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GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS PROGRAM  
MASTER’S THESIS**

**EXPLAINING MODERATE DEMANDS OF AN ETHNIC PARTY: INTRA-  
ETHNIC PARTY COMPETITION AMONG TURKISH ETHNIC PARTIES  
IN BULGARIA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Master's Thesis**

#### **Explaining the Moderate Demands of an Ethnic Party: Intra-Ethnic Party Competition among Turkish Parties in Bulgaria**

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**Graduate School of Social Sciences**

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**This study provides an overview of the impact of the lack of intra-ethnic party competition in Bulgaria that has resulted from institutional restrictions on moderate ethnic behavior from the Turkish ethnic party. According to intra-ethnic party competition, ethnic parties must attract their supporter through ethnic and territorial demands due to the expectations of their ethnic groups. When they encounter other ethnic parties, they make more attractive or extremist demands to keep their supporters. In analyzing the intra-ethnic party competition argument, the study places great emphasis on the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, which has not had any ethnic competitor since its establishment.**

**The institutional restrictions on ethnic politics in Bulgaria seem to have been a catalyst in creating the lack of intra-ethnic party competition as other Turkish parties were either banned by the constitution or were unable to overcome the required threshold due to the population of Turks present in the country. In fact, based on a survey and interviews from the Kardzhali region, however, the Turkish population has a tendency to vote for other Turkish parties and to support extremist demands such as including cultural and territorial autonomy. When a more extremist Turkish party is allowed to run in the elections, the Movement for Rights Freedoms (MRF) must adopt more extremist demands to attract its supporters.**

**However, institutional restrictions can assist ethnic parties in becoming the sole party in minority populated areas, which does not have to adopt any extremist policies since the ethnic group will support the party's cause in any case. In addition, Turkey is an important actor to enhance the political monopoly of the MRF over the Turkish population. As a result, the MRF does not need to promise more radical demands, due to the fact that the Turkish population supports the party in any case.**

**Keywords: Ethnic Parties, MRF, Intra-ethnic Party Competition, Institutional Restrictions, Turkish Parties in Bulgaria, Turkey.**

## **ÖZET**

**Yüksek Lisans Tezi**

**Etnik Parti'nin ılımlı Taleplerini Açıklamak: Bulgaristan'daki Türk  
Partileri Arasındaki Seçim Rekabeti**

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Bu çalışma, Bulgaristan'daki kurumsal kısıtlamalar sonucu ortaya çıkan etnik partiler arasındaki seçim rekabeti olmamasının, Türk partisi'nin ılımlı talepleri üzerine olan etkisini incelemektedir. Etnik partiler, seçmenlerinin beklentileri doğrultusunda, seçmenlerini teritoryal ve etnik talepler ile cezbetmek zorundadır. Özellikle, diğer rakip etnik partiler ile karşılaştıklarında, seçmenlerinin desteğini almak için, etnik partiler daha cezbedici veya radikal taleplerde bulunurlar. Bu çalışma, etnik partiler arasında rekabet argumanı doğrultusunda, kuruluşundan bu yana etnik parti rakibi olmayan Hak ve Özgürlükler Hareketi'ni inceliyor.

Bulgaristan'da etnik politika üzerine kurumsal yasaklamaların, etnik parti rekabetinin olmaması üzerine katalizör etkisi vardır. Çünkü diğer Türk partileri anayasa tarafından yasaklandı veya ülkede bulunan Türklerin nüfusu dolayısıyla seçim barajını aşamadılar. Aslında, Kırcaali bölgesindeki gerçekleşen anket ve röportajlara göre, Türk nüfusunun başka bir partiye oy verme ve daha radikal talepleri, bölgesel ve kültürel özerklik gibi, destekleme eğilimleri vardır. Bu yüzden, normalde daha radikal bir Türk partisi seçimlere katıldığı zaman, Hak ve Özgürlükler Hareketi'nin (HÖH), seçmenlerini cezbetmek için, daha radikal taleplerde bulunmak zorunda kalacağı varsayılabilir.

Fakat, Bulgaristan'daki araştırmanın ve diğer Türk partilerinden örneklerinde gösterdiği gibi, kurumsal kısıtlamaların, etnik partilerin azınlık bölgelerinde tek parti olmasında önemli bir etkisi vardır. Seçmenler tek partiye

her durumda destekleceğinden dolayı, partinin radikal taleplerde bulunmasına gerek kalmamaktadır. Türkiye HÖH'ün Türk azınlığı üzerinde politik olarak monopol olmasında önemli bir etkisi vardır. Sonuç olarak, HÖH seçmen desteğini her durumda alabildiğinden, seçmenlerini cezbetmek için daha radikal talepler bulunmasına gerek olmamaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Etnik Partiler, HÖH, Etnik Grup İçerisinde Partilerin Rekabeti, Kurumsal Kısıtlamalar, Bulgaristan'daki Türk Partileri, Türkiye.

**EXPLAINING THE MODERATE DEMANDS OF AN ETHNIC PARTY:  
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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>ATAKA</b>	National Union Attack
<b>BCP</b>	Bulgarian Communist Party
<b>BSP</b>	Bulgarian Socialist Party
<b>CEDB</b>	Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria
<b>DJP</b>	Democratic Justice Party
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>MRF</b>	Movement for Rights and Freedoms
<b>NMRF</b>	National Movement for Rights and Freedoms
<b>NMSS</b>	National Movement Simeon II
<b>PDC</b>	Party for Democratic Changes (PDC)
<b>TDP</b>	Turkish Democratic Party
<b>UDF</b>	United Democratic Forces
<b>UMD</b>	United for Muslim Democrats

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1980s, the Communist Regime of Bulgaria adopted strict ethnic policies that mainly aimed to assimilate the Turkish minority. The degree of ethnic violence<sup>1</sup> in Bulgaria was also higher than in Kosovo, Bosnia, and Macedonia, during the same period.<sup>2</sup> Due to the simmering ethnic tensions in the country, some observers even expected an outbreak of civil war in Bulgaria, and not in Yugoslavia, at the end of the Cold War.<sup>3</sup> However, unlike Yugoslavia, Bulgaria has not been confronted with any ethnic civil wars to this day. Despite these expectations based on the repressive policies of Bulgaria, the Turkish population did not engage in combat with the state. Instead, it integrated with the state through an ethnic political party, named as the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF), which later became a member of the government on two occasions.

This study mainly purposes to explain the transformation of the Turkish ethnic group from one that was excluded and repressed to one that is now an integrated ethnic political party. It considers the moderate demands of the MRF from the Bulgarian state, such as the freedom to use Turkish names and the language, the ability to practice Islam openly, and the ability to learn Turkish in schools as an elective course, as one of the key factors to explain this transformation.

Furthermore, although Bulgaria became a member of the European Union in 2007, the state still blocks the political participation of its minorities in the form of ethnic- and religious-based parties, which are banned by the constitution. The state also upholds a 4% electoral threshold that negatively affects the political representation of minorities due to their population. This study also aims to clarify the impact of these institutional restrictions on the moderate political behavior of the MRF.

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<sup>1</sup> Ethnic violence refers to violence motivated by ethnic hatred and ethnic conflict.

<sup>2</sup> Maria Koinova, "Why Do Ethnonational Conflicts Reach Different Degrees of Violence? Insights from Kosovo, Macedonia, and Bulgaria during the 1990s," **Nationalism and Ethnic Politics**, Vol. 15, No. 1, 2009, pp. 89-90.

<sup>3</sup> Bernd Rechel, "State Control of Minorities," **Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics**, Vol. 23, No. 3, 2007, pp. 352-370.

This study argues that the moderate behavior of the MRF is worth studying for several reasons. First, according to an ongoing debate on ethnic politics, since ethnic parties mainly aim to take the support of a particular ethnic group; they tend to adopt extremist demands about ethnic and territorial issues in order to attract their supporters.<sup>4</sup> Extremist demands, in general, intensify ethnic issues, and sometimes cause ethnic conflicts, such as in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Macedonia. In addition, since the Turks experienced serious human rights violations during 1980s, observers expected the Turks to escalate ethnic polarization in Bulgaria after the Cold War.

