the Turks and Muslims in the face of negative demographic trends. “Apprehensions about the place of Turks on Bulgarian soil grew especially after the Turkish invasion of Cyprus and the
international spread of Islamic fundamentalism” (Neuburger 2013, 226). Indeed, Zhivkov is reported to have said that they had to “get rid of at least 200,000 Muslims, otherwise in a few years Bulgaria will become another Cyprus” (Crampton 2007, 378). During the regeneration process, the “official propaganda pointed at the Turks as the foe and problem, thus instigating fear and animosity” (Bakalova 2006, 235).

Threat perception emanating from demographic trends is also visible. In terms of population decline, Bulgaria is one of the worst countries in the world (Vassilev 2006; Lütem 2000, 1:39–40). According to the Center for Demographic Policy, Bulgaria has the most rapidly shrinking population in the world, as the population is decreasing by 8 people per day (Novinite 2013d). The year 2013 is declared to be the year that saw the lowest birth rate since the count began in 1945 (Novinite 2013c). Between 1990 and 1998, the country's birth rate declined by more than 35%, the death rate increased by 15%, and the general fertility rate decreased by 37% (Vassilev 2006). That said, the population of minorities, notably of Roma, is increasing. (See Table 2, below, summarizing the population decline.) Bulgarian authorities are worried from the current tendency that could reduce the share of Slavic Bulgarians to less than 60% of the total population by 2050. Here it should be recalled that significant demographic changes might trigger the increased threat perception from the outgroup (Korostelina 2007). In 1989, when Zhivkov met with Soviet President Gorbachev, he argued that the number of the Muslims were increasing by 15-16% annually and that in 20 years Bulgaria would resemble Cyprus, therefore he wanted to expatriate even half a million Muslims to Turkey (Petkova 2002, 48).
Although the assimilation campaign of Zhivkov had failed, one can argue that his use of identity, traumas, and threat to mobilize majority Bulgarians succeeded, since the assimilation campaign did not face a significant resistance among majority Bulgarians and even became “popular in populist circles” (Crampton 2007, 378).

Fears of the Turkish-Muslim minority are the danger of losing ethnic and religious identity and eventually assimilating in the larger majority. This particular fear is
fed by the constant decrease of Turkish-Muslim presence in Bulgaria, both in demographic numbers and religious historical sites. Indeed, before the mass exodus of 1989, there were different waves of Muslim-Turkish emigration beginning from 1878.32 Between 1945 and 1980, about 350,000 people emigrated to Turkey from Bulgaria, followed by an additional 360,000 emigrants between 1985 and 1989 (Bibina 2013). By 1900, the number of Turks had declined from about 33% in 1875 to 14% of the total population (Crampton 2005, 113). These data are summarized in Table 3, below, 

*Bulgarian Population by Ethnic Identity.*

Table 3 Bulgarian population by ethnic identity (Crampton 2007, 424)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Bulgarians</th>
<th>Turks</th>
<th>Greeks</th>
<th>Jews</th>
<th>Roma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1880/1</td>
<td>2,823,865</td>
<td>1,919,067</td>
<td>701,984</td>
<td>54,205</td>
<td>18,519</td>
<td>57,148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>3,354,375</td>
<td>2,326,250</td>
<td>73,75</td>
<td>607,331</td>
<td>19,25</td>
<td>58,326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>3,310,713</td>
<td>2,505,326</td>
<td>75,67</td>
<td>569,728</td>
<td>17,21</td>
<td>58,518</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>3,744,283</td>
<td>2,887,860</td>
<td>77,13</td>
<td>539,656</td>
<td>14,41</td>
<td>70,887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>4,035,575</td>
<td>3,205,019</td>
<td>79,42</td>
<td>497,820</td>
<td>12,34</td>
<td>69,761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>4,337,513</td>
<td>3,523,311</td>
<td>81,22</td>
<td>504,560</td>
<td>11,63</td>
<td>50,886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>4,846,971</td>
<td>4,041,276</td>
<td>83,38</td>
<td>542,904</td>
<td>11,20</td>
<td>46,759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>5,528,741</td>
<td>4,455,355</td>
<td>80,59</td>
<td>577,552</td>
<td>10,45</td>
<td>10,564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>6,077,939</td>
<td>5,274,854</td>
<td>86,79</td>
<td>618,268</td>
<td>10,17</td>
<td>9,601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>7,029,349</td>
<td>6,075,124</td>
<td>86,40</td>
<td>675,500</td>
<td>9,61</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>7,613,709</td>
<td>6,500,541</td>
<td>85,46</td>
<td>656,025</td>
<td>8,62</td>
<td>7,437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>8,227,866</td>
<td>7,231,243</td>
<td>87,89</td>
<td>780,928</td>
<td>9,49</td>
<td>8,241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>8,727,771</td>
<td>7,930,024</td>
<td>90,86</td>
<td>730,728</td>
<td>8,37</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>8,487,317</td>
<td>7,271,185</td>
<td>85,67</td>
<td>806,052</td>
<td>9,43</td>
<td>4,930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>7,928,901</td>
<td>6,653,210</td>
<td>83,94</td>
<td>746,664</td>
<td>9,42</td>
<td>3,219</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

32 For a detailed account of waves of Turkish-Muslim population movements from Bulgaria beginning from 1877, see: (Trankova 2012b; Crampton 2007, 426–33; “The Expulsion of the Turkish Minority from Bulgaria” 1951; Lütem 2000, 1:71–84)
Socio-Psychological Processes Still at Play at even after Communism

The coercive tactics used by the communist regime increased group cohesiveness (Pruitt and Kim 2004) of the Turkish-Muslim minority and allowed mobilization of minority members around a new political party, MRF, in 1990. The contentious tactics have also resulted in the increase of salience of minorities’ ethnic and religious identities.

The conflict at the relational / communal level continued, although in latent forms, even after Bulgaria’s transition to democracy, as similar socio-psychological processes are still at play. Notably negative stereotyping and prejudices continue as “the Bulgarian perception of the generic ‘Turk,’ formed by memory, education, and the media as well as oral tradition, is negative, and Turks, for their part, tend to see Bulgarians as distant or even hostile” (Ilchev and Perry 1993, 36 in Eminov 1999, 51). Neuberger (2004), for example, explains how conflicting notions of good and bad, such as East and West, Europe and Asia, or progress and backwardness, inevitably damage Muslim – non-Muslim relations in Bulgaria.

Even in modern day Bulgaria the Ottoman cultural heritage is “overwhelmingly downplayed,” and history teaching limits five-century long Ottoman rule to a “few pages” and focuses on “uprisings and revolts and their extremely bloody subjugation” (Trankova, Georgieff, and Matanov 2011, 9). History teaching and popular imaging of the negative sides of the common history continue to be a major source of problem that feed distrust between and stereotyping about Bulgarians and Turks. For instance, “replaying costume drama fights between Bulgarians / Russians and Turks is gaining increasing popularity, which is usually done around the actual dates of battles in the 1876 April Uprising or the 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish War” (Sabev 2012, 22).
I remember two separate visits in 2002 to Pleven Panorama war museum, which was built in 1977 to honor the Battle of Pleven between Russian and Ottoman forces. After five months of battle, the army largely composed of Russian and Romanian soldiers took the northern town of Pleven from the Ottoman Turks. The victory was decisive on the outcome of 1877-78 Russo-Ottoman War. While this is commemorated in Bulgaria, Turkish popular memory also fondly honors the Turkish commander, Gazi Osman Pasha, who resisted the Russian army. Paradoxically, the Turkish history writing created a hero out of a lost battle. My first visit to the museum was with a group of Turkish officials. During the tour, our guide explained the important stages of the five-month long armed struggle, the bitter personal stories of individual soldiers, the difficulties in the battlefield, and the heroic discussions between Russian and Turkish commanders. My second visit was with one of my Bulgarian friends and we joined by chance a group of primary school children. The narrative used by the guide that time was quite different, dominated by the atrocities committed by the Ottomans before the war and the victorious battle. I still remember the fear that I saw in the eyes of the young pupils while listening to the brutal stories regarding the treatment of Bulgarians by the Ottoman Turks.

Below are few examples that occurred after Bulgaria’s transition to democracy indicating the complicated relationship between Bulgarians and Turkish-Muslim minority.

The reversal policy ending the assimilation campaign provoked a popular reaction among majority Bulgarians in the early 1990s (Neuburger 1997; Rechel 2007; Bakalova 2006), where half a million Bulgarians started rallies in front of the Parliament (Bakalova
2006, 237) and “protesters played on widespread fears of Islamic fundamentalism and Turkish irredentism as well as on the negative historical memories of five centuries of Ottoman domination” (Vassilev 2002, 106). As early as February 1991, the decision to allow Turkish teaching four hours per week if there is a will from the local population sparked widespread protests in ethnically mixed regions (Crampton 2005, 217).

Some political groups and leaders, including very recently, declared open support for Zhivkov’s policies. In an interview when he was Mayor of Sofia and before becoming Prime Minister, the popular Bulgarian politician Boyko Borissov argued that “the communist assimilation campaign against the Muslim population in Bulgaria in the 1980s had [the] right goals but the methods of its implementation were incorrect” (Novinite 2008). In 2014, President Rosen Plevneliev openly criticized “unceasing attempts to create a parallel reality and myths about Todor Zhivkov being a man of the people, about the ‘good’ DS agents who did not work for the party but for the state, etc., conveniently forgetting about labor camps, prisons and the terror exercised by these same professionals over the Bulgarian people” (Novinite 2014a).

In the 2005 elections, an ultra-nationalist party, “Ataka” (meaning attack), won seats in the Bulgarian Parliament. This was the first time since 1989 that such a party joined the parliament. In the presidential elections of October 2006, Ataka leader Volen Siderov, who was a famous journalist and published several anti-Semitic books, gained 24.1% of the votes in the second round of elections (Rechel 2007) by drawing parallels between the “Ottoman oppression” in the past and the present-day unfavorable conditions

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33 Since 1991, some political organizations have openly supported “Zhivkovian visions of Turks as Islamicized Turkified Bulgarians” (Neuburger 1997, 10).
In 2014, Siderov dominated the headlines by attacking a French cultural attaché and another passenger in a domestic flight, resulting in a discussion on forfeiting his parliamentary immunity (Novinite 2014d; Novinite 2014b).

As a “xenophobic party” that won 12% of the votes in the 2009 European elections, Ataka presents Turks as a threat to the country (ECRI 2009, 91) and adopts it as the favorite cause to “bash” the Turkish minority (The Economist 2010). The party won 7.30% of the votes in May 2013 general elections, winning 23 seats in the parliament and becoming fourth largest political party in the country (Babali 2013). Like Zhivkov, Siderov used common historical hurts, grievances, and fictive threats to mobilize support for power. Referring to the participation of the MRF in the previous Bulgarian government, Siderov said “Bulgaria is once again under the Turkish Yoke! The liberation must keep going on! … Bulgaria is a mono-national, unitary state… Our only aim is to give Bulgaria back to the Bulgarians” (Kavalski 2007, 28). (The rhetoric also reminds the arguments of Horowitz (Horowitz 2000, 175–81) about the fear of extinction in the face of an exaggerated threat perception from the rival ethnic group.)

As Brown (2001, 20) argues, during conflicts, ethnic minorities are accused for country’s problems and office holders try to use minorities as a threat to solidify their positions. In the Bulgarian case, “Turks and other Muslims are used as scapegoats by Bulgarian nationalists for country’s social, economic, and political problems” (Kavalski 2007, 27) and the Ottoman Empire “has become the populists’ favorite excuse for everything that has gone wrong in Bulgaria” (Trankova, Georgieff, and Matanov 2011, 10).
This pattern is visible in Siderov’s public claim that “the abject poverty of Bulgarians is a direct result of the privileged treatment of minorities in the country… the Bulgarians are subjected daily to direct discrimination in their own Fatherland” (Kavalski 2007, 29). With such statements, the ultranationalist leader is in fact trying to use identity to blame the Others for negative things that occur. Similarly, a new political party, Nationalist Party of Bulgaria, which was established in November 2013, declared its objective as “cleansing Bulgaria from the foreign and alien immigrant scum that has been flooding the towns of Bulgaria” (Novinite 2013b).

As argued above, these statements also reflect the role of minorities as negative shared reservoirs (Volkan 1998). Such historical references stand as examples of “time collapse” (Volkan 1998). They also reflect how memories of centuries old conflict are revived to fit contemporary conditions (Horowitz 2000, 98) and how “historical ‘facts’ shape today’s material and symbolic realities that guide action” (Ashmore, Jussim, and Wilder 2001, 246). Finally, they also stand as an example to how, as Rothbart and Korostelina (2009, 86) argue, protagonists of violence regard the current malignancies as rooted in the sacred events of the past.

3.2.2. Issues-Specific Level (Dugan) / BHN and the Role of the State (Azar)
As in various inter-communal conflicts, there are specific issues that appear to be causes and driving factors in the Bulgarian case. The analysis of the problems at the issue-specific level in the Bulgarian conflict suggests that the causes of conflict at this level are mainly associated with the denial of the minorities’ basic needs. As articulated above, Azar and John Burton concluded that if BHN, such as security, recognition,
identity, acceptance, and fair access to institutions, which are ontological and not negotiable, are not satisfied, people act and fight (Azar 1991; Burton 1990b; 1990a). In other words, dissatisfaction of BHN provides the motivator of the PSC.

The role of the state is also directly linked to the issues-specific level, as most issues emerge due to the failure of the state. In the Bulgarian case we witness various examples where Bulgarian governments have ignored the basic needs of the minority. Successive Bulgarian governments tried to solve the "Turkish problem" mainly by encouraging the emigration of Turks and Pomaks to Turkey and “ethnic cleansing and assimilation” were used for the neutralization of “Turkish threat” (Lozanova et al. 2007, 27–28). Even after 1990, despite dramatic changes, the Bulgarian state failed to fully satisfy the BHN of the minorities, as discrimination against minority groups continues (U.S. Department of State 2012; Amnesty International 2012; Hammarberg 2010).

The previous Bulgarian Prime Minister Borisov was quoted as saying “Anyone who is a Turk should go to Turkey” (Spiegel 2009, par.11), reminiscent of Zhivkov’s notorious call of “Turks should leave forever” (Neuburger 1997, 6). Before becoming Prime Minister, Boyko Borisov branded “Roma, Turks, and retirees as bad human material” (Telegraph 2009, para.1). Such statements made by a popular leader not only demonstrates negative stereotyping about the minorities, but also create the image of a state that regards the minority as a threat or burden, falling short of satisfying their basic needs.

The first set of issues is to do with the identity of the minority. The 1991 Bulgarian Constitution does not recognize the existence of “minorities” in Bulgaria.
Article 36 (2) of the Constitution includes “citizens whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian.” While minority members advocate for the satisfaction of their identity recognition, the issue stirs reactions among the majority. In 2006, an initiative to achieve identity recognition sparked a strong reaction in Bulgaria, when the then Vice-President Angel Marin branded the recognition of the Turkish national minority in Bulgaria as an attempt to erode the state foundations (BBC Monitoring 2006).