In contrast with this argument and expectations of numerous observers, the Turkish party, the MRF, has not adopted any extremist demands since its establishment and has positioned itself as a moderate party that does not aim to challenge the institutional or territorial integrity of Bulgaria. The MRF instead has aimed at integration into the state institutions of Bulgaria, not the establishment of autonomous cultural or political institutions, demonstrated by the fact that it became a member of the coalition government two times. The MRF has only focused on ensuring the fundamental human rights of its population, such as the freedom to use Turkish names and the language, the ability to practice Islam openly, and the ability to learn Turkish in schools as an elective course. Rather than adopting extremist demands, the MRF has just demanded to improve basic human rights of the Turkish population prohibited by the communist regime.

The moderate political behavior of the MRF remains an important factor in Bulgaria's peaceful political transition. According to Hoepken, "compared not only with [the] former Yugoslavia but also with Romania, the peace between the Bulgarians and the Turks must be upheld as a genuine success story in the endeavor to cope with ethnic tensions in post-Communist Eastern Europe."<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Rechel argues that "the participation of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms in the political life of Bulgaria helped greatly to reduce inter-ethnic

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<sup>4</sup> Donald Horowitz, **Ethnic Groups in Conflict**, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1985, p. 291.

<sup>5</sup> Wolfgang Hoepken, "From Religious Identity to Ethnic Mobilisation: The Turks of Bulgaria before, under, and since Communism," **Muslim Identity and Balkan State**, (Ed. Hugh Poulton and Suha Taji-Farouki) C. Hurst, London, 1997, p. 78.

tension and its moderation might have been 'the single most important factor' for the peaceful transition in Bulgaria.”<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile, for the Turkish population in Bulgaria, the need for an ethnic Turkish party arises from several possible reasons. Although Bulgaria has been a member the European Union (EU) since 2007, political and economic discrimination still continues against the Turks in society and politics.<sup>7</sup> Many Turks also believe that Bulgarian political parties do not tend to protect the rights of the Turkish minority, as the Bulgarian nationalism that has centered the Turks and Muslims as the enemy remains an effective factor during elections.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, Bulgarian parties have not aimed to improve any minority rights since the end of Cold War, because they have mainly sought out the support of the Bulgarians. As a result, many Turks argue that they need an ethnic Turkish party to improve their economic and political status in Bulgaria.<sup>9</sup> However, their sole available choice at election time is the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, so they will vote for the MRF even though some of them do not support all of the party's policies.<sup>10</sup>

This study assumes that one of the reasons behind the moderate behavior of the MRF regarding its ethnic, territorial, and cultural issues due to the lack of intra-ethnic party competition, which has resulted from the institutional restrictions on ethnic parties in Bulgaria, including the constitutional ban on ethnic parties and the electoral threshold. During the MRF's establishment, the institutional restrictions forced the Turkish community to choose a non-ethnic party name. In addition, to become a legal political party, the MRF also did not adopt any territorial demands due to the constitutional ban. Later, the MRF did not need to espouse more attractive demands to increase its votes because it had already become the sole political option for the Turkish population.

This study considers the state's institutional restrictions the most important factor in creating a lack of political choice for the Turkish people among other

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<sup>6</sup> Bernd Rechel, “The ‘Bulgarian Ethnic Model’ – Reality or Ideology?” **Europe – Asia Studies**, Vol. 59, No. 7, 2007, p. 1210.

<sup>7</sup> Field research in Bulgaria, July and August, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Field research in Bulgaria, July and August, 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Field research in Bulgaria, July and August, 2012.

<sup>10</sup> Field research in Bulgaria, July and August, 2012.



possible factors, such as solid leadership, strong political mobilization, and the good governance of the MRF. Consequently, since the MRF has a monopoly over the Turkish population and its supporters vote for the party in general, there is no need for it to radicalize ethnic demands. However, according to the intra-ethnic party competition argument, discussed further in the following chapters, even in the possible rise of another Turkish party, the MRF is likely to adopt more extreme demands to attract its population and to keep its electoral success. Extremist parties can be blocked by the institutions, because “they [institutions] define who is able to participate in the particular political arena, shape the different actors, political strategies and influence what these actors believe to be both possible and desirable.”<sup>11</sup>

The Turks are unable to establish or support a new Turkish political party because other parties have either been banned by the constitution or are unable to overcome the electoral threshold. Turkish population seems aware of the fact that when there are two Turkish parties, at least one of them will not be able to overcome the threshold due to the population of Turks present in Bulgaria. In addition, there is the possibility that both Turkish parties will not be able to enter into the parliament when they participate in elections simultaneously. In a nutshell, the constitutional ban and the threshold keep multiple Turkish political parties from existence in Bulgarian politics.

However, is it also important to note that during the establishment of political institutions, although the Bulgarian state aimed to weaken political representation of the Turkish minority and block extremist demands through the constitutional ban and the electoral threshold; it has actually enhanced political representation of the Turks since the MRF can overcome the electoral threshold. In other words, since the Turks have always supported the MRF, they can always be represented in the Bulgarian parliament with no trouble. However, if the state allowed the establishment of ethnic based parties, the Turks would more likely to be represented by several Turkish parties. As a result, it would decrease representation power of the Turkish community in the parliament.

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<sup>11</sup> R.A.W. Rhodes, Sarah A. Binder, and Bert A. Rockman, **The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions**, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2006, pp. 4-5.

In addition to the institutional restrictions on ethnic politics, this study also analyzes international actors, in particular the European Union (EU) and Turkey, to explain the political behavior of the MRF. However, this study argues that the impact of the EU on the political participation and the collective rights of minorities in Bulgaria remained limited due to the fact that ethnic parties are banned by Bulgarian constitution and there are many obstacles on the implementation of the human rights. Although the impact of the EU on the MRF is limited, this study analyzes the EU in detail due to its importance in the region.

In contrast to the EU, this study considers Turkey as one of the important factors in understanding the moderate demands and the monopoly of the MRF for following reasons. First, parallel to its foreign policy principles; Turkey has never intervened into the domestic affairs of Bulgaria after the establishment of the MRF. Second, Turkey has supported the MRF to remain single political representative of the Turkish population. Third, Turkey also encouraged the MRF to adopt moderate demands from the Bulgarian state to due to its own secessionist Kurdish political movement. Fourth, the Bulgarian Turks in Turkey have a right to vote in the general elections in Bulgaria which can have a significant impact on the ethnic politics. As a result, this study is mainly concerned with Turkey and how it enhances the monopoly of the MRF as well as encourages it to make moderate demands.

Among other factors for explaining the political behavior of the MRF, such as economy, election system, corruption, representational system, and leader based factors, this study focuses on the lack of intra-ethnic party competition and Turkey for following reasons. First, as explained in following chapters in detail, some possible factors are unable to explain the moderate demands of the MRF. For instance, the argument, which claims that economic differences increase the possibility of radicalization of ethnic demands, does not explain political behavior of the MRF, since the Turkish populated areas remain less developed than other regions in Bulgaria. In addition, during the post-Cold period, the ethnic politics in Bulgaria was greatly shaped by the institutional restrictions and Turkey through its effectiveness on the Turkish population.

Among the available subset of ethnic parties or mobilization opportunities for further study in Bulgaria, this study primarily emphasizes the Turkish population because they represent the biggest minority group (8.4%) and have a strong political representation—the MRF—in Bulgaria.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, other minorities, including Roma (4.7%), Pomaks (1-2%), and Macedonians (less than 1%) are not the topic of this study because they have not been effective political players due to their population size as they either cannot overcome the required 4% threshold in elections.<sup>13</sup>

This study defines the “ethnic Turkish population” as an ethnic group that speaks the Turkish language and whose members consider themselves a part of the ethnic Turkish group in Bulgaria. Therefore Pomaks or Gypsies, who also consider themselves Turks due to the “millet system” of the Ottoman Empire, which is based on religious beliefs, not ethnic identity<sup>14</sup> and/or vote for the MRF, are excluded from this study. This clarification is necessary, because often being Muslim is associated with being Turkish according to the Bulgarians and the Turks in Bulgaria. Similar to other countries in the Balkans, this association still continues in Bulgaria, as many Bulgarian nationalists regularly indicate that all Muslims are also members of the Turkish community.<sup>15</sup> In addition, since the survey of this study was mostly conducted in Turkish populated areas, the results can be generalized for the Turkish people. Given that most of the supporters of the MRF are members of the Turkish community, though, the research can yield reliable results concerning the perceptions on the political behavior of the MRF.

Finally, the topic of this thesis, “moderate demands of an ethnic party,” is also a remarkable subject in comparative politics and international relations for several reasons. First, there has been little systematic study of the origins and impact of ethnic parties on politics, ethnic conflicts, and institutions.<sup>16</sup> Second,

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<sup>12</sup> National Statistical Institute of State of Bulgaria, “2011 Population Census”, **Main Results**, 01.02.2011, [http://www.nsi.bg/census2011/PDOCS2/Census2011final\\_en.pdf](http://www.nsi.bg/census2011/PDOCS2/Census2011final_en.pdf) (17.11.2013).

<sup>13</sup> National Statistical Institute of State of Bulgaria, “2011 Population Census”, **Main Results**, 01.02.2011, [http://www.nsi.bg/census2011/PDOCS2/Census2011final\\_en.pdf](http://www.nsi.bg/census2011/PDOCS2/Census2011final_en.pdf) (17.11.2013).

<sup>14</sup> Ali Eminov, “Islam and Muslims in Bulgaria: A Brief History,” **Islamic Studies**, Vol. 36, No. 2/3, 1997, pp. 218-219.

<sup>15</sup> Field research in Bulgaria, July and August, 2012.

<sup>16</sup> John Ishiyama, “Ethnic Parties: Their Emergence and Political Impact,” **Party Politics**, Vol. 17, No. 2, P. 147.

Post-Cold War politics has mainly been shaped by “ethnicity,” which, as many authors argue, is an intervening variable for violence, democratic stability, economic growth, and institutional design.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to comparative politics, ethnic politics is also an important determinant in international relations through conflicts, refugees, secessionist demands and economic factors. In contrast to arguments of “the end of history” made by Francis Fukuyama, which claimed that the spread of liberal democracies and free market capitalism of the West become the final form of human government, the world has witnessed a number of ethnic and religious problems especially after the Cold War. For instance, due to ethnic issues, some countries including Czechoslovakia, Serbia and Montenegro were politically divided into different countries through peaceful ways. However, when some ethnic groups pursued to have their own independent countries, the demand intensified ethnic conflict such as in Bosnia, Turkey, Sri Lanka and Azerbaijan. Meanwhile, some ethnic conflicts also generate escalation of refugees in Kashmir, South Ossetia, Azerbaijan and Sudan.<sup>18</sup>

This study adopts both qualitative and quantitative methods to reach its aims. In addition to secondary resources, it also incorporates some primary data based on a field survey from the ethnic Turkish population in the Kardzhali region and on open-ended interviews with Turkish politicians and non-governmental organizations, which were conducted by the author using the snowballing technique in Bulgaria, in July and August 2012. The survey sought to uncover the political tendencies of the Turkish minority with regard to the MRF, other Turkish parties, Turkey, the Bulgarian state, nationalist Bulgarian parties, the Bulgarian Turks in Turkey and their ethnic demands.

Based on the interview responses, the survey aimed to explore whether or not the Turkish population believes that they need a Turkish party due to policies of the state. The survey also sought to assess whether there is a possibility of intra-ethnic party competition in the Turkish population or not. In other words, the

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<sup>17</sup> Kanchan Chandra, “What is Ethnic Identity and does it Matter?” **Annual Review of Political Science**, Vol. 9, 2006, p. 398.

<sup>18</sup> Michael E. Brown, **Ethnic Conflicts and International Security**, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1993, pp. 13 – 17.

research purposed to understand whether the Turkish population has a tendency to support another Turkish party or not. In addition, the survey questions also aimed to explore whether the Turks support more extreme demands than the MRF has adopted. Basically, the results of the research contribute to understanding the basis of political monopoly that the MRF has established over the Turkish minority.

The interview questions were semi-structured, including both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The field interviews included the politicians of the MRF, such as the vice president and the party speaker, Lütvi Mestan (the current president of the MRF); the MRF representatives from Kardzhali, Çetin Kazak and Necmi Ali; the Mayor of Momchilgrad, Akif Akif; and some other local MRF politicians. Meanwhile, the author also conducted interviews with a local politician from the Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria in Momchilgrad (CEDB, in Bulgarian; *Grazhdani za evropeysko razvitie na Balgariya*, GERB), some members of non-governmental organizations, and a Turkish journalist. Although the author sought to conduct interviews with Turkish opponents of the MRF who are active politicians in other Turkish parties or Bulgarian parties, they refused the author's requests without giving any reasons.

The survey consists of closed-ended questions and adopts a scale for the answers, from "totally agree" to "totally disagree." For the purposes of the field research, the author conducted a survey on 85 people, mostly located in the Kardzhali region, where ethnic Turkish people constitute the majority of the region's population. Among those 85 people, 11 people were over 60 years old, 43 people were between 30-60 years old, and 25 people were between 18-30 years old.

In Bulgaria, the Turks are particularly concentrated in two rural areas: the southeast (Kardzhali is over 50% Turkish) and northeast regions (Razgrad, Shumen, Targovishte, and Silistra, collectively, these regions are over 25% Turkish).<sup>19</sup> Both Turkish regions have similar social and economic structures

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<sup>19</sup> National Statistical Institute of State of Bulgaria, "2011 Population Census", **Main Results**, 01.02.2011, [http://www.nsi.bg/census2011/PDOCS2/Census2011final\\_en.pdf](http://www.nsi.bg/census2011/PDOCS2/Census2011final_en.pdf), (17.11.2013).

based on a rural economy.<sup>20</sup> Although some scholars argue that north-easterners and south-easterners have divergent sociological structures (for example, northerners are more religious than southerners),<sup>21</sup> this study claims that the differences are not large enough to affect the political tendencies of the Turkish people in general. For example, the Turkish people in these two regions have always voted for same party, the MRF, which has adopted the same policies since the end of the Cold War. Furthermore, the Turks generally live in areas with similar economic and social conditions. As a result, the data from the research in Kardzhali can provide important clues to understanding the overall political sentiments and tendencies of ethnic Turks in Bulgaria.

In addition to elaborating some of its characteristics, there are some shortcomings of the conducted survey, too. One of the problems was the inconsistent age distribution of the respondents. The percentage of the young Turkish population (18-30 years old) in particular is underrepresented in this study, because many young people currently leave Bulgaria to work in Western European countries. In addition, according to local politicians and non-governmental organizations, the young population is mainly apolitical, due to high immigration levels to Western Europe.

The underrepresentation of women in the survey is another problem. Similar to many other Islamic societies, in the Turkish community, a woman's political opinion in Bulgaria is significantly affected by her husband or father's views. Accordingly, the Turkish women acted more timidly than men while responding to the questions.

Finally, the snowballing technique adopted for this study has its own shortcomings, too. Initially, the author sought to interview random people in the region. According to non-governmental organizations and the Turkish population, however the communist regime of Bulgaria manipulated Turks through some

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<sup>20</sup> Eurostat Statistical Atlas, "GDP at Regional Level", **Main Statistical Findings**, March 2013, [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics\\_explained/index.php/GDP\\_at\\_regional\\_level](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/GDP_at_regional_level) (13.01.2014); Dia Anagnostou, "Nationalist Legacies and European Trajectories: Post-communist Liberalization and Turkish Minority Politics in Bulgaria," **Southeast European and Black Sea Studies**, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2005, p. 95.