After Bulgaria signed the Council of Europe’s Framework Convention on Minorities in 1997, some members of the parliament applied the Constitutional Court and asked if the Convention is in conformity with the Constitution, underlining that the Constitution does not recognize national minorities. In February 1998, the Court unanimously held that the Convention conforms the Constitution (Rechel 2007, 1203).

Despite many positive developments, the minority continues to have problems regarding the mother tongue and religious education, and “positive minority rights in Bulgaria have remained more restricted than in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe and more extensive minority rights than in Bulgaria have been established by all its post-communist neighbors” (Rechel 2007, 1208). Minorities have no theater, national paper, radio or TV channel. Nor is there a single private school where teaching is in Turkish (Babali 2013, 251). The level of education among minority Turks is much lower than that among majority Bulgarians. According to sociological surveys, more than 97% of the well-educated persons are Bulgarians and only about 1.2% of university educated

34 For specific issues see: Ozlem 2013; Babali 2013; ECRI 2009; Lozanova et al. 2007
35 See for instance: (Babali 2013, 258–59)
population is of Turkish origin, which means that only 2.7% of the Turks has a university education (Lozanova et al. 2007, 48).

Nationalists oppose even limited measures taken to satisfy the needs of the minority. For instance, Ataka leaders demand scrapping of Turkish-language news bulletins on public radio and television (The Economist 2010; Framework Convention 3rd Report 2012), which are far from being satisfactory (Ozlem 2013, 199).³⁶

Furthermore, discrimination and prejudice continue to create concrete problems for the minorities. In her recent research in Pomak regions, Ghodsee (2010) explains how significant numbers of Muslim minority members hesitate to take back their original Turkish – Islamic names, as it is much easier to find work with a Bulgarian name. Referring to anti-Turkish rhetoric of current extreme nationalist parties, which uses similar language with the “revival process” propaganda, Sabev argues that “in all likelihood many years will go by before the two (Bulgarians and Turks) can live again in confidence and mutual trust in their common home, Bulgaria” (Sabev 2012, 18).

Although the forceful name-change campaign, or regeneration process, is widely condemned by contemporary Bulgarian politicians, local authorities still continue to change the Turkish names of places (Trankova 2012b).³⁷ In December 2013, Varna Municipality decided to change the Turkish names of 215 districts to Bulgarian (World Bulletin 2013). In addition, none of the culprits of the communist era policies, including Zhivkov who passed away in 1998, are indicted. As the “victims of the ‘Revival Process’

³⁶ Currently, Turkish news bulletins are aired in state TV for only 10 minutes every weekday. State radio broadcasts in Turkish language only an hour a week (Babali 2013, 253).
³⁷ According to a study, Turkish names of 2277 places, such as villages, towns, and cities, were changed into Bulgarian between 1878 and 1972 (Lütem 2000, 1:56).
have not been recognized or provided with redress”, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe called on the authorities in 2010 to “provide reparation and find speedily a solution for pending pension claims” and to recognize “the suffering of all victims of the ‘Revival Process’ without further delay by shedding full light on the period of 1984-1989” (Hammarberg 2010, Art.34). Bulgarian authorities still resist disclosure of communist era documents about persecution of civilians (Babali 2013), which is even criticized by the current Bulgarian President himself (Novinite 2014a).

Economic hardships affecting minorities constitute another set of issues. During the communist period, the economic system was discriminatory. While a small group affiliated with the Communist Party was enjoying the benefits of the economic opportunities such as buying land, the majority was not given equal access to resources and employment opportunities. The lucrative businesses and government jobs were only available to certain groups based on ideological leanings. Economic hardships increased during the 1980s, when the entire Eastern bloc was suffering from an economic downturn.

The economic issues continue to be a major problem even after the collapse of communism and Bulgaria’s membership to the EU. Bulgaria continues to be one of the poorest nations in the EU (Eurostat newsrelease 2010). According to a recent Gallup global survey where respondents are classified as “thriving”, “struggling”, and “suffering”, based on how they rate their lives, Bulgaria had the negative distinction of topping the “global suffering list” with 39% of Bulgarians rate their lives poorly (Novinite 2013e). Singling out nepotism and corruption as the most serious problems in
economy, the International Monetary Fund projects that the country will need 40 years to reach the income and living standards in the richer European countries (Novinite 2014f).

Although current economic hardships affect everyone in Bulgaria, they have an even stronger negative impact on minorities, as “the transition from the planned socialist economy to the free market affected considerably the Turkish-populated regions” (Sabev 2012, 18). Turks have higher proportions of poverty and unemployment compared to Bulgarians (ECRI 2009, 88). Speedy privatization, in particular, had a strong bearing on the local economy in minority regions, inflicting a high social price. According to a study Lozanova et al. (2007, 21), almost all municipalities in the districts of Kurdzhali and Smolian, inhabited by a large minority population, are classified as “underdeveloped mountainous areas,” characterized by low degree of transport, technical and social infrastructure development, limited possibilities for employment, high levels of unemployment, low incomes, and depopulation. It is therefore not surprising that the former Bulgarian Prime Minister Stanishev argued that “the real root of the current inter-communal tensions in the country lies in economic issues, not ethnic” (Kavalski 2007, 32).

In addition, the lack of representation in institutions such as the judiciary, armed forces, and police (Ozlem 2013, 200; Hammarberg 2010) are other sources of dissatisfaction related to fair access to institutions. According to a 2006 survey, more than 60% of ethnic Bulgarians were opposed to minorities standing for the mayor’s and other higher government positions (Rechel 2007, 1208). In 2005, public protests occurred in various Bulgarian cities against appointments of governors from MRF (Kavalski 2007,
As of 2011, the number of Turks working in the government institutions, excluding positions filled by elections, was only 277 (Babali 2013, 250).

Another problem at the issue specific level has to do with political participation of minorities. Unlike other former communist countries in Europe, which has institutionalized mechanisms for minority political participation, Bulgaria prohibited foundation of political parties on ethnic or religious lines (Eminov 1999, 36–37). Therefore, small minority parties were not allowed to participate in elections in the past and although MRF has always entered the parliament after the communist period, there were several attempts at its prohibition for its ethnic nature (Rechel 2007, 1209–10; Eminov 1999). Using Turkish language during election campaigns is still forbidden in Bulgaria. The new (and second) leader of the MRF, Lutfi Mestan, was fined about 1,000 Euros for speaking Turkish in an election rally in 2013 (Sofia Globe 2013).

Return of confiscated properties belonging to Muslim foundations (waqf) continues to be another problematic issue. Eminov (2000) explains the motive behind the confiscation of these properties by the communist governments beginning from 1950s, as Muslim identity was seen as an obstacle to the integration of Turks and waqf properties were seen as instruments in that regard. Although some of the waqf properties were returned back to the community, the problems still continue. As of the end of 2012, Office of Chief Mufti and local branches brought about 60 cases before courts regarding hundreds of buildings and large amount of land (Babali 2013, 256). In February 2014, claims of Chief Mufti’s Office over an old mosque in Karlovo town sparked violent

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38 In the Ottoman administrative system, Waqfs were tax-exempt properties and their incomes were endowments for Islamic establishments (Hupchick 2001, 139).
protests in the city of Plovdiv, where several thousand of people attacked the Dzhumaya Mosque in the city (Novinite 2014e).

Human Rights Commissioner Hammarberg’s 2010 report includes a call on the Bulgarian authorities to “enhance dialogue with the Muslim community to speedily settle property-related questions” (Hammarberg 2010, Art.3).

The dire physical conditions of Ottoman immovable cultural heritage objects are also a matter of concern for the minority. There are few studies that list the monuments, buildings, mosques, and other objects, and “most of the Ottoman heritage of Bulgaria remains almost completely unknown to the outside world” (Trankova, Georgieff, and Matanov 2011, 10). Beginning from the 1878-79 War, many Ottoman buildings, including non-religious public buildings, had been demolished, replaced, or closed (Trankova 2012a; Crampton 2007, 428–29). Therefore, many Ottoman era mosques and other buildings do not exist today. For instance, while Sofia had about 40 mosques from the Russo-Turkish war of 1878-79, only one remained today (Popov 2012, 62). The number of mosques, medresa and Turkish schools were argued to be 80 before the war and 75 of them were demolished after the war (Lütem 2000, 1:56). The restoration of these buildings hardly receives attention of the authorities (Babali 2013, 257).

Another issue-specific problem regarding religious rights has to do with the election of Muslim community leaders (mufti) (Ozlem 2010). For two decades after the advent of democracy, there has been a struggle between Nedim Gendzhev, the Grand Mufti of the communist period, and different contemporary names for the position of

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39 In 1877, a Russian soldier described Sofia as “a forest of minarets” (Crampton 2005, 111).
Grand Mufti, as well as ownership of *waqf* and Mufti properties. Despite the election of other popular figures, such as Fikri Salih and Mustafa Alish Hadzhi, Gendzhev continued to claim the position based on court verdicts. This happened despite European Court of Human Rights’ two judgments about “unwarranted interference by the authorities in the internal organization of the divided Muslim community between 1995 and 1997 under the old Denominations Act of 1949” (Hammarberg 2010, 44). The problem has finally reached a solution in 2013 following an intensive political dialogue between the government and the minority representatives, and between the Bulgarian and Turkish governments (Babali 2013, 209).

3.2.3 Sub-systemic and Systemic Level (Dugan) / International Linkages (Azar)

As Dugan specifies (1996, 15), with systemic level structural causes of conflict, we broadly refer to “inequities that occur as a result of human constructs.” Some of the problems that seem to be issue-specific actually stem from systemic level dynamics. As explained above, despite dramatic improvements in the 1990s, structural violence against minorities continues.

Structural violence at the larger systemic level has its manifestations at the sub-systemic level. There are incidents of violence involving especially Roma minorities in ethnically mixed regions (Amnesty International 2012; U.S. Department of State 2012; Hammarberg 2010). Bulgaria “has seen a surge of xenophobic sentiments recently with ultranationalist groups frequently assaulting refugees, immigrants and people from the ethnic minorities on the streets of the capital Sofia” (Novinite 2013b). In May 2011, members of Ataka party attacked Muslims observing Friday prayer in Sofia’s only
mosque, Banyabasi (Babali 2013). In two decades after the advent of democracy, there were more than 100 documented cases of direct attacks against worship places and none of the perpetrators are identified or brought to justice (Hammarberg 2010, 25). The Chief Mufti’s Office recorded attacks against mosques and religious buildings in 2012 and 2013 (Babali 2013, 258). Therefore, in its 2009 report, European Commission against Racism and Intolerance called on politicians to “combat all verbal or physical manifestations of racial and religious intolerance towards Turks” (ECRI 2009, 94). Based on Dugan’s theory, one could argue that these seemingly separate incidents actually “mirror” the conflict at the broader level.

An important factor at the systemic/international level is the relationship between Bulgaria and Turkey and its impact on majority–minority relations. For both countries, the status of Turkish-Muslim minority has been the defining factor in bilateral relations (Petkova 2002). The minority is often labeled as a “bridge” between the two countries. Although the term is mostly used with a positive connotation, the bridge could also have a spoiling effect depending on the treatment and status of the minority in Bulgaria (Babali 2013).

Beginning from the San Stefano and Berlin Treaties of 1878, the status of minorities have been included in international and bilateral agreements that Bulgaria is party to (Crampton 2007, 422, 438), a case which makes a seemingly domestic issue an international one. The Ottoman State recognized Bulgaria’s independence in 1908 with a

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40 For instance, in late 1983, according to the account of the then Turkish Ambassador in Sofia, the bilateral relations between Turkey and Bulgaria was passing through “a very good period” and “there was no serious conflict” in the relationship (Lütem 2000, 1:44). Two years later the name-change campaign and treatment of the Turkish minority made the two countries as strong adversaries.
protocol signed in Istanbul a year later. The protocol included provisions protecting the rights of the Turkish-Muslim minority. According to the protocol, the election of the Chief Mufti was subjected to the approval of the Sheikh ul-Islam in Istanbul. Similar provisions were present in bilateral and multilateral agreements signed during the last century (Lütem 2000, 1:59).

Bulgaria’s and Turkey’s taking part in rival blocs during the Cold War added to the already strained relationship between the two countries, which had a direct effect on the situation of the minorities as “the Turkish and the Muslim Bulgarian minorities had increasingly been viewed as the ‘fifth column of the imperialism’” (Lozanova et al. 2007, 28–29). Strong involvement of the US Government on the side of Turkey against the regeneration process (Lütem 2000, 1:499–502) was not only related to the sensitivity over global human rights violations, but more so to the difficult dynamics of the Cold War rivalry. Indeed, Washington was the most forthcoming nation in condemning and acting against the regeneration process, while many Muslim capitals remained silent (Lütem 2000, 1:509–13). In addition, the concentration of the minority population at the bordering regions with their kin-state (Turkey) was considered to be a constant source of regional instability by the Bulgarian governments (Lozanova et al. 2007, 28).

Although the deep ideological division between the two countries ended with the collapse of communism, the perception of minorities and their political party (MRF) as a “fifth column” of neighboring Turkey is still strong (Neuburger 1997; The Economist (US) 1991; Vassilev 2002; Lozanova et al. 2007). The ultra-nationalist leader Volen Siderov proclaimed that his nationalism “is a practical program … aimed at preventing
the process of the Turkification of Bulgaria. There are whole regions of Bulgaria, which both culturally and administratively are becoming Turkish. Economically, they are also being occupied by Turkish or pro-Turkish companies. This is a dangerous precedent, which poses the threat from their annexation by Turkey” (Kavalski 2007, 29). This is not surprising, given the arguments that the existence of a strong neighboring kin-state of a minority, could fuel a perception of the minority as a “fifth-column” that has dangerous ambitions against the majority, which hence feeds the threat perception by the majority from the minority group (Korostelina 2007).

Despite the fact that the two countries are now NATO allies, the relationship continues to be “tempestuous” (Ghodsee 2010, 12). Although not as strong as during the communist period, Bulgarians are still concerned that minority groups inside the country pose a serious threat to national unity and territorial integrity (Vassilev 2002). In 2010, for instance, a nationalist party, VMRO, collected more than 300,000 signatures in support of a motion for a referendum in Bulgaria for Turkey’s EU membership. The initiative was supported by Ataka, which even threatened to withdraw its support from the then Borisov government because of Borisov’s public support to Turkey’s EU membership. Later during the year, some members of parliament from the Ataka party showed up in the Parliament wearing t-shirts saying “no” to Turkey in the EU (Dikov 2011).

Thus far I have analyzed the identity conflict in Bulgaria with a multi-level framework analysis and with the help of two theoretical models. I merged Dugan’s nested and Azar’s PSC models to look at the dynamics of the conflict at three levels: relational,
issues / BHN, and systemic. The underlying sources of the Bulgarian identity conflict are more at the relational / communal level than those at the remaining two levels. The identity building processes based on grievances, various socio-psychological processes that are at play, difficult historical relationship, existence of myths, historical hurts, traumas, use of identity politics by elites, and fears and threats, among others, lie at the very roots of the conflict. Existing literature shows that various factors are also at play at the second level (issues / BHN) including the state’s denial of identity needs and dissatisfaction of the need for identity recognition, discriminatory policies, and unequal access to economic wealth. The literature also suggests that there are factors at the systemic level including structural violence, relations with the kin state, and impact of external alliances. Based on the foregoing, the study will now build a theoretical model and offer theory driven preliminary answers to the research question.