<sup>21</sup> Janice Broun, "Rehabilitation and Recovery: Bulgaria's Muslim Communities," **Religion, State and Society**, Vol. 35, No. 2, 2007, p. 108.

Turkish secret agents in order to control the Turkish minority in the past. As a result of these experiences, the Turkish population has a tendency to avoid expressing their political ideas in public. Due to this fear, the author of the study was even accused as being an individual who was trying to collect information about the Turkish community for the Bulgarian Secret Police. This assertion indicates that the fear based on the communist period still lingers in the Turkish community.

In addition, as explained earlier, there is a still notable discrimination by the state against the Turkish population. For instance, recently, the municipality of Varna city has decided to change the Turkish names of 125 villages into Bulgarian ones.<sup>22</sup> The state still pursues to erase the historical background of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria based on the Ottoman Empire. As a result, the Turkish population continues their fear about the state due to its negative policies on the minorities.

In addition, some Turkish opponents of the MRF preferred not to participate in the survey for two reasons. First, since the MRF is the dominant political organization and influences the economy of the Turkish regions through local municipalities, the Turks were afraid that partaking in the survey might cause them to lose their jobs. Second, it is a common assumption among the Turks that some members of the MRF are corrupt politicians dabbling in illegal affairs. As a result, although this study aimed to select a random sample in order to reach non-biased results, the author generally reached people through the author's own personal networks in the Kardzhali region. However, due to existing relationship of the author, this study was able to conduct a survey in Bulgaria. Without the existing relationship of the author, it would be impossible to conduct a research in Bulgaria due to the mentioned reasons.

The remaining parts of this thesis unfold as follows: the first chapter mainly focuses on the historical background of the MRF in two different parts, before the Post-Cold War period and during the Post-Cold War period. The main aim of this chapter is to explain whole background of the puzzle: the peaceful

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<sup>22</sup> Murat Bardakçı, "Bulgarlar'a İlham Vermişiz", **HaberTürk**, 16.12.2013, [http://www.haberturk.com/yazarlar/murat-bardakci/903829-bulgarlara-ilham-vermisiz,\(26.01.2013\).](http://www.haberturk.com/yazarlar/murat-bardakci/903829-bulgarlara-ilham-vermisiz,(26.01.2013).)

transformation of the Turkish ethnic group through the MRF, and establishment process of the constitution and the election system in Bulgarian politics. Explaining the establishment of the constitution and election system is an important point in understanding the lack of intra-ethnic party competition in Bulgaria.

The first part of the first chapter analyzes the political structure of the Turkish minority during the Ottoman period, the independence of Bulgaria, and the communist regime. Later, this chapter attempts to examine the establishment of the MRF, the Bulgarian constitution, and Bulgaria's political institutions. The final part seeks to analyze the historical processes of the MRF after the Cold War, including Bulgaria's political difficulties, its demands, and its electoral successes.

This chapter is ordered before the theoretical framework chapter in this study, because in order to comprehend why this study mainly analyzes the lack of intra-ethnic party competition among other possible factors; a reader must know about the historical background of the Turkish population and the MRF. As a result, the following chapter discusses why other domestic factors cannot be considered as an independent variable to explain the political behavior of the MRF. However, to comprehend this reasoning, a reader must know process of the establishment of institutions in Bulgaria.

The second chapter, "Ethnic Parties and Electoral Competition," examines the intra-ethnic party competition argument with regard to the Bulgarian case. The main goal of this chapter is to examine the existing arguments on the subject and elaborate the intra-ethnic party competition theory that can help to solve the puzzle raised in this study. While some arguments remain convincing arguments to explain the moderate demands of the MRF, others are unable to provide rational reasoning with regard to the MRF, as will be discussed in this chapter.

Before explaining the main assumptions of this argument, the first part discusses conflicting definitions of ethnic parties. Later, the second part also seeks to clarify the meaning of "moderate" and "extreme" demands, which are further complicated terms for several reasons, as will be mentioned. Since the study aims to discover the "moderate demands of an ethnic party," it is necessary to classify these terms, which will be used throughout the study.



Later, the third part goes over the literature on the demands of ethnic parties. This section is divided into three parts; international, domestic, and leader-based factors, all of which explain the demands of ethnic parties. This segment also examines the arguments that specifically explain the demands of the MRF. After each part, this study discusses whether the argument can be applicable on the political behavior of the MRF, or not. After the international arguments part, this study examines the role of the EU on ethnic politics in Bulgaria in detail. The final part will mention the intra-ethnic party competition argument to understand the moderate demands of the MRF. This section also analyzes how the institutional restrictions block the intra-ethnic party competition.

The third chapter analyzes Turkey, other Turkish ethnic parties and the research to explain the lack of intra-ethnic party competition in Bulgaria. This chapter, first, analyzes the impact of Turkey over the Turkish ethnic politics in Bulgaria through the relations between Turkey and Bulgaria, Turkey and the MRF, and the Bulgarian Turks in Turkey and the MRF. In addition, this part also analyzes the impact of Turkey through the research in Bulgaria. Through this part, this chapter aims to point out how Turkey enhances the moderate demands and the monopoly of the MRF.

The remaining part of this chapter analyzes the lack of intra-ethnic party competition among the Turkish population in Bulgaria by focusing on other Turkish ethnic parties and research conducted in Bulgaria by the author from July to August 2012. In addition, since this study argues that the main reason for the lack of intra-ethnic party competition is the existence of institutional restrictions on ethnic politics in Bulgaria, this chapter also examines how restrictions shape the ethnic party competition in Bulgaria by explaining the role of the institutions on ethnic politics in the country.

The first part of this chapter analyzes other Turkish parties that have been blocked either by the constitutional ban on ethnic parties or by the electoral threshold. The last portion of this chapter examines the political tendencies of the Turkish population over the MRF, other Turkish parties, and ethnic and territorial demands. In other words, this section examines whether there is a possibility of intra-ethnic party competition in the Turkish population.

Finally, the conclusion chapter ends the study with an overview of the monopoly of the MRF on the Turkish population. This chapter also discusses possible areas of further research on ethnic parties by analyzing the research done in Bulgaria.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE MOVEMENT FOR RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS**

The state of Bulgaria comprises over 15 ethnic groups of which the largest group is the Turks.<sup>23</sup> The Turkish minority established a political party, named the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, in 1990. This chapter provides an overview of the historical background of the Turkish minority and the MRF in two parts: before the Post-Cold War period and during the Post-Cold War period. Before 1980, due to the constraints of communism in Bulgaria, the Turkish population was unable to establish any significant political organization that influenced the existing political system. Later, between 1980 and 1989, there was a period when the Turkish minority began to organize as a political unit against the assimilation policies of the communist government.

Finally, after the Cold War, the Turkish minority established a political party, the MRF, which has become one of the most remarkable political organizations in Bulgarian politics. The outstanding nature of the MRF derives from the fact that soon after its establishment, it became a member of coalition government twice and it has been a remarkable actor in the country's entry into the EU and its NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) membership. Ethnic politics in Bulgaria after the Cold War have been mainly shaped by the country's institutions, including the constitutional ban on ethnic parties and the electoral threshold. Therefore, the second part of this chapter also discusses the reasons behind Bulgaria's strict ethnic policies and how those rules were established. Since this study considers the lack of intra-ethnic competition in Bulgaria a result of institutional restrictions on ethnic policies, explaining the establishment of these institutions is essential to understanding why ethnic politics were mainly shaped by them.

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<sup>23</sup> The ethnic groups include Bulgarians, Turks, Roma, Russians, Armenians, Vlachs, Macedonians, Greeks, Ukrainians, Jews, and Romanians.

### 1.1. BEFORE THE POST-COLD WAR PERIOD (UNTIL 1990)

The Turks have played a significant role in the history of Bulgaria because of the Ottomans, who entered Bulgarian lands in the late fourteenth century. Later, Bulgarians lived under Ottoman rule for more than five hundred years. During the Ottoman period, the Bulgarians were governed by the “millet system,” which tolerated non-Muslim religious groups and gave them some degree of self-governance.<sup>24</sup> Due to the rise of nationalism, however, the Bulgarians revolted several times against the Ottoman Empire during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. After several attempts, finally, with Russia’s assistance, Bulgaria gained its semi-independence (autonomy) in 1878 and its full independence in 1908 from the Ottoman Empire.

During the Ottoman period, several Turkish tribes had settled in the Bulgarian lands. This Turkish population controlled the regional economy and had a privileged position in society. Following the independence of Bulgaria, while many Turks immigrated into the remaining parts of the Ottoman Empire, which later became the Turkish Republic, a large number of them chose to remain where they were. In contrast to the Ottoman period, however, those who chose to remain behind enjoyed neither special privileges nor economic security in the new Bulgarian society.<sup>25</sup> During this period, the Bulgarian government tried to establish a nation-state based on the Bulgarian identity.

Additionally, similar to other Balkan countries, following its independence, Bulgaria sought to enlarge its territories based on its nationalist ideology. Therefore, Bulgaria fought both in World Wars I and II, but lost both wars. After World War II, Bulgaria became a communist country and an ally of the Soviet Union. In general, until 1945, not only the Turkish minority, but also other minority groups were also excluded from the political process; they did not have their own political representation.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> James W. Warhola and Orlina Betova, “The Turkish Minority in Contemporary Bulgaria,” **Nationalities Papers**, Vol. 31, No. 3, 2003, p. 257.

<sup>25</sup> Ali Dayıoğlu, **Toplama Kampından Meclise; Bulgaristan’da Türk ve Müslüman Azınlığı**, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2005, p. 208; Mary E. McIntosh and others, “Minority Rights and Majority Rule,” **Social Forces**, Vol.73, No. 3, 1995, p. 942.

<sup>26</sup> Anna Krasteva and Antony Todorov, “Ethnic Minorities and Political Representation: The Case of Bulgaria,” **Southeastern Europe**, Vol. 35, pp. 15-16.

During the interwar period, since the Turkish population was influenced by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who adopted secular reforms in Turkey, the Turkish population established nationalist cultural organizations, such as “Turan, Altın Ordu and Alparslan.”<sup>27</sup> These activities existed in parallel to the nationalist ideology in Turkey, as Kemalist ideology excluded religion but internalized ethnic nationalism. During these years, since the state was unable to influence the Turkish populated areas due to establishment of regime consolidation, the Turks continued its relationship with Turkey after the Ottoman Empire. As the state became powerful, however, all cultural activities and other democratic liberties were banned in 1934 by the fascist Bulgarian government.<sup>28</sup>

During an interview with Lutvi Mestan (president of the MRF), he claimed that the discrimination against and political pressure on the Turkish and Muslim community escalated after the First World War, because some Pomak communities were assimilated and forcibly became Bulgarians.<sup>29</sup> Some attempts that aimed to create a Turkish party were also prevented by the state at this time.<sup>30</sup> In other words, efforts to establish a Turkish party started long before the Post Cold period. During this period, the Turks also immigrated to Turkey in several waves (estimated total number is 200,000) because of the repression from the Bulgarian government.<sup>31</sup>

After the Second World War, the fascist regime collapsed due to the Soviet invasion, and the communist ideology monopolized the political scene in Bulgaria. Later, the communist regime followed three different minority policies in three different periods, namely, the recognition of cultural differences, integration, and assimilation.<sup>32</sup> The first policy was the recognition of cultural differences. Parallel to the first policy, the 1947 constitution recognized the existence of minorities in Bulgaria, because the Bulgarian Communist Party, in general,

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<sup>27</sup> Dayıoğlu, p. 212.

<sup>28</sup> Dayıoğlu, p. 212.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Lutvi Mestan, President of the MRF, Sofia, July 26, 2012.

<sup>30</sup> Warhola and Betova, p. 259.

<sup>31</sup> Kader Özlem, “Bulgaristan Türklerinin Tarihsel Süreç İçerisinde Dönüşümü, AB Üyelik Süreci ve Türk Azınlığa Etkileri,” *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2008, p. 350.

<sup>32</sup> Krasteva and Todorov, p. 16.

*“followed the general Soviet orientation, which held that ethnic minorities should be granted a degree of political and cultural autonomy while pursuing, with the rest of the country, the common goals of ‘communist construction’ at home and support for the foreign policies of the regime.”*<sup>33</sup>

Therefore, the new regime allowed the establishment of a minority language press and schools for minorities.

While the communist regime tolerated the existence of minority groups, it did not permit the expression of religious beliefs of any kind.<sup>34</sup> The prohibition on religious activities negatively affected the Muslim population, including the Turks, who were unable to perform their religious duties. In addition, the communist regime also banned some economic liberties, including collective rights and private property rights.<sup>35</sup> Some Turks who settled down in rural areas and were small landowners resisted the collectivization of agricultural lands, but they started to lose their private property. Due to the prohibition of religion and the collectivization of agricultural lands, about 150,000 ethnic Turks were finally forced to immigrate to Turkey.<sup>36</sup> As a result, the Turks immigrated to Turkey due to political and religious pressure, and economic monopoly of the communist regime excluding private property.

The second policy toward minorities was integration, which aimed to “modernize” the Bulgarian society. Its goals included “urbanization, social mobility, the emancipation of women, and the liberation of individuals from obsolete patriarchal structures.”<sup>37</sup> The policy of integration provided some opportunities to the minority groups, such as better education for children and possibilities for social advancement.<sup>38</sup>

In contrast to the 1947 constitution, the 1971 constitution adopted a stricter overtone on minorities, because the communist regime was confronted with serious economic problems based on state socialism and was concerned about

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<sup>33</sup> Warhola and Betova, p. 261.

<sup>34</sup> Krasteva and Todorov, p. 16.

<sup>35</sup> McIntosh and others, p. 943.

<sup>36</sup> McIntosh and others, p. 943.

<sup>37</sup> Krasteva and Todorov, pp. 16–17.

<sup>38</sup> Krasteva and Todorov, pp. 16–17.

anti-communist movements in Czechoslovakia and other communist countries.<sup>39</sup> Consequently, the new constitution altogether denied the existence of minorities, who were described as non-Bulgarians.

The state justified this intolerant minority policy based on two claims. First, according to a peculiar interpretation of Marxism, nations or ethnic groups do not exist in the world. Instead, there are only economic classes that always clash to improve their own economic power. Therefore, the regime claimed that no minority groups existed in Bulgaria. The second argument was based on idea that the Bulgarian Turks were actually Slavs who had to alter their religion while under Ottoman rule.<sup>40</sup>

Furthermore, due to the Turkish military intervention on Cyprus in 1974 to protect the Turkish minority, it is also possible that the Bulgarian politicians feared a similar end for Bulgaria, too.<sup>41</sup> Consequently, with the new constitution, the communist regime introduced assimilationist practices over the minorities in Bulgaria. The communist regime also encouraged the Turkish population to immigrate to Turkey between 1968 and 1978, and about 130,000 Turks left the country.<sup>42</sup> The immigration was based on the Turkish Bulgarian treaty in 1968, which mainly aimed to reunite Turkish families.<sup>43</sup>

Despite the changing attitude toward minorities in Bulgaria, the Turkish minority did not experience serious state violence or strong repression until the 1980s. However, from 1984 to 1989, the Bulgarian government once again resumed its strictly assimilationist policies against nearly one million Turks, which roughly translated into about 10% of the total population.<sup>44</sup> This new policy was called a “national revival,” because according to the communist regime, Turks who had to change their religion during the Ottoman rule were actually

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<sup>39</sup> Dia Anagnostou, “Nationalist Legacies and European Trajectories: Post-communist Liberalization and Turkish Minority Politics in Bulgaria,” **Southeast European and Black Sea Studies**, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2005, pp. 95-96.