3.3. Theoretical Model for Research Question

While mapping the causes of conflict and non-violence, I divided the factors based on individual, structural, political, economic, cultural, and social identity related ones. As for the causes of non-violence, in addition to individual theories, I focused on different theories, including ethnic conflict, collective action, aggression, and globalization. Now, in order to connect the existing theories to the Bulgarian case, I will use a modified levels of analysis framework, which has been widely used in CAR (Waltz, 1959; Sandole, 1999; Crocker et.al, 2007; Ramsbotham et.al, 1999). A multi-level analysis is essential to “capture the complexity of conflict” (Sandole, 1999). The analysis in this research will focus on three levels: elite, domestic/societal, and international. This
allows me to study the causes of the lack of direct violence in the Bulgarian case in a systematic and comprehensive way. The model here is driven by theory and the study will make linkages with the existing literature/theories highlighted above.

3.3.1. Elite Level

As highlighted in the literature review, the policies and actions of political leaders are among major causes of conflicts. Political leaders are the ones who decide to start and stop organized political violence, or to go to war as well as to end it (Hauss 2003). This research argues that the first democratically elected President of Bulgaria, Zhelyu Zhelev, and the leader of the ethnic Turks, Ahmed Dogan and the political party he spearheaded (MRF), played instrumental roles in preventing a possible backlash during a fragile transition to democracy.

President Zhelyu Zhelev was a strong anti-communist liberal. As a philosopher, Zhelev became an opponent of the Bulgarian Communist Party’s actions and was expelled from the party in 1960s (Crampton 2007). He was among the founders of the first non-communist, right wing political party the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) in late 1989. He was elected President by the Parliament in 1990 and was reelected by direct popular vote in 1992. He was one of the most powerful figures in the governance during a fragile period.

Bulgaria’s democratic transition in the early years of 1990s was not easy. The first elections were held in June 1990, a new constitution was adopted a year later, and early elections were held in October 1991. In both elections MRF became the third largest group in the parliament after socialists (former communists – BSP) and liberals (UDF).
This short period was marked by public protests, major divisions among left and right wing, mounting economic problems, and nationalist reactions to new minority rights (Crampton 2007; Dayıoğlu 2005; Palchev 2002; Bakalova 2006). The declaration by Peter Mladenov, the first leader of Bulgaria after Zhivkov’s removal from power, that the regeneration process was wrong received criticism from angry protestors as early as late December 1989 and later on. The protests were made in different cities and protestors were against the restoration of minority rights. On January 4, 1990, half a million Bulgarians gathered in front of the Parliament to protest against restoration of Turkish names (Bakalova 2006). The nationalists regarded the return of Turkish names as “a step toward Muslim cultural and political autonomy and a threat to the territorial integrity” (Vassilev 2002, 107). Peter Mladenov gathered a meeting with intellectuals on November 14, 1989 and told them that assimilation policy has ended, however due to the possible reactions from nationalist groups the government should move slowly (Dayıoğlu 2005, 375). The decision in February 1990 to introduce Turkish classes in minority regions was postponed after popular protests. When MRF won seats at the first democratic elections in 1990, protestors tried to prevent MRF MPs to enter the Parliament. Nationalist parties tried to close MRF down arguing that it is an ethnic party and thus illegal. Despite all these popular reactions, the political leadership of the country showed common sense and continued to give minority rights back. In January 1990, UDF agreed to form a Round Table with Socialists. The Round Table included Turkish representatives and many other organizations. Its large base proved to be an essential factor during a fragile period
During this fragile period, Zhelev played an instrumental role as the President of the country.

Zhelev’s positive attitude towards the minority is not only due to his liberal and anti-communist views. His close relations with MRF and its leader Ahmed Dogan also played an important role there. Dogan was quoted as saying “Dr. Zhelev has real authority. In 1988, 1989 and 1990, few Bulgarians had the courage to speak up openly in our support. One of these few was Dr. Zhelev. One never forgets such things” (Palchev 2002, 67). Indeed Zhelev received strong support from the MRF electorate during his election in 1992 and got an overwhelming support in minority regions like Kurdzhali (Dayıoğlu 2005).

Similarly, the Turkish minority leader Ahmed Dogan and the political party – MRF – that he founded were instrumental in averting a possible violent conflict. 

Professor Lyudmil Georgiev of Sofia St. Kliment Ohridski University argues that Dogan and the MRF “practically introduced something entirely new and unknown so far in the general theoretical discussions and approaches in the resolution of ethnic conflicts” (Palchev 2002, 9). MRF was credited to be one of the main driving factors of the successful ethnic reconciliation in the country during the transition (Petkova 2002; Dayıoğlu 2005; Palchev 2002; Lozanova et.al 2007). Former socialist President Peter Stoyanov declared that MRF playe a nationally responsible role in Bulgaria’s transition to democracy and in the formation of “Bulgarian ethnic model” (Palchev 2002, 95). Former Prime Minister (former King) Simeon Saksoburggotski too declared that the exemplary

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41 For an extensive account of the role of Ahmed Dogan in the democratic transition of Bulgaria see: Palchev, 2002.
“Bulgarian ethnic model” founded thanks to Ahmed Dogan provided an important gain in joining the EU (Dayıoğlu 2005, 455).

Like Zhelev, Dogan was a young scholar of philosophy. He was among the leading figures in Turkish National Liberation Movement, a group that ascribed peaceful resistance to regeneration process. Due to his dissident activity, he was sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment in 1986 and stayed there until December 1989. The Movement was returned into a political party (MRF) in March 1990. Thanks to its key role as the third largest political party in Bulgarian politics, MRF proved to be a strong voice for the minority for more than two decades.42 MRF is regarded as being instrumental in preventing escalation of ethnic tensions and in the non-confrontational nature of the transition in political life (Rechel 2007; Bakalova 2006). The strength of the party, although being a constant irritant for nationalists, positively stimulated the process of ethnic reconciliation (Zhelyazkova 2001, 65), facilitated confidence building between minority and majority (Petkova 2002), and ensured that “no administration dared move towards greater restriction on the Turks” (Crampton 2007, 439). Apart from providing a legitimate platform for representation of the minority, the fact that minorities are represented in public life by a political platform also had a legitimizing impact of the minorities in the eyes of the majority (Zhelyazkova 2001).

42 There are discussions about whether MRF is a true representative of the minority given its occasional alliances with former communists, certain policies that it followed, and allegations that Ahmed Dogan and some other leading figures were agents of the former secret service (Petkova 2002). MRF also received criticism on issues like encapsulating the minority in itself, being clientelist, and deliberately keeping the minority marginalized (Kavalski 2007). However, in all the elections after 1990, Turkish minority members overwhelmingly voted for the MRF, which thus makes its status as the political representative of the minority.
What made Dogan an important figure was his moderacy and strong stance against violence (Palchev 2002, Dayıoğlu 2005). Even during his time in prison, he sent orders to his followers not to resort to violent tactics (Palchev 2002). He also tried hard to mitigate the threat perception of the Bulgarian majority by making references to overarching national themes. First party program of the MRF foresaw the use of only peaceful and legal measures to protect rights and freedoms, clearly refused terrorism and other violent means, condemned chauvinism and Islamic fundamentalism, refused the idea of autonomy, with the understanding that it prevents national reconciliation (Özgür 1999). Hence Dogan was awarded with the highest national order (Stara Planina) in 2004 for his contributions to democratic environment, ethnic peace, and tolerance in the country (Dayıoğlu 2005, 454; Rechel 2007).

MRF and Dogan endured difficulties from both Bulgarian nationalists and hardliners within the Turkish community. As mentioned above, nationalists rallied for the closure of MRF based on the law on political parties in 1990. Its party headquarters in the district of Shumen was targeted by a bomb attack in October 1990. In 1991, BSP MPs applied to Central Election Commission to ban MRF from running in general elections. After 1990, Dogan tried hard not to fuel already rising nationalist tendencies in the society by using a conciliatory rhetoric and pursued a national political agenda, rather than a pure ethnic Turkish one. He never called for autonomy or independence (Petkova 2002; Dayıoğlu 2005). MRF ascribed to the principles of territorial integrity and

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43 The resistance to regeneration process was not entirely peaceful. In August 1984, bombs exploded in a railway station in Plovdiv and in Varna airport. Zhivkov was planning to visit both cities. After the explosions flyers writing “forty years, forty bombs” (as it was the 40th anniversary of communism) distributed in the streets (Crampton 2007, 378).
sovereignty of Bulgaria (Lozanova et.al 2007). MRF even expelled members of the party, who made nationalist statements or demands.44 His moderate attitude even received criticism from some members of the Turkish community. He managed to distance himself from nationalistic Turkish movements, including the one formed by Adem Kenan, who asked for administrative and cultural autonomy and the creation of a federation (Lozanova et.al 2007; Vassilev 2002). He also walked a fine line in his relations with Turkey not to fuel threat and fifth column perceptions. During his tenure at the helm of the MRF for about two decades he only visited Turkey twice. In his historic speech at the opening of the first democratic parliament plenary session, he underlined that MRF is not a fifth column or a Trojan horse (Palchev 2002, 107). Dogan, who is a strong secular, never used Islam as an instrument in his endeavors as well.

An important factor that makes Dogan strong is the collectivistic nature of the Turkish culture. Because of the “patriarchal environment” of the Turkish minority, the leader has a strong say over the group members and “what the leader says is the law for the rest” (Palchev 2002, 52). This gave Dogan the ability to take controversial steps and maneuver between different political alliances.

Both Zhelev and Dogan found a common enemy, i.e. communism and its leadership structure, to struggle against in order to address their particular needs. Hence, despite their ethnic and religious differences, the two leaders found a common ideological ground.

44 In October 1990, “nationalist elements who want to raise Turkish flags” in MRF extraordinary congress were expelled from the party. Similarly, Deputy Governor of a Pazardjik district, Recep Molla Ahmet, was expelled for saying Christians should be driven from Rhodopes and Turkish kids should take all classes in Turkish and not in Bulgarian in March 2003 (Dayıoğlu 2005, 422).
In addition, European integration was attractive for both liberal Bulgarian leaders (notably Zhelev) and for the Turks. Zhelev firmly believed that the future of Bulgaria should be within Europe. Similarly, Ahmed Dogan believed that the rights of the Turkish minority would be best guaranteed within the Euro-Atlantic structures. Indeed, he was the first Bulgarian political figure who dared to say that Bulgaria should be part of NATO. Therefore, based on rational calculations, both leaders tried not to enter into a confrontation that would jeopardize Bulgaria's membership in the Euro-Atlantic structures, a goal that both leaders saw as being essential in addressing the needs of their respective constituents.

Given the foregoing, the research argues that the sensible policies of both the Bulgarian and Turkish elites played a vital role in the fragile early years of the democratic transition during 1990s.

3.3.2. Domestic / Societal Level

In the Bulgarian case, there were a couple of factors that made it easier to deal with past traumas. First, the available literature suggests that although the history of relations between Turks and Bulgarians were difficult, the two communities had never waged war or used direct violence against each other after 1878. In other words, there was not a history of direct communal violence, which helped prevent a violent conflict in the second half of 1980s. Ahmed Dogan, for instance, “believes that Bulgarians and Turks in the country have never quarreled and they do not have to be reconciliated” (Palchev 2002, 28). Scholars like Antonina Zhelyazkova and Toncho Zhechev are among the ones that underline the importance of historically good relations on the community
level, among the people, except during the difficult years of the regeneration campaign (Zhelyazkova 2001; Palchev 2002, 95). Even during the Ottoman period, in mixed Christian and Muslim villages, the residents “shared common experiences, traditions, songs, and often languages” (Hupchick 2001, 139). Zhelyazkova credits the “common sense of people” living in mixed regions, the “dominant traditional values embraced by Bulgarian society” for the peaceful regulation of ethnic relations during a difficult period of change in 1990s (Zhelyakova 2001, 63). She also cites that centuries old cohabitation experience, generally stable informal relations among different communities, and acceptance of the “otherness” as important factors in the Bulgarian ethnic model (ibid., 66). Vassilev also points to public opinion polls showing that xenophobic intolerance is limited in Bulgaria as compared to that in other East European countries (2002, 112). Although the notion of a tolerant Bulgarian society is challenged by other scholars (Rechel 2007; Kavalski 2007), the lack of direct communal violence is a fact in the majority – minority relations history.

Second, after 1990, communism became the scapegoat for the wrongdoings against the minority. In her article on possible factors averting a violent clash during the transition, Bakalova singles out the identification of discriminatory policies against Turks with the communist past as the main factor, preventing the transition from falling into a nationalist trap (Bakalova 2006, 242). The regeneration process was regarded as a communist policy and the reaction against communism also meant a reaction against assimilation policies (Crampton 2007, 438). Communists and Zhivkov played the role of
a common enemy for the Turks and for the new ruling liberal elite of Bulgaria. Even the new leadership of the Communist Party condemned the regeneration process as a “perfect hand washing manoeuvre” (Bakolava 2006, 236). This played an important role in the reconciliation process, as the perpetrators of the past crimes were seen as the common enemy of Turks and Bulgarians, alike. Due to this, the Turks had the opportunity not to see the Other – Bulgarians as a whole – as a monolithic group. They were able to project their agony and frustration onto the “communists” and not on to all Bulgarians. In a sense, the Bulgarian communists played a similar role as Bolsheviks or Nazis, in the sense that the victims were able to blame a detested group or a figure in the past and not the present figure of the other.

Third, Bulgaria's first President and Prime Minister during the democratic era publicly apologized for the assimilation campaign of the former regime. The research model argues that the acknowledgement played a fundamental role in healing the wounds of the past. The first apology came just after the resignation of Zhivkov. In mid December 1989, the Communist Party Central Committee plenum apologized for previous mistakes, including the regeneration process. BCP Leader Peter Mladenov repeated the apology on December 29 (Crampton 2007). Similar apologies came from different Bulgarian leaders and the parliament a couple of times during the last two decades.

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45 Indeed, during 1989 the Turkish minority received support from Bulgarian intelligentsia, who opposed the policies of the Zhivkov regime. Meanwhile, the first post-communist Prime Minister Dimitrov followed a strong anti-communist campaign at various institutions (Crampton 2007).
Beginning from December 1989, Bulgarian governments took steps to correct the past mistakes of the Zhivkov regime and create redress mechanisms. Although these measures received public reaction from nationalist groups, the process continued. In late November, the Parliament passed a new law, which effectively provided amnesty to Turkish minority prisoners. On December 22, some 50 Turkish prisoners, among them being Ahmed Doğan, were released from prison (Poulton 1994). A week later on December 29, the Parliament decided to provide freedom to choose names, religion and language, which meant that the official name change policy ended. After the adoption of a law in 1990, in one year nearly 600,000 Turks applied to get back their original names in a year (Özgür 1999). The new constitution, which was adopted in July 1991, brought safeguards to Bulgarian citizens regardless of ethnicity. The MRF parliamentary group played an instrumental role in installing minority rights to the constitution. During the discussions on the new constitution, the MRF leadership threatened to leave the parliament if minority rights are not included in the text and left the constitutional consultations briefly, but returned after their requests were met (Dayıoğlu 2005, 386). Additional steps were also taken in the fields of religious freedom, return of property, foundation of religious schools, broadcasting and printing in minority language, opening of culture centers (Zhelyazkova 2001; Dayıoğlu 2005; Lozanova et.al 2007).