<sup>40</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, **Ethnopolitics in the New Europe**, p. 22.

<sup>41</sup> Krasteva and Todorov, p. 17.

<sup>42</sup> Dayıoğlu, p. 293.

<sup>43</sup> Dayıoğlu, pp. 292-293.

<sup>44</sup> Marko Hajdinjak, “Thou Shall not Take the Names Ethnic or Minority, and I Will Bless Thee: Political Participation of Minorities in Bulgaria,” **Political Parties and Minority Representation**, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Skopje, 2008, p. 88-89.

Bulgarians.<sup>45</sup> This policy thus claimed to unite Bulgaria as one nation, and reduced Turkish separatism and Islamic fundamentalism in the country.<sup>46</sup>

The adoption of an assimilationist state policy was primarily due to the birth rate of the Turkish population, which was higher than the Bulgarian population at the time.<sup>47</sup> Some nationalist politicians claimed that ethnic Bulgarians would become a minority group in the future due to their birth rate.<sup>48</sup> The assimilation policies toward the Turkish minority included the Bulgarization of family names, limitations on the use of the Turkish language, and restrictions on some religious rituals. Additionally, between 1984 and 1989, about 800-2,000 Turks who resisted the policies are estimated to be killed by the communist regime.<sup>49</sup> According to Mestan, at the end of 1984, the state intervened in Turkish communities and villages through the use of armed forces in order to enforce these assimilation policies.<sup>50</sup>

Among the minority policies of the state, the assimilation policy promoted the consolidation of the Turkish population against the communist regime. The assimilation policy not only failed in its purposes, but it also provided a strong stimulus to establish a political movement for the Turkish community. The Turkish people in Bulgaria started to hold onto their ethnic and religious identity.<sup>51</sup> For instance, during an interview, a Turkish man said, “It’s good that Zhivkov did the name-changing. We had almost forgotten that we are Turks. Name changing brought us back together as an ethnos.”<sup>52</sup>

In order to resist the state violence and assimilation, the first Turkish underground organizations were subsequently established in Bulgaria.<sup>53</sup> As Krasteva and Todorov argue, “this period is of great historic importance as it marks the beginning of the transformation from ethnic to political self-

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<sup>45</sup> Rossen V. Vassilev, “Post-Communist Bulgaria’s Ethnopolitics,” **The Global Review of Ethnopolitics**, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2001, p. 39.

<sup>46</sup> Vassilev, p. 39.

<sup>47</sup> Dayıoğlu, p. 309.

<sup>48</sup> Dayıoğlu, p. 309.

<sup>49</sup> John Ishiyama and Marijke Breuning, **Ethnopolitics in the New Europe**, Lynn Rienner Publishers, London, 1998, pp. 22-23.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with Lutvi Mestan, President of the MRF, Sofia, July 25, 2012.

<sup>51</sup> Dayıoğlu, p. 311.

<sup>52</sup> Anagnostou, p. 96.

<sup>53</sup> Krasteva and Todorov, p. 17.



identification.”<sup>54</sup> In other words, due to the state repression at the time, the Turkish population began to organize as political movement.<sup>55</sup> One of these organizations was the Turkish National Freedom Movement (TNFM, in Turkish: Türk Milli Kurtuluş Hareketi) established in 1985.<sup>56</sup> This is a significant organization, because later its founders established the MRF, too.

The movement mainly aimed to protect the ethnic and religious rights of the Turks in Bulgaria. Since the movement was organized in several Turkish provinces, it was able to organize widespread protests and strikes that demanded the release of Turkish prisoners and helped the Turkish families of the prisoners through peaceful means.<sup>57</sup> Similar to the members of other organizations, however, the leaders of the movement were arrested in 1986 and sentenced to prison because they had betrayed the communist principles.<sup>58</sup> During this period, Turkey, with the support of international community, also put political and economic pressure on Bulgaria for its assimilation politics.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, the Soviet Union left Bulgaria alone in international area at this time because of its own economic and political problems. As a result, in 1989, Todor Zhivkov (the president of Bulgaria between 1971 and 1989) forced the Turkish population to leave the country. About 350,000 Turks had to leave in 1989 and most of them immigrated into Turkey.<sup>60</sup> International human rights organizations declared this immigration to be the biggest movement of people since the Second World War in Europe.<sup>61</sup>

However, the immigration of the Turkish people exacerbated the economic problems in Bulgaria, because the Turks had been particularly active in agricultural sectors, which remained the most important part of the Bulgarian

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<sup>54</sup> Kreteva and Todorov, p. 17.

<sup>55</sup> Bulgaria Independent Human Rights Organization (in Bulgarian: Bağımsız İnsan Hakları Derneği), Unity for the Democratic Defense of Human Rights (İnsan Haklarının Savunulması Birliği), 1989 Vienna Union Support (1989 Viyana Destek Derneği), for details see: Dayıoğlu, pp. 328-333.

<sup>56</sup> Özgür, p. 77.

<sup>57</sup> Dayıoğlu, p. 330.

<sup>58</sup> Dayıoğlu, p. 331.

<sup>59</sup> Sedat Laçiner, “Turgut Özal Period in Turkish Foreign Policy: Özalism”, **the Journal of Turkish Weekly**, 2009, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/article/333/turgut-ozal-period-in-turkish-foreign-policy-ozalism.html> (01.12.2013).

<sup>60</sup> Dayıoğlu, pp. 333-338.

<sup>61</sup> Antonina Zhelyazkova, “Bulgaria in Transition: The Muslim minorities”, **Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations**, Vol. 12, No.3, 2001, p. 290.

economy.<sup>62</sup> In addition to the ethnic and economic problems, the communist ideology also caused political and economic unrest in the world. Similar to other communist regimes in Eastern Europe, Bulgaria also experienced a regime transition during this period. As a result, the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP, in Bulgarian: Balgarska Komunisticheska Partiya, BKP) decided to end its monopoly over the state and opened Bulgaria to democracy at the end 1989.

To sum up, until the Post-Cold War period, there were three main features affecting the Turkish population. First, Bulgaria always excluded Turks from political participation as well as its other minorities. In other words, the Turks had never been represented in the government or parliament since the creation of the modern Bulgarian state. Second, similar to other Muslim groups in Bulgaria, the Bulgarian regimes tried to assimilate the Turkish population either through force or persuasion. Third, since its independence, nationalist or communist Bulgaria continuously forced the Turks to immigrate to Turkey, as seen by the immigration waves in 1878, 1912, 1952, 1968, 1978, and 1989. Consequently, the Turks decided to establish their own ethnic political movements against the strict ethnic policies in place after the Cold War.

## **1.2. THE POST-COLD WAR PERIOD (1990 – 2012)**

Until the end of the Cold War, Bulgaria had always encouraged or forced the Turkish population to immigrate into Turkey. In addition, the state had continued to block the political representation of all minorities, including the Turks. Meanwhile, after the Cold War, Bulgaria had changed its ethnic policies due to the democratization process of the country and the Turkish population established their own political organization. In contrast to other countries in the Balkans that guaranteed the political representation of ethnic minorities, however, Bulgaria adopted strict ethnic politics, which banned ethnic-based parties and implemented an electoral threshold to block the political representation of small minorities. Bulgaria remains one of the two countries, along with Albania, in

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<sup>62</sup> Johnson, p. 19.

south-east Europe that officially prohibits ethnic parties.<sup>63</sup> The MRF and other ethnic parties in Bulgaria have experienced several difficulties due to these institutional restrictions. This section will therefore explain both the establishment of the institutions that have shaped ethnic politics in Bulgaria and the historical evolution of the MRF.

Furthermore, after the communist regime, different political parties came into power after each election in Bulgaria. Meanwhile, the unstable political situation of Bulgarian politics provided several advantages to the MRF. In addition, the MRF derives its vote mostly from ethnic minority voters in the elections, and its electoral support is concentrated mainly minority populated areas. It is a remarkable success that the MRF is the only party in Bulgaria that has ever increased its votes from each consecutive election since 1994. Its political effect on the government is also remarkable; three times it was a member of the government under three different prime ministers, including a conservative, a liberal, and a socialist.

### **1.2.1. Establishment of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms**

Following the fall of communism in November 1989, the Turks organized a series of public protests in the country, which requested that Turkish names to be restored, those prisoners arrested for resisting against the assimilation policies to be released and that their religious, cultural and social rights to be protected.<sup>64</sup> Later, due to external, in particular the EU and Turkey, and domestic pressure, in particular the Turks and opposition groups, which demanded liberal democratic regime, the Bulgarian Communist Party abandoned its assimilationist policies and allowed the Turkish population once again to use their Turkish names, to practice their religion, to speak Turkish in public, and to organize political and cultural organizations.

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<sup>63</sup> Daniel Bochsler, "Komunizm Sonrası Seçim Sistemleri ve Etnik Azınlıkların Temsili," **Seçim Sistemleri ve Etnik Azınlıkların Parlamenter Temsili**, (Ed. Ersan Erkan), Beta Basım, İstanbul, 2010, p. 45.

<sup>64</sup> Zhelyazkova, p. 295.

In contrast to these democratic steps, however, Bulgarian nationalists organized widespread protests with slogans like “No to separatism” and “Bulgaria for the Bulgarians” especially in the regions inhabited by mixed populations.<sup>65</sup> The nationalists feared Islamic fundamentalism and Turkish separatism,<sup>66</sup> because there were many undesirable examples during this era, as seen in Islamic fundamentalism in Iran and Lebanon<sup>67</sup> and the ethnic separatism of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. The negative attitude against the minorities also relied on the fear that minorities would always pursue the abolition of the Bulgarian nation.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, most of the Bulgarians also believed that recognition of minorities would likely enhance their other demands for things such as political autonomy and independence.<sup>69</sup> In addition, according to Nitzova, the Bulgarian nationalism honed in on the Muslim identity as the most dangerous aspect, because the Bulgarian identity was to a great extent shaped by membership in the Bulgarian Orthodox church, which also centers the Turkish and Muslim identity as the most dangerous enemy of Bulgarians.<sup>70</sup>

Furthermore, similar to other Balkan countries, in Bulgaria, since “Islam” equated to being “Turkish,” anti-Muslim discourse also usually contained anti-Turkish language.<sup>71</sup> In addition to the negative views of the Bulgarians, after the fall of communism, nationalism also became a political device to increase legitimacy for political parties in the country, similar to other ex-communist states.<sup>72</sup> As a result of rising nationalism in Bulgaria, the government established the “Public Council for Discussion of the National Question” as a consultative

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<sup>65</sup> Rechel, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, p. 354.

<sup>66</sup> Vassilev, p. 39.

<sup>67</sup> Dayıoğlu, p. 310.

<sup>68</sup> Rechel, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, p. 354.

<sup>69</sup> Rechel, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, p. 354.

<sup>70</sup> Petya Nitzova, Bulgaria: Minorities, Democratization and National Sentiments, *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 25, No. 4, 1997, p. 736.

<sup>71</sup> Nitzova, p. 737.

<sup>72</sup> Maria Spirova, “Bulgaria since 1989,” *Central and Southeast European Politics since 1989*, (Ed. Sabrina P. Ramet), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010, p. 403; Rechel, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, p. 354.

committee to solve the country's ethnic and minority problems, at the end of 1989.<sup>73</sup>

Following its establishment, the Council drafted a declaration, which condemned the communist assimilation policies of Bulgaria and explicitly supported the right of Bulgarian citizens to choose their names, speak their languages, and practice their religions freely. At the same time, however, the Council also declared the protection of territorial integrity as the highest duty of the Bulgarian state. Therefore, it stated that all organizations directed against territorial integrity should be restricted by law.<sup>74</sup> The new state was obviously striving to find a midway between the Bulgarian nationalists and the Turkish population as it aimed to protect the basic rights of the Turkish minority and mitigate the radical demands of the Bulgarian nationalists including rejection of the Turkish identity, culture and language.

Later, the Turkish population began establishing their own political organizations. The formerly sentenced members of the Turkish National Freedom Movement were released in late 1989. Later, its members also organized a meeting to form a Turkish political group at the beginning of 1990. After the meeting, the members decided to establish a political party whose name was initially the "Movement for Rights and Freedoms of Turks and Muslims in Bulgaria."<sup>75</sup> However, after long discussions, the members decided not to use any ethnic or religion identifiers due to rise of nationalism in Bulgaria.<sup>76</sup> As a result, the Turkish community officially established the Movement for Rights and Freedoms on March 27, 1990.

Its group leader, Ahmed Dogan, who also established the Turkish National Freedom Movement earlier, formulated the basis of a political program that included the protection of the freedom to use Turkish names and the Turkish

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<sup>73</sup> Bernd Rechel, "State Control of Minorities," **Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics**, Vol. 23, No. 3, 2007, p. 354.

<sup>74</sup> Rechel, **Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics**, p. 354.

<sup>75</sup> Dayıoğlu, p. 424.

<sup>76</sup> Dayıoğlu, p. 424.

language, and the freedom to practice Islam openly.<sup>77</sup> As earlier mentioned, these political rights were allowed by the state immediately after the Cold War.

Additionally, politicians representing the group have argued that the MRF has never supported radical Islam or Turkish nationalism, which are assumed to further promote ethnic conflict in Bulgaria.<sup>78</sup> For instance, Mestan stated that “the MRF has had no action against the territorial integrity of Bulgaria and [has] not support[ed]...radical nationalism [or] Islam since [its] establishment. The model of the MRF protects ethnic, cultural and religious identities and promotes the national integrity of a country.”<sup>79</sup>

Furthermore, Mestan compares Kurdish politics in Turkey with Turkish politics in Bulgaria and argues that “in contrast to the Kurdish politics which attempted to destroy the territorial integrity of Turkey and supported violent actions, the MRF remained compatible with the territorial integrity of Bulgaria. States, today, must both respect ethnic differences and oppose the separatist movements.”<sup>80</sup> The MRF mainly aimed to establish a country where the Turks have equal fundamental rights with the Bulgarians. However, it did not desire to establish cultural or political autonomy in the Turkish populated areas.

According to the Turkish community, although the party did not declare itself an ethnic group, all Turks knew that it was and has remained a Turkish party due to its leaders and historical background. A man from the Kardzhali region said,

*“The MRF was established as the Turkish party because its leaders had been also leaders of the Turkish National Freedom Movement formed against the assimilation. Therefore, no matter what Bulgarian or Turkish politicians say, the MRF is the Turkish Party.”*<sup>81</sup>

According to Fikri Gülistan (a local politician in Kardzhali), “The MRF has always tried to position...itself as a liberal party, but this is impossible since ethnicity of the supporters and leaders are...members of the Turkish community.”

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<sup>77</sup> Interviews with Lütvi Mestan, President of the MRF; Çetin Kazak, Representative of the Kardzhali Region; and Necmi Ali, Representative of the Kardzhali Region, Sofia, July 25, 2012.

<sup>78</sup> Interviews with Lütvi Mestan, President of the MRF; Çetin Kazak, Representative of the Kardzhali Region; and Necmi Ali, Representative of the Kardzhali Region, Sofia, July 25, 2012.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with Lütvi Mestan, President of the MRF, Sofia, July 25, 2012.

<sup>80</sup> Interview with Lütvi Mestan, President of the MRF, Sofia, July 25, 2012.

<sup>81</sup> Field research in Bulgaria, July and August, 2012.