As highlighted in the literature chapter, identity related factors play a significant role in igniting conflicts. In the Bulgarian case, I argue that despite the existence of various factors related to identity, recognition of a separate Turkish identity has helped prevent a violent eruption of conflict. Indeed, from Bulgaria’s quasi independence in
1878 to the 1980s – almost a century – the distinct identity of a separate Turkish minority was recognized by successive Bulgarian regimes. During these 100 years, despite hardships, the existence of a distinct Turkish minority in Bulgaria was not denied. It is only after 1984 that the Communist government denied the existence of the minority and changed the names of almost a million Turks in 3 months. However, the assimilation process lasted only a few years and ended in late 1989.

In addition, since one of the most important utility of identity is providing esteem to individuals, I would argue that Turkish identity provided a certain degree of self-esteem to minority members. Being Turkish was not something pejorative. In the end, there has always been a powerful Turkish state in the region. Being Roma, for instance, was and still is not a desired identity. Therefore, many Roma in Bulgaria either claim to be Bulgarian or Turkish, based on their religious affinities. Ethnic Turks did not have a similar issue.

The nature and concept of identity – such as civic, ethnic, religious, etc. – are important factors in conflicts. Korostelina (2007) outlines 3 concepts of civic, ethnic and religious national identity. While the ethnic concept of national identity is more prone to conflict as it hardly integrates the minority groups, multicultural and civic national identities are less likely to see conflicts between majority and minority groups. Civic national identity, based on citizenship or a sense of belonging to a country, encompasses such strong divisions as ethnic, religious, or sectarian, and thus offers powerful tools to deal with conflicts. Given the arguments of Reicher et.al (2006) about the Bulgarian government’s refusal to expel Jews during World War II, one can argue that the
Bulgarian national identity is a civic one, rather than one based on ethnicity. Reicher et.al maintain that the arguments used in public documents to mobilize Bulgarians against the deportation of Jews in World War II are based on “category inclusion,” which treats the Jews as part of the ingroup; “category norms,” which propose that helping those under attack is a core aspect of ingroup identity; and “category interest,” which suggests that the ingroup will be harmed if Jews are persecuted. In each of the three cases, they argue, “the predominant category on which arguments are based is national identity (i.e. ’we Bulgarians…’).” Zhelyazkova also argues that Bulgarians shared a collective sense of shame for not attempting to save Turks and Pomaks and that there was a feeling that the “moral capital” gained after the saving of Bulgarians Jews during Holocaust was lost (Zhelyazkova 2001, 64).

That said, other scholars, such as Brustein and King (2004) and Todorov (2001) cite other reasons for Bulgaria’s attitudes towards Jews. In their comparative analysis between the different attitudes of Romania and Bulgaria towards the Jews, Brustein and King underline that while the Jews were overrepresented in the Romanian middle-class and controlled a large portion of the national wealth, this was not the case in Bulgaria. In addition, while Jews were closely linked to the subversive Communist Party in Romania, in Bulgaria they were not. Todorov’s (2001) work also gives much of the credit to certain figures in the government, church, and opinion makers, rather than a collective effort on the side of the entire Bulgarian nation. She underlines anti-Semitic measures taken by the Bulgarian regime as well as the deportation of some 14,000 Jews in Macedonia and Thrace in early 1940s (Frank, 2003). Therefore, the research model will argue that the
civic nature of the Bulgarian national identity might play a limited role in averting a violent conflict.

Last but not least, transition to democracy played an important role at the domestic level in impeding the outburst of direct violence. Bulgaria’s first post-communist government declared itself as a “government to guarantee the peaceful transition to a democratic society” and all major parties promised to cooperate for a peaceful transition to a democratic system (Crampton 2007, 393). As explained before, the minority were able to voice their demands through an effective political party (MRF) in the parliament. Enlargement of political space and minority participation in the governance played an important role in alleviating the resentment of the minority members, and through their political representatives in national parliaments and local municipalities, they found alternative channels to voice their concerns and address their needs. As explained above, during 1990s, in addition to the scrapping of assimilation policies of the communist regime, positive minority rights were also given. The changes in political and social structures also pushed radical voices towards the center.

The EU integration process has also played a vital role in the democratization process. I will highlight its impact under the following heading.

3.3.3. International / Systemic Level

The model argues that the international or systemic level factors that impeded a violent eruption of conflict include EU integration process, the dynamics of the bipolar system, and factors related to the kin state – Turkey. EU integration served as a very powerful motivation for change in most of the Eastern European countries. The allure of
the EU played a significant role in moderating the nationalist backlash against minorities. The EU is one of the best examples that is often cited to underline the positive effects of globalization and integration based on democratic and market values. Many scholars see EU integration as a positive step toward a cosmopolitan society (Giddens 1991, Habermas 1998, Beck and Grande 2004 in Haller & Ressler, 2006).

Bulgaria’s transition to democracy in 1990 and its entry into the EU in 2007 are certainly positive developments for the peaceful resolution of the identity based conflict in this country (Lozanova et.al 2007; Ozlem 2013). The conditions imposed by Brussels on Sofia for full membership curbed nationalist or discriminatory tendencies in Bulgarian politics. Scrutiny by the EU institutions was serious, real, and continuous. The Association Agreement with the EU, signed in 1992, was the first such document by the EU that included an article safeguarding the human rights of ethnic minorities (Crampton 2007, 438). EU integration was so important for the future of the country that successive Bulgarian governments from different political orientations refrained from jeopardizing the membership process by alienating the minorities. Major steps to ensure positive rights for minorities, including use of minority language in broadcasting and education were due to the larger efforts to become part of the European club. Bulgaria became member of the Council of Europe in 1992, signed association agreement with the EU in 1992, became member of the Western European Union in 1994, applied for EU membership in 1995 and became a full member in 2007. It also became a NATO member in 2004, after its application in 1993. Bulgaria’s membership to the Council of Europe was also vital as it signed its Framework Convention for Minorities in May 1999. Although the move has
sparked reactions in the country, this led Bulgaria to officially recognize the existence of a national minority.

EU integration has also created a unity of purpose for Bulgarian and minority politicians. A field study in ethnically mixed regions by Lozanova et.al shows that EU related projects and processes create solidarity and cooperation between majority and minority members, creating local alliances across ethnic and political lines (2007). Almost all governments, including the socialists, declared European integration as being among their major objectives (Dayıoğlu 2005; Crampton 2007; Bibina 2013). As the existence of national civic causes that transcend ethnic and religious boundaries help alleviate identity conflicts, the goal of getting Bulgaria into the EU played the role of a joint cause for all Bulgarian citizens.

The role of Turkey has also played an important role as a powerful kin state. Zhelyazkova argues for example that anti-Turkish nationalism is usually projected outside Bulgaria, and to Turkey, not to Bulgarian Turks (Zhelyazkova 2001, 64). Kin states could act as spoilers in identity conflicts as highlighted in the literature chapter. The model would argue that in the 1980s, overwhelmed by domestic problems, Turkey did not pursue a policy that could trigger a violent conflict in Bulgaria. In 1980, a coup d’état happened in Turkey. Then, the Kurdish issue turned into a violent conflict. Therefore, the regime was compelled to focus on domestic issues. Throughout the 1980s, Turkish governments were relatively weak and had little inclination to deal with external issues. During the fragile early years of transition, Turkey acted as a responsible player
by not assuming an “overly protective role” regarding the Turkish minority (Bakalova 2006, 242).

On the other hand, the existence of a powerful kin state – i.e. the Ottoman Empire and then Turkey – had some positive implications on the status of the Turkish minority. For instance, from 1878 onward, minorities were granted certain rights through bilateral treaties between Bulgaria and Turkey or international treaties involving Turkey, including the one signed after the World War I (Crampton 2007, 422, 438). The Turkish minority, therefore, was not “alone” like the Bosnians in former Yugoslavia. This has also been one reason why the identity of the minority was not denied for a century.

Since Bulgaria and Turkey belonged to two rival blocs – i.e. NATO and the Warsaw Pact – during the Cold War, they had limited powers to take individual / independent steps against each other. This prevented Turkey, for example, from carrying out a unilateral action against Bulgaria to protect the Turkish minority, because of its possible global implications during the difficult years of the Cold War. Therefore, constraints of the bipolar system alleviated an important possible cause of conflict (Petkova 2002).

In addition, the Bulgarian communist government's relations with Gorbachev's Soviet Union became strained in the 1980s (Crampton 2007). However, the U.S. has been supportive to Turkey on international platforms regarding the plight of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria (Ates and Ozkubat 2013). Indeed, when Bulgaria deported more than 300 thousand Turks in less than 3 months, U.S. President George W. Bush voiced a strong support for Turkey, while the USSR remained silent. This fastened the dissolution
of the Bulgarian regime, which seemed to lose its vital external support in a bipolar system, in which nation states were assessed based on their place within the rival blocs, rather than their individual, national capabilities. The loss of support from the USSR also encouraged the dissident voices within the BCP, which accelerated the process ending in the removal of Zhivkov from the helm of the Party and the country (Crampton 2007).

Last but not least, the end of the Cold War also unleashed positive dynamics regarding Bulgarian – Turkish relations, which also had positive impact on the minority relations in Bulgaria (Bibina 2013; Petkova 2002). End of Cold War also ended the systemic division between the two countries, which will later become allies in NATO. This has decreased the threat perception from a major neighbor and kin state, relations with which have historically been difficult. In addition, Bulgaria’s aspiration to join NATO offered an impetus to develop relations with Turkey. Indeed when Bulgaria tried to establish ties with NATO in 1990, it was “brusquely told that its first step must be to secure better relations with Turkey” and in March 1992 for the first time after almost a century a Bulgarian Defense Minister visited Turkey, which was followed by a treaty of friendship in May 1992 (Crampton 2007, 398). 1990s has seen a dramatic warming up of relations between Turkey and Bulgaria with increased bilateral visits, signing of bilateral agreements, resolution of a maritime border dispute, and increased economic cooperation (Petkova 2002).

3.3.4. Conclusion
The model used a modified levels of analysis framework to connect the existing theories to the Bulgarian case. The research focused on three levels elites,
domestic/societal, and international/systemic. For a better grasp of the model, the levels are summarized in the below Table 4:
### Table 4 Possible Factors of Non-violence

#### Possible Factors of Non-violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Factors</th>
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<td>Elite level</td>
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<td>Ahmed Dogan and the policies of MRF</td>
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<td>Domestic / societal level</td>
<td>Lack of direct violence between the groups</td>
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<td>Communism being scapegoat for past mistakes</td>
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<td>Public apology and redress measures</td>
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<td>Turkish Identity was not denied except for brief periods</td>
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<td>Minority identity providing self-esteem</td>
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<td>Nature of Bulgarian identity civic</td>
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CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sandole underlines a “culture problem” between academics and practitioners vis-à-vis the conflict phenomenon (Sandole 2009a). Academia, which is largely focusing on the theoretical aspect of the concept, is criticized for being naïve or disconnected from reality, whilst practitioners are criticized for missing the root causes and focusing on palliative solutions. It is the research that constitutes the “essential bridge” between theory and practice (ibid.).

This study analyzes a complex conflict in the Bulgarian context. To do this, it builds a model based on various existing theories. Since the phenomenon is complex, multi-layered and multi-level, different theories inform different hypotheses on different levels. This chapter describes the overall research framework, which includes the design and approach, the data collection and analysis techniques, a consideration of likely ethical issues, and a discussion of logistical matters.

In order to explain the dynamics of non-violence, I addressed the following research question: Why did Bulgarian conflict not escalate into direct violence?

4.1. Research Design
In seeking answers to these questions this research utilized a qualitative research methodology. The nature of the research subject is important when selecting an appropriate research design. As discussed previously, although there are few studies discussing the concept of non-violence and its underlying factors as opposed to the
concept of violence and its causes and dynamics, both violence and non-violence relate to social relations. Therefore, the nature of this research’s subject is appropriate for a qualitative research design as Marvasti notes: “Qualitative research provides detailed description and analysis of the quality, or the substance, of the human experience” (Marvasti 2004, 7). For Creswell “Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell 2014, 4). To him, what humans do and experience in their lives is the result of actions that are formed around the perceptions of issues in their lives. To explore and understand the issue of non-violence, this study investigates the issue in a way through “representing the views and perspectives of the people” (Yin 2010, 7), which is one of the very basic features of the qualitative research.

The nature of the research topic is also crucial when deciding on the design approach. Among five different approaches in qualitative research design (Creswell 2007), the case study approach is chosen for this study, as it enables the researcher to examine some aspects of a historical period to provide explanations that might be applicable to other social events (George and Bennett 2005).

4.2. Case Study Approach

According to Yin, case studies are preferred in three instances: if the researcher asks "how" or "why" questions, if she/he has little control over events, and if his/her focus is on a “contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context” (Yin 2009, 2). All three factors are present in the research topic of this study. George and Bennett (2005) underlines that case studies are valuable tools to examine the hypothesized role of causal
mechanisms in contexts of individual cases. They have the capacity to address causal complexity, and they allow the researcher to achieve conceptual validity by paying due attention to contextual factors.

Although Willig (2008) does not see the case study as a separate research method, he sees it as an approach to study single entities by using various data collection and analysis methods. While some criticize the case study approach for not allowing scientific generalization (Willig 2008; Flick 2009), others argue that case studies offer powerful tools to expand and generalize theories, which is also called “analytic generalization” (Yin 2009).

One weakness of the case study approach is that the data collection is done within the natural environments of the individuals. Unlike traditional experiments, where the researcher has nearly complete control over the environment, or a survey, where the researcher puts a clear agenda through a series of fixed questions, the case study approach does not allow the investigator to have control over the data collection activity. For instance, the interviewees will be free to set the environment and time frame of the interview. They also have a large discretion about providing a complete picture of the case or a limited or distorted version of what they know. Case studies can employ different methods of data collection and analysis. However, it requires careful planning and preparation, a clear design, use of appropriate methods, and observance of strict ethic rules (Willig 2008). Therefore good preparation is essential in the case study approach before going to the field to collect data.
The first step in preparing a clear case study design is to identify the case (or cases) (Creswell 2007). According to Yin (2009) case studies can be single or multiple case studies. In single case studies “the researcher focuses on an issue or concern, and then selects one bounded case to illustrate this issue” (Creswell 2007, 74).

Since this research focuses on factors on different levels (individual, societal, and international), the study is based on an embedded - single case design (Yin 2009). As such, the research will not only try to understand the role of the individuals, but also the societal and communal dynamics, as well as larger international factors. This case study is explanatory, and not a descriptive one (Willig 2008), since it will try to offer explanations within the existing theoretical formulations regarding the event.

4.3. Data Collection
To Patton (2001), in qualitative research, data can be gathered through three different kinds of collection techniques: interviews, observation, and documents. Interview is basically asking people questions and receiving their answers regarding their lived experiences, opinions, and knowledge (Patton 2001; Seidman 2006). Since this study investigates the concept of non-violence and its underlying factors through people’s perspectives, expert interviewing was chosen as the data collection method.

Interviews are one of the most important sources of case study information (Yin, 2009, p.106) and are among the most preferred types of qualitative data collection. As for the interviews, semi-standardized expert interviews (Flick, 2009, p. 57) are used. As to the format of the questions there are three basic approaches: unstructured, structured, and semi-structured interviews. For this study, semi-structured face-to-face interviews were
used to give more space to the respondent’s perspectives (Robson 2011), while addressing the factors of non-violence at different levels with a high level of response rate.

A total number of ten questions were prepared to address different aspects of factors of non-violence. The interview questions were as follows:

The first two questions in the interviews were open ended to give space to respondents to have their unbiased opinions:

- “What are the factors that deterred a violent conflict between ethnic Bulgarians and the Turks in the final years of the Communist regime?”
- “The Bulgarian ethnic model is shown as an example of peaceful coexistence. Why do you think that Bulgaria achieved this positive image?”

Then questions were asked to look for factors on different levels. Participants were asked the following question to explore the role of political elites in preventing violent conflict:

“What are the factors that deterred a violent conflict between ethnic Bulgarians and the Turks in the final years of the Communist regime? What is the role of political leaders (both Bulgarian and minority leaders) in the relationship between Bulgarian and Turkish communities during the transition period in early 1990s? Please share your views in particular on the roles played by Zhelyu Zhelev and Ahmet Dogan.”

Several questions were asked about the role of domestic/societal level factors:
- “How do you assess the relationship, between ethnic Bulgarians and Turks in a historical perspective? Do you think that lack of a history of direct communal violence is a factor in preventing a violent war?”
- “Turkish identity is not denied throughout the history. Could this play a role?”
- “Do you think that Turkish identity provided self-esteem to its members and if so could this play a role?”
- “Given the treatment of Jews during WWII, do you think that Bulgarian national identity is a civic one and could this play a role?”
- “What do you think about the “regeneration process”? Do you think that the fact that communism being detested by both Turks and new Bulgarian elites helped alleviate the conflict?”
- “What was the role of public apology and acknowledgement of crimes committed during the “regeneration process” on reconciliation?”

Finally, the following questions about international/systemic level factors of non-violence were asked:

- “How did the EU membership process affect the relationship between Bulgarian and Turkish communities and the minority issues? Please, also add your views on the impact of quick transition to democracy on alleviating the conflict.”
- “What do you think about the relationship between Bulgaria and Turkey as well as Turkey’s role in ethnic relations in Bulgaria? Please, also add your views on the impact of end of Cold War on the ethnic conflict.”
An appropriate sampling strategy is another critical part of any research. Although, random sampling can provide more accurate and generalizable results (Given 2008), it might not be suitable for a case study fieldwork required for this research. Therefore, non-random purposive sampling (Nachmias & Frankfort-Nachmias 2008; Flick, 2009) strategy was chosen to search for factors of non-violence in the Bulgarian identity conflict. To this end, elite interviews are conducted to gather first hand information from the people who either witnessed the conflict and the ensuing transition period or have prominent roles (Mikecz 2012) in the Bulgarian society.

Since I was working as the Chief of Staff of the former Turkish President after completing my course work at GMU, it was impossible to go out to the field and make expert interviews in Bulgaria and spend time there for more than one month. Given the exigencies of the situation, with the permission of my Committee members and following the HSRB approval, I used a proxy interviewer, Ms. Muzaffer Kutlay, who held the interviews for me in Bulgaria. Ms. Kutlay was one of three academics that I proposed to the Committee. She is an academic who works on Bulgaria and the Balkans. Her MA thesis was about the “Europeanization of Minority Rights in Bulgaria.”

Before, Kutlay had already spent 4 months to do elite interviews in Bulgaria in 2010, so she had previous experience. The objectives of the research, the main research questions, ethical concerns, and the formulation of the research questions were duly explained to the proxy researcher before she went into the field. She completed the CITI basic course.
After having the IRB approval\textsuperscript{46}, we contacted 60 people (30 ethnic Bulgarian and 30 ethnic Turks) from politics, government, academia and NGOs, and requested their consent for the interview procedure. The list of the interviewees is provide in Appendix 1. A total of 39 people accepted to participate and gave their consent. The female / male ratio of the interviewees was 12 females and 27 males. All interviewees were 30 or older, and most were in their 50s. Roughly 10 \% was at the age band of 40-50 and another 10 \% was above 60. Despite our efforts to get more Bulgarian interviewees, the number of ethnic Bulgarians vs ethnic Turks was 14 to 25. However, all of 25 ethnic Turks, were Bulgarian Turks. The interviewees include former President Zhelev (who passed away in January 2015), many Bulgarian Turkish political figures and community leaders, important Bulgarian academics working on ethnic relations. Most of the interviewees were academic (13) and political figures (9). The rest mainly included think tank representatives, journalists, and community leaders.

The interviews were held for a period of 40 days in October through November 2012 and most interviews were tape recorded. When recording was not possible due to the interviewee’s request, note taking was used. Each interview took about 30 to 60 minutes.

**4.4. Data Analysis**

Analyzing case study data is difficult as there are no clear-cut techniques. It is therefore important to be analytical (Yin 2009). To strengthen the analytical approach, I used the strategy of relying on theoretical propositions (ibid.,130-131). Accordingly, I

\textsuperscript{46} Approval letter of GMU ORIA is presented in Appendix 2.
would design my case study based on the research question, assumptions, existing theories, and the model based on these theories (Chapters 2 – 4). Therefore, while making the analysis, the model both informed the interview questions as well as the themes and issues that are needed to examine the raw data.

Broadly speaking, there are two schools of text analysis (Tesch 1990; G. Ryan & Bernard 2003): The linguistic tradition, which sees the text as the object of analysis, such as narrative or discourse analyses, or the sociological tradition, which treats the text as a tool to understand social phenomenon and human experience, such as grounded theory, thematic analysis, and schema analysis. I adopt the sociological tradition and analyze the rough data by using thematic analysis (Boyatzis 1998; Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe 2010). Thematic analysis allows a researcher to manage large data clusters without losing the gist of the matter and the focus of the research. Mills et.al (2010, 926) does not qualify thematic analysis as a unique research method, but as an “analytic approach” used in case study research. In thematic analysis, the focus is more on “issues,” and not on the actual characters or individuals. The related acts and understandings tend to be at the center of analysis (ibid., 139).

Thematic analysis, which is essentially “a process for encoding qualitative information” (Boyatzis 1998, vi), basically includes the following stages (Willig 2008): The researcher first reads and rereads the text and puts notes and descriptive labels near the statements, paragraphs, or certain phrases. Second, the researcher identifies themes in each section of the text. Third, the researcher forms clusters by merging the similar or related themes and finally makes a summary table of the structured themes. The thematic
analysis made on each individual interview is expected to generate common or general themes for all or most of the interviews. In other words, the rough qualitative data is summarized and analyzed through the use of extended phrases and sentences (Saldana, 2009, p. 208).

For data analysis in this research, all recordings were transcribed: 196 pages in total. The transcripts were then transferred into an Excel spreadsheet.

The thematic analysis literature suggests three different approaches for coding: theory driven, previous research driven, and inductive (Boyatzis 1998; Gibbs 2007). Here theory driven coding was used to find out the relevant information for the analytical framework. Each interview was carefully read and thoroughly coded. After the first cycle of coding was done, related and similar themes were merged to create general themes (Saldaña 2009) that correspond to the factors of non-violence at different levels.

Upon completion of the coding process, Excel formulas were utilized to calculate frequency and percentage of each theme. The most frequent five themes are displayed through tables and figures. The results that are presented for each question represent different aspects of the proposed analytical framework. To overcome the over-representation of ethnic Turks as interviewees, frequency tables for overall data are also presented separately for ethnic Bulgarians and Turks. By doing this, the study tried to make clear whether there are differences of opinions between and bias for the two ethnic groups.
4.5. Ethical Issues

Since there is still no alternative to the researcher’s personal code of ethics (Nachmias & Frankfort-Nachmias, 2008, p. 85), together with the proxy interviewer, we tried to protect the integrity of the research as best as possible. Human Subject Review Board’s compulsory proceedings were an essential start.

After constructing questions for face-to-face interviews, an introductory statement and informed consent forms were prepared to explain the purpose of the research. The Mason Off-site Resource Recovery Program (ORSP) approved these documents. The forms were accompanied by the abstract of the study and interview questions.

Confidentiality of the human subjects was given due attention. Although Bulgaria is an EU democracy, we still acted diligently not to do any harm to the informants. The interview recordings were kept encrypted. I addressed the issue of personal bias as one of the parties to the conflict belonging to my own ethnicity. As a matter of fact, this is also an important element of validity and reliability, and one of the most important elements of research quality is validity (Miles and Huberman 1994; Flick 2009; Willig 2008). Certain steps were taken to ensure trustworthiness and overcome bias. As the research investigates a conflict that involves my own ethnicity, gathering data from the different sides of the conflict helped to maintain data source triangulation (Yin 2009).

Efforts were spent to achieve a balance between ethnicities. However, as the number was not balanced in the end, to control the possible bias factor, the answers were analyzed based on ethnicity as well. This enabled me to see where ethnicity might have played as a bias factor. Moreover, interview questions included open-ended questions to
give both ethnicity members freedom to provide their own personal opinions without any limitation or bias.

The degree of authenticity of the interviewee’s account was checked whether there were factual inaccuracies. Using Legewie’s (1987, in Flick 2009) suggestions, I operated on three different levels and ask the following three questions: 1. Is the content correct? 2. Is the account socially appropriate? 3. Is the account sincere in terms of self-presentation? I particularly focused on the interviewees that are political figures, in order to see whether their accounts were given to make a deliberate political statement, rather than an accurate account of they think.

Certain tactics which are argued by Shenton (2004) were also used: each interviewee was given a clear opportunities to refuse to participate, they were encouraged to be frank at the very beginning, and they were reminded that they have the right to withdraw at their request and timing.

While choosing interviewees, although we adopted purposive sampling, we tried to identify people from different sectors, including academia, think-tanks, politics, and members of the community and journalistic domains. One of the strengths of the data collected was that some of the interviewees, like the late President Zhelev, were actively involved before and during the transition period in early 1990s.

The proxy interviewer, Ms. Kutlay, had previous research in the Bulgarian context. She knew the issues well. This helped with her credibility in the sense that Shenton (2004) put forth, as she already had developed an early familiarity with the culture before the first data collection dialogues took place. We also had various debriefing sessions.
For thematic analysis, I randomly selected 6 interviews (3 from each ethnicity) and sent their codings to two academics for peer reviews (Flick 2009). None of the peers mentioned a mismatch between my interpretations and the ideas shared during interviews. For the purposes of “reliability” (Flick 2009; Willig 2008; Yin 2009), we tried to standardize the way that the interviews were carried out. During the interviews, the proxy interviewer tried to use same sentences and make similar gestures to every interviewee.
CHAPTER FIVE: DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the analysis of the responses gathered from 39 face-to-face semi-structured expert interviews. The excel format is used for coding and analysis. The analysis gives emerging themes based on the calculated percentages.

The first two questions in the interviews were open ended to give space to respondents to have their unbiased opinions:

- “The Bulgarian ethnic model is shown as an example of peaceful coexistence. Why do you think that Bulgaria achieved this positive image?” and
- “What are the factors that deterred a violent conflict between ethnic Bulgarians and the Turks in the final years of the Communist regime?”

Specific questions followed, which were given under the following subheadings (Elite, Societal, Systemic) and were asked to check theory driven propositions based on the research model.

Out of 60 elites in Bulgarian society who were contacted for interview, 39 agreed to participate in the research. Table 5 (below) shows the ethnic distribution of the participants. Despite several attempts to increase the number of the participants from ethnic Bulgarians, only 14 people agreed to participate in the research while 25 ethnic Turks accepted the offer.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>ETHNICITY</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bulgarian</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>64%</td>
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The analysis of the answers to specific questions regarding the possible factors of non-violence in three different levels are given here below. Interviewee’s responses to initial open-ended question were also given place in the analysis.

5.1. Elite Level Factors of Non-violence

Participants were asked the following questions to explore the role of the political elite in preventing violent conflict:

“What are the factors that deterred a violent conflict between ethnic Bulgarians and the Turks in the final years of the Communist regime? What is the role of political leaders (both Bulgarian and minority leaders) in the relationship between Bulgarian and Turkish communities during the transition period in early 1990s? Please share your views in particular on the roles played by Zhelyu Zhelev and Ahmet Dogan.”

Themes from the overall data are listed in Figure 3 below. Responses indicate that most of the respondents confirmed theory driven propositions regarding the roles of Zhelev and Dogan. Accordingly, 69% of the participants cited the important role of Zhelyu Zhelev, his liberal worldview and polices in preventing violent conflict. Similarly,
67% of the participants mentioned that Ahmet Dogan and the political party that he founded (MRF) played an important role in preventing a violent conflict.

Most of the respondents preferred to speak in general terms about contributions of the two elites and they mostly underline their calls against violence, reconciliatory statements, their role in ensuring the enlargement of the minority rights and opening up avenues in minority political representation.

Professor Yalimov, for instance, underlines that Zhelev fought to change negative attitudes towards minorities and tried to expand their rights in the difficult transition period. Professor Hakov, though, underlined the importance of conciliatory statements by Zhelev in the initial years of transition period. Professor Antonina Zhelyazkova speaks about the role of the late President as a leader that enjoys the respect of the Turkish minority. This trust placed in him by the minority was a major contributor to the domestic security. She also explains how Zhelev, even before elected as President, in his capacity as Advisor on Ethnic and Religious issues, financially supported programs that tried to attain reconciliation between the majority and minority. Mihail Ivanov, an Advisor to Zhelev and former Director of Ethnic and Demographic Relations Council during early 1990s, on the other hand, mentions the efforts of Zhelev to develop bilateral ties between Sofia and Ankara, which also helped alleviate the conflict.

On the contributions of Dogan to non-violence, Zhelyazkova argues that the political party that Dogan formed (MRF) worked as a guarantor for the Turkish minority that there would never be violence against them. To her, the MRF presence at all levels of government – both central and local – guaranteed peace in the country. In Dr. Dimitar
Bechev’s words, “The Turkish leadership played a very constructive role during transition period. Ahmet Dogan supported non-violent ways of opposition. He also established a party and became a player of the democratic transition period.” Professor Yalimov, underlines that Dogan rejected the use of violence even during the final years of Communism when his movement was illegal. Professor Hakov too mentions about the emphasis that Dogan puts against violent methods. MP Rusen Riza also reminds that even when MRF was an illegal entity during communism, the then organization charter included a “war without weapons” article, which shows the importance of MRF and Dogan in achieving non-violence. He also reminds that during mass protests by minority groups, Dogan’s public messages that they will get their rights in the Parliament quelled the public anger.
Twenty three percent (23%) of the participants state that in the final years of the Communist regime, the Bulgarian elite did not support assimilation policies and took actions to improve minority rights and freedoms. These findings supported previous studies (Crampton, 2007, Dayioglu, 2005, Bakalova, 2006) that posit the positive role of the Bulgarian elite.

Like Rechel (2007), 18% of the participants stated that the Bulgarian political elite played a positive role through maintaining a controlled transition to democracy, which also had role in preventing violent conflict. Finally, the lack of direct communal violence in history is also mentioned by the 18% of the participants as a factor, which contributes to prevent violent conflict.
When responses are analyzed based on the ethnic breakdown of the participants, Turkish minority puts more emphasis on the role of elites in preventing violent conflict than Bulgarians. While 76% of the Turkish minority believes that Zhelev and Dogan played an important role during this process, only 57% of ethnic Bulgarians mentioned the positive role of Zhelyu Zhelev, and 50% believes that Ahmet Dogan’s role was critical. Mr. Marin Lessenski, for instance, from Open Society Institute in Sofia, argued that the roles of both Zhelev and Dogan were “influential and very important for avoiding ethnic tension and ethnic violence in Bulgaria.”
Thus, the Turkish minority has more positive attitudes towards the role of the elites in preventing violent conflict than ethnic Bulgarians. However, this positive attitude on the part of the Turkish respondents seems to be limited only to Zhelyu Zhelev and Ahmet Dogan. Turkish interviewees tend to underline the positive role of Zhelev and Dogan together, mostly focusing on their reconciliatory policies and statements. For instance, Hasan Azis, a respected local politician, says “I believe that the roles of the first President Zhelyu Zhelev, and the MRF leader Ahmet Dogan are very important. Together they embrace a policy of tolerance which then became one of the foundations of

Figure 5 Responses of ethnic Turks regarding the role of elite level factors
Bulgarian ethnic model.” However, when it comes to the role of overall Bulgarian elites in the final years of communism, only 8% of the Turks believes that the Bulgarian elites did not support assimilation policies and took actions for minority rights and freedoms. However, 50% of ethnic Bulgarians mentioned the role of Bulgarian elites in general. Bulgarians not only speak about the positive role of Zhelev and Dogan but also prefer to mention other ethnic Bulgarians. For instance, Professor Maria Bakalova speaks about the role of even the Communist Party:

“The resettlement of the Bulgarian political scene left no empty niche for nationalistic anti-Turkish views – new elite of the Communist party wanted to dissociate from the previous regime and rejected the latter’s policies towards the Bulgarian Turks.”

On the other hand, Lubov Panayotova mentions about the role of Bulgarian opposition highlighting that they stand against nationalistic policies, which in turn contributed to preventing a violent conflict:

“We can see the process starting in the former Yugoslav Republic which is our neighbor and which we saw the Croatian war in the end of 1991. We saw Milosevic and the beginning of the nationalistic and populist rhetoric and slogans. The political leadership in the opposition at that time, not only Zhelev but all the opposition, was immunized against this nationalistic turn.”

This difference might be the indication of positive bias towards one’s own identity and the negative bias against the others as discussed by Neuberger (1997, 2004). Thus, Bulgarian respondents tend to give credit to the larger Bulgarian elite, rather than
to certain figures, whereas Turkish respondents tend to dismiss the role of larger Bulgarian elite, but focus on Zhelev and Dogan as key figures.

5.2. Domestic/Societal Level Factors of Non-violence

During the interview process several questions were asked about the role of domestic/societal level factors. These factors included the “Bulgarian ethnic model”, role of Turkish and Bulgarian identities, impact of public apology, lack of violence in relations history, and role of communism as a common enemy.

5.2.1. Bulgarian Ethnic Model as a factor of non-violence

Participants were asked the following question about the role of “Bulgarian ethnic model” in averting a violent conflict. This general and open-ended question gave space to respondents to make their assessments about possible factors of non-violence:

“The Bulgarian ethnic model is shown as an example of peaceful coexistence. Why do you think that Bulgaria achieved this positive image?”
Combined responses indicate various themes about the role of Bulgarian ethnic model in preventing a violent conflict. The above Figure 6, the responses regarding Bulgarian ethnic model as a factor of non-violence, shows that only 15% of the participants cited Bulgarian ethnic model as a model of peace and tolerance. However, without citing a particular model or a group’s behavior, 44% of the participants believe that history of a peaceful co-existence was important in preventing violent conflict. Respondents also mentioned a history of tolerance (23%), a lack of direct communal violence (21%), and a “high level of tolerance of Turkish minority” (15%) as factors that prevented a violent conflict.

Therefore, although some respondents gave credit to the Bulgarian ethnic model, more interviewees underlined the importance of a “peaceful co-existence and tolerance”
as factors of non-violence. For instance, Professor Evgenia Kalinkova argued that “the continuous peaceful coexistence of different peoples and ethnic groups in the Bulgarian state after the Liberation of 1878” played a role in averting a violent conflict. Many respondents, such as Bechev, Azis, Zhelev, and Hakov, only mentions about the history of coexistence, without giving any specific examples. They mostly underline lack of direct violence as a positive factor. Professor Yalimov, however, gives examples of peaceful coexistence during conflicts:

“But Bulgarians and Turks lived together about 5 centuries... We can talk about good relations between simple Christians and Muslims. Some historical documents show that the communities helped each other. In certain cases, when (Muslim) irregulars attack a region, local Turks protected their Christian neighbors or hid them. In other cases, when Russian and Ottoman armies waged wars 10 times and during when Russians entered Ottoman regions, local Christians protected their Muslim neighbors.”

Professor Maria Bakalova underlines the institution of “komshuluk” (the Turkish origin word for neighborhood) as a factor that prevented a violent conflict. Professor Antinoia Zhelyazkova puts it more extensively:

“Bulgaria’s positive image is due, above all, to the fact that the Bulgarians and Turks had created through the centuries (including the period of the Ottoman Empire) co-existence spaces governed by common sense and respect for the religious and cultural traditions of the “other” neighbor. There was hardly any romantic vein in these relations as the two ethnic groups were not particularly
close – for instance, mixed marriages were extremely rare. They lived side by side rather than together and in close relationship. However, there were strict unwritten rules of that coexistence which made it enduring even in times when adventurist politicians tried to cause tension. That coexistence was based on mutual respect and good neighborliness and its main preoccupation was to preserve peace.”

Lubov Panayotava of the European Institute also argues:

“We inherited a peaceful cultural legacy. We have so many cultural traditions in common, a similar kitchen. Moreover Turkey is our biggest and an important neighbor. When I travel thorough Bulgaria, I witness how the people live in a multicultural environment, especially in the south of Kurzhali or in the north. The people peacefully live door-by-door with each other. They have common traditions.”

When looked into the distributed data (Figures 7 and 8) below, “history of peaceful co-existence” remains the most important factor for both groups. Turks attach more importance to history of tolerance (28%) than ethnic Bulgarians (14%). Interestingly, Bulgarian ethnic model got slightly more credit from the Turkish minority (16%) than ethnic Bulgarians (14%).

Moreover, “tolerance” of Turkish minority in preventing violent conflict is only cited by the Turkish respondents, which can be explained by a strong minority in-group bias. From the responses of the Turkish interviewees, by tolerance they mean Turkish minority’s remaining silent or not initiating violent resistance to the assimilation policies.
of the Communist regime. Mr. Muzekki Ahmed, an ethnic Turkish journalist and civil 
activist, argues “The reason behind the lack of violent conflict is the tolerance of Turkish 
minority towards other people. Despite suffering from cruel policies, Turkish minority 
has never attempted to arm.” A prominent ethnic Turkish politician, which lived through 
the transition period, Kasim Dal holds a similar view by arguing that despite all the 
assimilation policies, Turkish minority has never felt grudge, thus preventing a violent 
clash.

Figure 7 Responses of ethnic Bulgarians regarding Bulgarian ethnic model
5.2.2. Lack of direct communal violence between groups

Participants were asked the following question to inquire about the role of the lack of direct communal violence between ethnic Bulgarians and Turks as a factor that prevented a violent clash in early 1990s:

“How do you assess the relationship, between ethnic Bulgarians and Turks in a historical perspective? Do you think that lack of a history of direct communal violence is a factor in preventing a violent war?”
According to combined responses, 79% of the participants believe that the lack of direct communal violence in history is an important factor for the non-violent result. Although 41% of respondents mentioned some examples of communal violence in history, it seems both groups consider those events as isolated and limited cases. Mr. Krassimir Kanev (Head of Bulgarian Helsinki Committee) states that:

“There was no communal violence in peacetime. But there was of communal violence during the wars that took place between Bulgaria and Turkey including the Balkan wars. ... In general, I think the Turkish minority was quite wise to be realistic in its demands. And Bulgarian government was quite wise not to go too
far in the discrimination and prosecution of the Turkish minorities so that we could avoid conflicts.”

Hasan Azis holds a similar view:

“Of course, there were some tensions in history that created conflicts between Bulgarians and Turks. However, they have never become widespread events in either society or country. These conflicts were happened at in limited areas as isolated cases.”

History of peaceful co-existence (28%) and tolerance (23%) are mentioned here again. Tolerance of Turkish minority is also cited by 8% of the participants.

The figures below (10 and 11) show ethnically distributed responses. The importance of the lack of communal violence maintains its position as the most cited theme. However, it is more important for ethnic Bulgarians (86%) than for the Turkish minority (76%).
Figure 10 Responses of ethnic Bulgarians regarding lack of direct communal violence as a factor of non-violence

There is a difference of opinions about the role of the “history of tolerance”.

When lack of direct communal violence is asked, Turkish minorities believe that it was also a result of tolerance (32%) since there are examples of limited communal violence (40%) in history. On the other hand, one of the participants (Mr. Cetin Kazak, member of the parliament, MRF Party) from the Turkish minority says:

“The reason behind why there was not a violent conflict between groups is Turkish minority in Bulgaria is always being peaceful, tolerant, calm, and mostly comprised of farmers.”
However, such an attention on “tolerance” might well be a result of strong in-group bias, since once again only the Turkish interviewees, although as a minority opinion (12%), cited the high tolerance level of Turkish minority as a factor of non-violence.

![Turks](image)

**Figure 11** Responses of Turkish minority regarding lack of direct communal violence as a factor of non-violence

### 5.2.3. Recognition of Turkish identity through history

Existing literature suggests that throughout the history Turkish identity is not denied except for brief periods. Participants were asked about the role of this factor with the following question:

“How do you assess the relationship between ethnic Bulgarians and Turks in a historical perspective? Please take the following point into consideration:
Turkish identity is not denied throughout the history. Could this play a role?”

Figure 12 below presents undistributed responses to this question. 59% of the participants states that identity of Turkish minority in Bulgaria was acknowledged historically. That said, a bigger share of the respondents (69%) mentioned that the Turkish identity was denied during the regeneration process (which is a fact that was amply described in Chapters 1 and 3). Although the notorious regeneration process was a short period during the centuries old presence of Turks in today’s Bulgaria, its effects left a deep mark on the collective identity of the Turkish minority. Therefore, most Turkish respondents speak more about that “brief” period of identity denial than the longer history when identity was not denied. For instance, former MP Ahmed Huseyin says:

“Turks have always been here, their roots are here. Turkish identity was only denied during the second half of 1980s. They said ‘You are not Turk, you are Bulgarian’. However, that was not true. Turks have always maintained their presence”.

Timur Halilov argues the following: Turkish identity denial was a fact during the Communist era. The regime tried to have Turkish minority forget to speak and read Turkish, and changed their names. In 1984 they even erased Turkish names from graveyards and headstones. However, these were limited to final years of the Communist regime.”
A small portion of respondents (8%) also mentioned the denial of identity by contemporary nationalist parties. Mr. Kasim DAL from Freedom and Honor Public Party (a former MRF member) says:

“Unfortunately, today some people, who constitutes a portion of society, who are called as nationalists think very different about this issue. ... Even today they deny Turkish identity.”

Another small portion of participants (again 8%) also talked about the role of communist regime in denying the Turkish identity, which is also argued in previous chapters. Mr. Marin Lessenski, for instance, argues:

“Turkish identity has never been denied throughout the history. It was only the last years of Communist regime, Jivkov decided to change the system and Turkish
identity suppressed/denied. Jivkov created nationalistic feelings and used ethnic threat as a legitimacy-providing instrument of his policies and tried to keep support of Bulgarians.”

Figure 13 Responses of ethnic Bulgarians regarding recognition of Turkish identity through history as a factor of non-violence

Responses of ethnic Bulgarians in Figure 13 indicate a similar tendency with the combined data, which is similar for Turks in Figure 14 below. The majority of ethnic Bulgarians limit the denial of identity to the regeneration process (7%), and for today to the nationalist parties (7%). For Turks, 68% posit that such a denial is an exception where we can only see in the regeneration process and this is a mistake by the communist regime (8%). They also mentioned that even today nationalist parties deny Turkish identity (8%). Given the overall data, it can thus be inferred that the recognition of
Turkish identity throughout the history played an important role in preventing violent conflict.

Figure 14 Responses of Turkish minority regarding recognition of Turkish identity through history as a factor of non-violence

5.2.4. Turkish identity self-esteem as a factor of non-violence

Participants were asked about whether their Turkish identity provides self-esteem for them or not. Relevant interview question was formulated as follows:

“How do you assess the relationship, between ethnic Bulgarians and Turks in a historical perspective? Please take the following point into consideration:

Do you think that Turkish identity provided self-esteem to its members and if so could this play a role?”
Based on the combined response data in Figure 15 below, 59% of participants state that Turkish identity provides self-esteem and thus played a role in preventing violent conflict. Several arguments were made in that regard.

Professor Sevim Tahir argues that “Unlike to the identity of Pomaks, Turkish identity has never been a subject of a debate. Turks in Bulgaria are aware of their identity and origin, and political and historical developments are sources of proud to them.” Professor Zhelyazkova thinks that this positive self-esteem has a favorable impact on inter-ethnic relations. Professor Plamen Ralchev argues that the identity helped Bulgarian Turks to sustain assimilation pressures of the authoritarian regime, a view echoed by Timur Halilov as well.

Krasimir Kanev of Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, underlines self-esteem dynamic as it relates to a powerful kin state, Turkey, and the protection it gives to the minority group. He compares the Turkish minority to Pomak and Macedonian minorities, and argues that existence of a powerful kin state made assimilation attempts more difficult.

Professor Kostadin Grozev, on the other hand, relates the self-esteem issues to more recent political power issues, by arguing that

“Turkish minority has their own party, they have the capacity to influence the course of Bulgarian politics and they preserve their culture and traditions. Therefore, they seem to be proud of their identity. This may be interpreted as a positive development for their self-esteem. Since they believe that they can
contribute to Bulgarian system with their existence, they may not opt for violence.”

However, 13% of the participants also say that during the regeneration process policies of the communist regime prevented Turkish minority from having identity self-esteem. If we compare these results with the responses to the previous question, we can argue that if the minority identity is recognized and if it provides self-esteem, short-term identity denials and self-esteem issues might not necessarily lead to a violent conflict.

Figure 15 Responses regarding Turkish identity self-esteem as a factor of non-violence
In reply to this particular question, 8% of the participants argued that the situation of Turkish minority was significantly affected by the state of the relationship between Turkey and Bulgaria. Five percent (5%) of the participants said that Turkey’s support for Turkish minority in Bulgaria is important for identity self-esteem. This data will be analyzed in the systemic factors section below. Lastly, data show that elite efforts for improving minority rights and freedoms are also contributed to identity self-esteem, which in turn prevented a violent conflict.

![Figure 16 Responses of ethnic Bulgarians regarding Turkish identity self-esteem as a factor of non-violence](chart.png)

According to Figure 16, a majority (57%) of the ethnic Bulgarians believe that Turkish identity provides self-esteem and a smaller portion of respondents (14%) argue that it was only during the regeneration process that this was not the case. Again a
smaller portion (7%) of the respondents argued that Turkey’s support was important for identity self-esteem.

Figure 17 below shows that 60% of the Turkish respondents believe that Turkish identity provides self-esteem for its group members. This is only interrupted during the Regeneration Process (12%). Another small portion of the Turkish interviewees (12%) believes that relationship between Bulgaria and Turkey had direct impact on identity self-esteem. Role of Bulgarian elite (4%) and Turkey (4%) were also cited by few respondents as factors that affected identity self-esteem.
5.2.5. The civic notion of Bulgarian identity as a factor of non-violence

Another theory informed proposed factor at the domestic/societal level for non-violence is the civic notion of Bulgarian identity. Interviewees were asked the following question:

“How do you assess the relationship, between ethnic Bulgarians and Turks in a historical perspective? Please take the following point into consideration: Given the treatment of Jews during WWII, do you think that Bulgarian national identity is a civic one and could this play a role?”
Figure 18 Responses regarding the civic notion of Bulgarian identity as a factor of non-violence

Figure 18 shows that although the majority of the participants (36%) agree on the civic notion of Bulgarian identity, there is no significant difference between them and those who thinks otherwise (33%). For instance Professor Grozev and Martin Lassenki agrees on the civic notion of identity. Lassenski says:

“Of course, this [treatment of Jews] is really an excellent example of Bulgarian national identity is civic one. This shows that, especially during crisis times, ethnic Bulgarians became more tolerant. Regarding Turkish situation in the late 1980s, most of Bulgarians hadn’t known that what is happening.”
Professor Dimitar Bechev, who is the head of European Council on Foreign Relations in Sofia holds a similar view:

“I think the Bulgarian national identity has generally been civic. There is a liberal vision in the society, despite the counter-propaganda of the communist regime. The Bulgarians’ treatment of Jews during World War II is also an illustration of this phenomenon. Bulgarians did not deport Jews and did not prosecute them. This clearly shows the civic notion of Bulgaria’s nationalism understanding.”

However, Professor Kalinova argues that the treatment of Jews during World War II is rather specific and it would hardly be correct to draw general conclusions. Professor Salchiev argues that the Bulgarian identity is largely based on ethnicity and built upon anti-Ottoman feelings. He argues that the idea of civic identity is only espoused by certain elites. Professor Plamen Ralchev holds a similar position and says Bulgarian national identity is ethno-centric and it has not been upgraded so far. Sevim Tahir favors a similar view:

“Bulgarian national identity is nowhere near to the civic one. I would provide some examples in order to defend my hypothesis: If you declare you are Turk and Muslim, you will not be accepted as a “real” Bulgarian, Bulgarian of a heart. Bulgarian national identity is not inclusive one because the standards, which puts on the table are everything else but not civic.”

Ahmet Huseyin, a former MP, argues the following:

“I believe that Jewish issue and the Turkish issue are different. To be more honest, there is a double standard... Bulgarian identity is not the reason of the
absence of violence at that time, it was the success of Turkish minority which abstained from entering into a conflict.”

Krasimir Kanev, on the other hand, argues that Jews were not treated well during the World War II, there were many anti-Semitic laws at the time, and although some Jews in the mainland were not sent to the concentration camps, substantial numbers of Jews were deported to concentration camps.

Professor Zhelyazkova admits both, but end in the civic argument:

“A paradox exists in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian national identity is a civic one, the Bulgarian nation is civic, therefore de facto society both during WWII and nowadays lives and reacts in the complex situation of a civic nation. People, however, are not aware of that, and continue to stick to the ideological and theoretical content of the German school postulates of “one state - one nation”. This often leads to funny contradictions. Here is an example: some 5 to 10 per cent of the Bulgarians support the meetings of the far-right nationalist party Ataka and vote for it, however, when urged to support anti-semitism or extreme anti-Turkish actions, they recede. There is no chance for extreme nationalism to become en masse in Bulgaria or to win a considerable following in society because whether consciously or not the nation has been functioning for decades on end as a civic one.”

Finally, Professor Bakalova suggests, “like other national identities, Bulgarian national identity is a construct and comprises both ethnic and civic elements. It is a matter
of conjectural elements and political decision to emphasize more one set of elements or other.”

In addition, 13% of participants believe that it would not be correct to make generalizations moving just from the treatment of the Jewish minority during World War II to say that Bulgarian identity is a civic one. While some participants (5%) state that for what happens during conflict times, people tend to blame the communist regime and not the “Bulgarians”, a similar portion of the participants (5%) state that Bulgarian prejudice is against the Ottoman Empire not the Turks.

Figure 19 Responses of ethnic Bulgarians regarding the civic notion of Bulgarian identity as a factor of non-violence

Data on ethnic Bulgarians show that the majority of the participants (57%) believe that Bulgarian identity is a civic one and such a notion played a role in preventing violent
conflict. A small portion (7%) of Bulgarians think that the Bulgarian identity is not a civic one and making generalizations based on the Jewish example would be wrong.

![Graph showing responses of Turkish minority regarding the civic notion of Bulgarian identity as a factor of non-violence.](image)

**Figure 20** Responses of Turkish minority regarding the civic notion of Bulgarian identity as a factor of non-violence

For Turks, the majority (48%) believes that Bulgarian identity is not civic. On the other hand, nearly a quarter of (24%) the Turkish participants think that it is a civic one. 16% says making generalizations is wrong.
Eight percent (8%) of the Turkish minority believes that it was not the Bulgarian identity at play, since the Turks blamed communist regime, and not the Bulgarians for what happened during conflict time.

5.2.6. An easy escape: Putting the whole blame on Communism

Participants were also asked about whether putting all the blame of wrongdoings on the hated and vague figure of “communism” served as a factor of non-violence or not. The interview question was formulated as below:

“What do you think about the “regeneration process?” Do you think that the fact that communism being detested by both Turks and new Bulgarian elites helped alleviate the conflict?”

![Figure 21 Responses regarding scapegoating of Communism as a factor of non-violence](image)
According to the combined data in Figure 21, a majority of the participants (36%) considers regeneration process as a violation of human rights. Professor Maria Bakalova from the University of National and World Economy describes it as follows:

“From a human point of view the so-called “regeneration process” was a regretful barbarian act of forceful and humiliating attempt at changing the identity of a group of people. Politically, this kind of policy is typical for non-democratic regimes as one of “problem-solving” strategies in multiethnic societies in non-federal unitary states.”

![Bulgarians chart]

Figure 22 Responses of ethnic Bulgarians regarding scapegoating of Communism as a factor of non-violence
Moreover, 26% of the respondents state that this process was denounced by elites, which played a role in preventing a violent conflict. As Professor Evgenia Kalinova argues,

“At the end of 1989 Bulgaria experienced the deeply negative results of the ‘revival process’ both in inner and international scale. The failure of this policy was evident. The collapse of the Communist regime came, among other reasons, also as a result of the negative consequences of the ‘revival process’. Actually, the hatred was directed on the first place towards the overthrown dictator Zhivkov. He was associated with the worst features of the regime, including the ‘revival process’. As a result, this policy was generally condemned and the possible ethnic conflict was quickly prevented by the new political figures in the Bulgarian Communist Party and the (liberal) UDF.”

Twenty one percent (21%) recognizes that regeneration project was a project of the communist regime and it is blamed for those assimilation policies (15%). For instance, MP Cetin Kazak says that the regeneration process was a state policy of the Communist regime and therefore, the Turkish minority does not hold the whole Bulgarian nation responsible for it.

Thirteen percent (13%) mentioned the consensus among the elites against communism. Professor Zhelyazkova points out the unifying impact of “anti-communism” over the large and politically diverse new “democrats”, which also worked for more minority rights.
Professor Bechev underlines the impact of putting the blame on communism on reaching a consensus between Bulgarians and Turks:

“The regeneration process was the project of the Communist regime. It was assimilation campaign. When the regime changed, the new ruling elite did not support these policies. They declared that it was not the mistake of Bulgarian state but the faults of Communist regime. Therefore, they provided ample room for them to reconcile with the Turkish minority. Turks also did not insist on generalizing the problem. On the contrary, they tended to interpret it as the extravagant policies of the Zhivkov era. This enabled parties to reach a consensus.”

Distributed data about ethnic Bulgarians in Figure 22 indicate similar attitudes towards the regeneration process. Human rights violations are the most mentioned theme in replies to this question (43%). In the words of Kostadin Grozev:

“The Turks also suffered too much. So I think it was an anomaly. It was a very big mistake. It was also a crime because people were killed and tortured. It was anomaly of the communist regime; it was an anomaly in terms of the ethnic model of Bulgaria because it was not the natural state of relations between Bulgarians and Turks.”

Maria Bakalova says:

“From a human point of view the so-called “regeneration process” was a regretful barbarian act of forceful and humiliating attempt at changing the identity of a group of people. Politically, this kind of policy is typical for non-
democratic regimes as one of “problem-solving” strategies in multiethnic societies in non-federal unitary states.”

Timur Halilov also says:

“This process is the summit of all efforts to eradicate the Turkish identity. It resulted huge deal of torture which in-turn triggered the resistance.”

Bulgarians consider this period as the project of the communist regime (36%) and thus as a period that was not representative of the larger Bulgarian society. Respondents also underlined that there is a shared elite ideology against communism (14%), which denounced regeneration process (14%), did not support any of the assimilation policies and took action to increase minority rights and freedoms (14%).

![Figure 23] Responses of Turkish minority regarding scapegoating of Communism as a factor of non-violence

Figure 23 Responses of Turkish minority regarding scapegoating of Communism as a factor of non-violence
As shown in Figure 23, a smaller portion (32%) of the Turkish respondents mentions about the human rights violation aspect of the regeneration process. However, Turks give more credit to elite denouncing of regeneration process than Bulgarians (32% vs 14%). Turks also blame the communist regime and not the entire Bulgarian society for assimilation policies (24%) and recognize that the regeneration process was a project of communist regime (12%). Turkish minority also mentioned about the role of shared ideology of elites against communism, which contributed to reconciliation between groups. Deputy Ombudsman of Sofia Mr. Huseyin Ismail shares following:

“I think the framing of communism as the “common enemy” played an important role in closing the gap between the two communities. The leaders of both communities also conceptualized regeneration process as the guilt of the communist era, which provided both sides to reconcile in the post-communist era.”

5.2.7. Public apology as a factor of non-violence

The role of public apology in preventing violent conflict was inquired with the following question:

“What was the role of public apology and acknowledgement of crimes committed during the “regeneration process” on reconciliation?”

The role of public apology is highly mentioned by the participants. 64% believes that it played an important role in preventing violent conflict. Krassimir Kanev believes that public apology in different manifestations had a strong positive impact on the reconciliation:
“There were several apologies and acknowledgement of the crimes of the regeneration process. Some of these were stated immediately after the fall of communism and took many different forms. Some of the acts of the governments should also be considered as implicit apology. For example, amnesties were given to the Turks who were in prison due to their objections to the regeneration process. All these things have a positive effect on reconciliation.”

Professor Hakov and Hasan Azis believe that the “apologies” played an important role in reconciliation.

On the other hand, 18% thinks that it did not directly play a role in preventing violent conflict. Some, like Ahmed Huseyin and Izzet Ismailov argues the apology came late. In Ismailov’s words:

“Public apology is important. However, I do not think that it played a role in preventing issue from turning into a violent conflict, because apology was declared after issue has been resolved.”

Others (13%) say that public apology is not enough, 8% believes that there was no real public apology as it should be. Ahmed Ahmedov from the Office of Mufti argues that there was not a collective apology or efforts to rehabilitate individuals:

“There were individual apologies from different political groups. However, the state did not apologize. Everybody tries us to forget this period (regeneration). The state did not compensate. There was no trial, nobody was accused, and nobody paid a price.”
Some other 8% argues that it is the reinstatement of freedoms and rights of minorities that played a role in preventing violent conflict. To Professor Kostadin Grozev from University of St. Kiliment in Sofia, for example, the “real public apology was realized when the Turkish deputies took their places in the national assembly. They became part of the political system.”

MP Cetin Kazak too argues that the reinstatement of rights and freedoms in early 1990 was instrumental to pass the transition without violence.

![Figure 24 Responses regarding public apology as a factor of non-violence](image)

Ethnic Bulgarians gives credit to the role of public apology in preventing a violent conflict. Sixty four percent (64%) believes that it played an important role. However,
21% stated that it did not directly play a role and 7% says there was no real public apology as expected. One of the Bulgarians who thinks that there was no real apology is Professor Maria Bakalova. She says:

“I do not think that a real and comprehensive process of reconciliation regarding the “regeneration process” actually took place. For sure, Bulgarian President Stoyanov offered an apology in front of the Turkish parliament for the injustices to the Bulgarian Turks during the renaming campaign. However, no such thing happened within Bulgaria between the groups.”

A majority of the Turkish respondents (64%), too, believes that public apology played an important role in preventing a violent conflict. Cetin Kazak, Cengiz Hakov and Sevim Tahir all underline the importance of public apology in reconciliation. Huseyin
Ismail, Deputy Ombudsman of Sofia, indicates that the public apology increased public awareness on the crimes committed, as most practices during the regeneration period was hid from the larger Bulgarian public. Ismail Cambazov from Sofia Islamic Institute says the public apology gave a sense of security and assurance to the Turks that they will not be persecuted again.

Another 20% says that public apology is not enough; while 16% says it did not have a direct impact on violent conflict prevention.

![Figure 26 Responses of Turkish minority regarding public apology as a factor of non-violence](image)

While only 12% of Turkish minority mentions the role of the reinstatement of freedoms and rights of minorities, no Bulgarian respondent uses this theme as a non-
violence factor. Lastly, 8% of Turkish minority states that there was no real apology as it should be.

5.3. International/Systemic Level Factors of Non-violence
The following questions about International/Systemic level factors of non-violence were also asked during the interview process.

5.3.1. EU integration/membership process
The question about the role of EU integration/membership process is formulated as follows:

“How did the EU membership process affect the relationship between Bulgarian and Turkish communities and the minority issues? Please, also add your views on the impact of quick transition to democracy on alleviating the conflict.”

Overall data about the role of the EU integration/membership process are presented in Figure 27 below. More than half of the participants (51%) say that it had positive effect on preventing violent conflict. One of the reasons that they provided was that the EU integration process also improved minority rights (44%). Professor Maria Bakalova, for example, argues that the EU’s setting minority protection as one of the preconditions for membership and EU membership stimulating tolerance, rule of law and intra-community cooperation played a positive role in the Bulgarian context:

“First, the European integration of Bulgaria further engrained the presence of the Bulgarian Turks in the Bulgarian political space and enhanced it to the European institutions through the MPs in European Parliament from the MRF. Second, there are potential possibilities for social and economic development of
Bulgarian Turks stemming from various EU funds available to Bulgaria. Third, as Bulgarian citizens, Bulgarian Turks become also European citizens with all the opportunities and current (hopefully temporarily) limitations of this status. Overall, the EU sets minority protection as one of the preconditions for membership. In more general terms the EU membership stimulates tolerance, rule of law and intra-community cooperation.”

Lubov Panayotov, the Director of European Institute, and former Deputy Minister of Economy underlines the driving force of the EU membership process in granting new rights to minorities and establishing new institutions ensuring the enlargement of these rights.

In addition, 23% of the respondents say that this process democratized Bulgarian politics. Professor Kostadin Grozev, for instance, says that EU membership process promoted democracy and human rights in Bulgaria; therefore it also increased the conditions of minorities. MP Metin Kazak also argues that the EU membership helped introduction of democratic institutions and rule of law.

However, there are also negative opinions regarding the role of the EU integration process. While 21% of the participants said that the process produced less impact than expected on minority rights, some 8% states that it paradoxically provided an opportunity for nationalist parties to follow populist/racist politics.
Looking into ethnic Bulgarian data in Figure 28 below, obviously they all have positive opinions regarding the effect of this process. A big majority (79%) of ethnic Bulgarians says EU membership process had a positive effect on preventing violent conflict through improving minority rights (64%), and democratizing Bulgarian politics (36%). Professor Dimitar Bechev, for instance, posits that:

“I think, overall, it has a very positive effect. The EU membership process created new incentives to democratize Bulgarian political system and improve the rights
of minority groups. Bulgaria signed new documents to further the rights of minorities.”

Figure 28 Responses ethnic Bulgarians regarding the EU integration/membership process as a factor of non-violence
Although not as much as Bulgarians think, 36% of the Turkish respondents say that this process had a positive effect on preventing violent conflict. More (40%) believes that this process improved minority rights in Bulgaria and 24% says it contributed to the democratization of Bulgarian politics.

When it comes to negative opinions, 32% of Turkish interviewees seem not satisfied with the impact of the EU integration process on improving minority rights.

Complaining about the implementation, Ismail Canbazov from Sofia Islamic Institute argues that although Bulgaria signed all the documents regarding minority rights as part of its membership process, they were not put into practice. He gives the example of mother tongue education, which is signed but minority schools are not permitted.

Journalist Sezgin Mumin makes a similar point:
“Bulgaria was not ready to join EU, however its accession was easy because of its strategic position. The biggest issue in Bulgaria is lack of justice. You can see this in our reports. In Bulgaria, minority issues were not resolved, most reforms were not done, but Bulgaria joined the EU. Bulgaria signed the Framework Convention for The Protection of National Minorities but did not put it into practice. It is also the poorest member of the EU.”

Moreover, 12% of respondents think that the EU membership process provided an opportunity for nationalist parties to pursue their extreme ideologies in the Bulgarian political sphere.

5.3.2. Kin state as a factor of non-violence

To inquire the role Turkey as a kin state actor the following question was asked:

“What do you think about the relationship between Bulgaria and Turkey as well as Turkey’s role in ethnic relations in Bulgaria? Please, also add your views on the impact of end of Cold War on the ethnic conflict.”
Figure 30 Responses regarding the role of kin state as a factor of non-violence

Figure 30 shows that majority of the participants (41%) gives credit to the role of Turkey’s cautious policies regarding minority issues in Bulgaria. 31% believes that the relationship between the two countries is good, and economic ties have a positive effect (23%). Another theme here is the mutual membership to NATO, as 21% states that it played an important role in preventing an ethnic conflict. Mr. Krassimir Kanev gives the following explanation:

“Bulgaria’s membership to NATO the EU was quite positive developments in this sense. This played a decisive role on avoiding the ethnic conflicts.”

On the other hand, 18% of participants value the role of Turkey as kin state as they argue that the Turkish minority relies on Turkey for solving their problems.
Distributed data of ethnic Bulgarians in Figure 31 shows that Bulgarians value the cautious policies of Turkey regarding minority issues in Bulgaria (57%). In addition, equal portion (36%) of respondents says economic relations and mutual membership to NATO have also positive effects. Lastly, according to 29% of ethnic Bulgarians, the relationship between two countries is good.
Based on the information in Figure 32, the majority of Turkish minority (32%) says Turkey follows cautious policies about ethnic issues in Bulgaria. Another equally important theme is the level of relationship between two countries, which described as “good” by similar portion (32%) of the respondents. For Turkish respondents, Turkey is important as a kin state (28%) since they rely on Turkey for solving their issues. According to them economic relations between two countries (16%) and mutual membership to NATO (12%) have also a positive effect.
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

This final chapter summarizes the research objectives and findings of the research. It provides a summary of conclusions drawn from the thematic analysis of the interview data.

6.1. Implications for Theory

When the Bulgarian conflict is analyzed through existing conflict theories, we discover a clear identity based conflict. We see that there are ample reasons and it is a fertile ground for a violent conflict.

The Bulgarian popular narrative, which is still valid today, characterizes the 5 centuries long Ottoman rule as a yoke and a long difficult period of history. The suffering, independence struggle, and Bulgarian’s taking control of their homeland are marked by mythic narratives. Therefore when the Communist regime started to lose power, it found a threat and enemy figure in the name of “minority” to mobilize popular support and ramp up the ailing regime. Turkish Muslim minority, as the living remnants of the bitter past and former enemy, played the role of a negative shared reservoir (Volkan 1998) to project negative thoughts as well as to strengthen the “we-ness” feeling by opposing the outgroup. One of the interviewees, a Bulgarian Turkish politician Korman Ismailov argues that the “500 years of Turkish slavery” slogan is used for
propaganda purposes and since the Turkish minority is regarded as a fifth column, they were tried to be controlled and were isolated.

The treatment of the minority during the final years of communism and the so-called regeneration process show that the theories of Burton and Azar (1990) regarding ontological and non-negotiable basic human needs, including recognition, identity, acceptance, and fair access to institutions were denied to the minority. Therefore, there was fertile ground for a violent conflict. In addition, we also witnessed a near failing state in the final years of communism, as the state was not able to meet the needs of the minority. This was multiplied with the state policy of persecution. All of our interviewees spoke about the communist repressive policies against the minority with strong negative terms. The dire state of affairs was explained by MP Cetin Kazak as one of the darkest pages in Bulgarian history, during which even the existence of Turkish community was denied.

In order to justify the assimilation policies, the communist regime used socio-psychological mechanisms, including victimization, dehumanization, selective recall, over-simplification, and stereotyping. Myths regarding the difficult Ottoman period were utilized to deepen borders between majority Bulgarians and minority Turks, and to achieve cognitive blindness on the part of the majority. These policies deepened the ingroup - outgroup and we – they divisions in the society.

To conclude, analyzed through existing theories in the field of CAR and given the collected data, there are ample factors that could turn the latent conflict into a manifest
one. Therefore, it is important to see what prevented the violent eruption, a quest that this research would like to make as an important contribution to the field.

The factors that prevented a violent conflict in the Bulgarian case were analyzed at three levels: elite, domestic/societal, and international/systemic. When the roles of elites were analyzed, two leaders, Zhelev and Dogan, and their policies came forward. Most interviewees (69%) praised the role that the first democratically elected President of Bulgaria Zhelev played in the initial years of the transition. Respondents credit Zhelev for using his political power and his personal influence to calm down people and promote democracy and a culture of peaceful coexistence. They also underline Zhelev’s strong support to achieve positive ethnic relations. Ahmed Dogan too received credit from most interviewees (67%) for pursuing a peaceful policy to get democratic rights, rejecting violence, and creating a political space for the minority by establishing a mainstream political party. His rejection of violent resistance, even during communism, played a key role in preventing a violent eruption of the conflict. A quarter of respondents also gave credit to other personalities, who were office holders during the fragile initial years of democracy, in averting violence, mainly through their roles in reinstating the rights of the minority.

The findings show that despite the existence of an identity conflict, responsible and legitimate leaders, which follow sound and sensible policies (Mueller 2001) to unite people despite divisions and past mistakes, could play a vital role in preventing the conflict into turning violent.
On the domestic/societal level, I found a lack of direct communal violence between Bulgarian and Turkish communities (79%), history of coexistence (44%) and culture of tolerance (23%) as important factors that prevented a violent eruption. The only low-density violent period was experienced during the relatively short regeneration period (69%). The fact that despite all ups and downs in the status of minorities, the recognition of a separate Turkish – Muslim minority (except during regeneration process) and the ability of a separate Turkish – Muslim identity to provide self esteem to its members also played a significant role. These findings show that identity denial and assimilation policies do not necessarily lead to violent conflicts, but the history of relations between parties and past treatment of identities could play as important factors in that regard.

In addition, most interviewees spoke strongly against the regeneration process and the communist regime. Most put the blame of the assimilation policies on the vague figure of “communists”. Putting responsibility on a third party that does not exist anymore played an important role in dealing with the past trauma. This also created a common enemy figure (communists) for both Bulgarians and Turks. That factor also prevented, to a certain degree, Turks blaming the other as a whole. Meanwhile, Communism being the perpetrator also makes the apology easier. And many interviewees (64%) believed in the importance of the apology in preventing a violent conflict. Therefore, not in every conflict, “good-us vs bad-them” categorization, which encompasses all of “other”, is absolute. Depending on the context and historical experience, parties might use other elements to define the enemy other. More
importantly, putting responsibility on an actor that does not exist anymore plays an
important role in dealing with the past traumas.

Given Bulgaria’s positive treatment of the Jews during World War II, I also
inquired whether the Bulgarian nationality as a civic one and whether that could have
played a role in averting a violent conflict in late 80s and early 90s. However, while a
small number of respondents identify the Bulgarian identity as civic (36%), a similar
number of respondents reject the notion (33%). When I looked at the distributed data,
there exists a clear positive bias, as more Bulgarians (57%) think that the Bulgarian
identity is civic and more Turks (48%) think the opposite. This shows the play of a bias
factor. Since civic identity is a positive factor, ethnic Bulgarian respondents have more
positive ingroup bias, whilst ethnic Turks demonstrate negative bias against the other.
This is yet another example of how positive-self and negative-other bias still exists in the
identity conflict in Bulgaria.

In terms of systemic level factors, the research looked into the role of the EU
membership process and relations with Turkey. More than half of the respondents believe
that EU membership process had a positive impact, especially by ensuring the increase of
the minority rights. When looked at distributed data, one third of the Turks argued that
the membership process did not yield expected improvements. However, they also
acknowledged the important role of the EU as at least it puts a roadmap on what to do to
ensure rights. These findings confirm the positive role that international actors can play in
preventing violent conflicts.
Findings on the role of Turkey underline the importance of kin states in identity conflicts. About half of the participants acknowledge Turkey for not fueling the ethnic problem in Bulgaria. About a third of the interviewees also believe that the good relations were established after communism and the specific policies of two states played important roles in preventing a violent internal conflict. Since available literature on the role of kin states mostly focus on negative examples, this study is might be important as it offers a positive example to the literature.

6.2. Implications for Research and Policy

As Sandole (2007) underlines, conflict theory, research and practice are all intimately connected with the real world. Thus, results of a research should indicate elements for further research and this research also puts forward findings and elements, which require further research.

When considering the conflict dynamics, the Bulgarian case has many factors, including chosen traumas, relative deprivation, denial of BHN, and frustration / aggression processes that prepare a ground for an aggressive conflict. This research argues the role of various factors at different levels in preventing violence. Further research is needed to see whether the factors argued in this research are at play in other conflicts, which did not turn into violence. This is also important to have a better understanding about each factor and to what extent they played that role. Similar studies will also help us understand how to achieve a non-violent course of action during conflicts.
On elite level factors, the overall data show that community leaders played an important role in preventing a violent eruption. The role of the leaders is important as they relate to many factors in other levels. For instance, the role of elites in public apology (relational level), which played an important role in alleviating the conflict, or their commitment to the EU membership process (systemic level) played interrelated positive roles in preventing violence. On the other hand, this is not a one-way relationship and we see that communal or systemic level factors also affect elite level ones. For instance, the lure of the EU membership especially in terms of economic development affected the policies of the elites, as some of the minority rights were granted because this was a membership requirement. We also see that other systemic level factors, such as the relations between the country and the kin state, as well as the attitude of the kin state, have important implications on the communal level factors, including self-esteem, which all have effects of the non-violence (and violence) outcome.

To conclude, all factors that are analyzed in this research need further analysis to both see their individual as well as interrelated roles in alleviating conflicts. These factors should also be analyzed not only in non-violent cases but also in violent conflicts to see which factors or their lack of are at play.

Although the findings suggest there is a culture of peaceful coexistence between these two communities, there are still problematic areas with regard to trust and negative perceptions. Bulgarian elites should show necessary efforts to make Bulgaria a liberal European democracy to achieve Galtungian positive peace in terms of majority – minority relations. Based on interviews and available literature, the use of the mother
tongue in public space (including during political campaigns), the support of media in minority language, a proper representation in civil service and public offices, the elimination of discriminatory and degrading elements in school curricula, and an introduction of legal action mechanisms for racist actions are among steps that should be taken in that regard.

CAR practitioners could also benefit from the findings. In their works on different conflicts, they could build upon positive historical tenets and practices, notably coexistence and tolerance examples, encourage the parties for accepting past mistakes and making apologies, encouraging elites to be embracing, showing empathy to the minority groups, enlarging the political space for them, and encouraging the kin states and other international actors to pursue peaceful policies.

6.4. Conclusion

This research tried to analyze the factors that played a role in averting a violent conflict in the Bulgarian case, where elements for a potential violent encounter were not missing. It focused on the historical relations between the majority Bulgarians and the minority Turks. Based on existing literature on the Bulgarian case and in the field of CAR, it offered theory informed preliminary answers to the research question. Data were collected through semi-standardized expert interviews and analyzed by a thematic method. While the analyzed data confirmed most of the arguments made before the field research, it failed to do so in certain cases. In that regard, the positive role of elites, lack of direct communal violence, Turkish identity recognition, communism being the
common enemy, public apology, EU integration, and role of kin state were positive factors.

Additional research is needed to confirm or further define the roles of factors articulated in this study. However, based on the results, one can argue that Bulgarian elites should transform the country into a true liberal European democracy to heal the wounds of the past and deal with the rising racist and xenophobic tendencies in the country to ensure full integration of minority groups.
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