The program also declares its opposition, in particular, to Bulgarian nationalism, Islamic fundamentalism, and religious fanaticism. During this period, in order to relieve the fears of the Bulgarian nationalists, Dogan insistently denied claims that the MRF was an ethnic or secessionist party.<sup>82</sup> Moreover, the leaders also decided to focus not only on the Turkish minority, but also aimed to protect other minority groups in Bulgaria, such as the Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks), Gypsies, and Macedonians, in general.<sup>83</sup> As a result, due to the moderate position of Dogan and other top members who did not challenge the territorial integrity of Bulgaria, the Turkish nationalist fractions who demanded to establish territorial autonomy were eliminated in the extraordinary congress of the MRF in October 1990.<sup>84</sup> They were able to be eliminated by the party due to the strong leadership of Dogan during this period.<sup>85</sup>

### **1.2.2. Establishment of (Ethnic) Institutions in Post-Communist Bulgaria**

During that period, similar to other Eastern European countries, political wings in Bulgaria organized “round table talks”, before the Bulgarian Constitutional Assembly election, established to approve constitution and other decisions of the round table talks in June 1990 to form new political institutions for the country, including the constitution, the law on political parties, and the establishment of its electoral law. Although some Turkish politicians were invited to the round table talks, as a political party, the politicians of the MRF were obviously ignored, because both the Bulgarian Communist Party (leftist) and United Democratic Forces (rightist) aimed to gain the support of the Turkish

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<sup>82</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, *Ethnopolitics in the New Europe*, p. 31.

<sup>83</sup> Dayıoğlu, p. 423; Baskın Oran, “Balkan Türkleri Üzerine İncelemeler,” *SBFD*, Vol. 48, No. 1-4, 1993, p. 127; and Interview with Necmi Ali, Representative of the Kardzhali Region, Sofia, July 25, 2012.

<sup>84</sup> Oran, p. 126.

<sup>85</sup> Oran, p. 126.

minority.<sup>86</sup> Their main aim was to block establishment of the any Turkish party and to compel the Turkish population to vote for the Bulgarian parties.

At the round table talks in 1990 (from January to May), most of the political elites reached an agreement on the prohibition of ethnic- and/or religious-based parties, an item discussed at the only closed plenary session of the round tables, because all the political wings hesitated to make public statements on ethnic issues.<sup>87</sup> Meanwhile, different political parties also agreed on the law concerning political parties, which bans parties that pose a threat to the territorial integrity of the country and its unity by organizing on the basis of religious and/or ethnic origin.<sup>88</sup> The same law also prohibits parties from adopting religious symbols and images, and/or the flags of other countries. Finally, the law compels political parties to use only the Bulgarian language in their political activities and electoral campaigns.<sup>89</sup> According to Mestan, due to this article, many Turkish politicians have been punished for speaking Turkish in their electoral campaigns.<sup>90</sup> During their discussions, the political actors also reached an agreement on the electoral threshold, which remained at 4%.<sup>91</sup>

In addition to the ban on ethnic parties, the new constitution also avoided using the term “minorities,” and instead described them as “citizens whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian or who have a separating ethnic self-identification.”<sup>92</sup> This definition, according to Rechel, is a continuation of the 1971 nationalist “Zhivkov constitution.”<sup>93</sup> Although political elites ignored minority rights to prevent ethnic conflict, “the refusal to recognize ethnic difference can itself be regarded as a manifestation of ethnic politics”<sup>94</sup> because it privileges the majority ethnic group over the other ethnic groups and rejects political participation of minority groups. The decisions of the round table talks were approved in 1991 by the parliament

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<sup>86</sup> Venelin I. Ganev, “History, Politics, and the Constitution: Ethnic Conflict and Constitutional Adjudication in Postcommunist Bulgaria,” *Slavic Review*, Vol. 63, No. 1, 2004, p. 71.

<sup>87</sup> Rechel, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, p. 354.

<sup>88</sup> Rechel, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, p. 354.

<sup>89</sup> Rechel, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, p. 354.

<sup>90</sup> Interview with Lutvi Mestan, President of the MRF, Sofia, July 25, 2012.

<sup>91</sup> Research in Bulgaria, July and August, 2012.

<sup>92</sup> National Assembly of Republic of Bulgaria, “Constitution”, <http://www.parliament.bg/en/const> (13.01.2014).

<sup>93</sup> Rechel, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, p. 354.

<sup>94</sup> Rechel, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, p. 355.



established after the elections held in June, 1990 in which the MRF also was able to run and gained 24 representatives among 400 representatives. The decisions were approved with no trouble, since the Bulgarian Socialist Party gained the majority of parliament seats after the elections.

The president of the MRF, Lütvi Mestan, stated that, “the Turkish politicians did not approve the constitution and left the parliament, due to the ban on ethnic parties and other restrictions on ethnic groups. In other words, the MRF had no impact on [the] establishment of new constitution.”<sup>95</sup> Moreover, representative of the MRF of the Kardzhali region, Çetin Kazak stated that “at that time, this article was clearly established against our party [the MRF] and the constitutional court has only used this article against minority parties. However, the article was never used for nationalist or religious Bulgarian parties such as the Christian Democrat Party which was established in following years.”<sup>96</sup>

As a result, the Bulgarian constitution and the law on political parties mainly aimed to protect the interests of the state of Bulgaria and ethnic Bulgarians, not the minorities. The articles of the constitution indicate that Bulgaria did not aim to improve the political participation of its minorities. Instead, the constitution protects the national unity of Bulgaria, because the Bulgarian politicians and the public felt anxiety over their imagined enemies, which included the minority groups.

### **1.2.3. The Movement for Rights and Freedoms in Bulgarian Politics**

After the establishment the constitution and institutions, due to the strict ethnic policies of the state, the MRF has confronted several political problems in terms of political participation. Although, the MRF has declared itself a liberal party, and all of its “radical” members were eliminated, the state and public have shown several varied reactions against political participation of it. Due to the nationalist protests and the political pressure of the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), the Sofia City Court declared that the political registration of the MRF for

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<sup>95</sup> Interview with Lütvi Mestan, President of the MRF, Sofia, July 25, 2012.

<sup>96</sup> Interview with Çetin Kazak, Representative of the Kardzhali Region, Sofia, July 25, 2012.

the parliamentary elections in 1991 would contradict Article 11(4) due to its ethnic nature. Since the jurisdiction of the City Court did not include whether a party could attend elections or not, however, the MRF was able to participate in the general elections of 1991 and gained 24 representatives among 240 representatives.

Later, the Turkish and Bulgarian community confronted some ethnic tensions in Sofia. The European Union and Turkey also criticized the City Court's decision and pressured the government to allow the MRF's participation in all elections.<sup>97</sup> After the declaration of the Sofia City Court, the MRF appealed to the Constitutional Court to reach a final decision about status of the party. Later, in 1992, the Supreme Court approved the MRF as being constitutional.<sup>98</sup>

Despite these efforts, the main Bulgarian parties vied for the Constitutional Court to close the MRF for two reasons. First, during this period, there was a rise in nationalism among Bulgarians who were trying to exclude the Turks from political participation. Hence, the main Bulgarian parties aimed to secure the support of the nationalists within the country. Second, at the beginning of 1990s, the main parties also desired the votes of the Turkish community and knew they could only obtain them by excluding the MRF from politics.

After the approval of the Constitutional Court, however, the MRF were able to run all elections in Bulgaria. Due to the electoral system (proportional representation), the number of seats won by the MRF has been proportionate to the number of votes received. The proportional representation provides more advantages to small parties than large parties as the number of seats is based on the number of votes. Therefore, several parties were able to enter into the parliament after each election. This fragmented political structure has provided the MRF to become key party in the parliament.

In addition to the MRF, post-communist Bulgarian politics until 2001 was mainly characterized by two main parties; the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP, in Bulgarian: "Bulgarska sotsialisticheska partiya," successor of the Bulgarian Communist Party, leftist) and the United Democratic Forces (UDF, first named

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<sup>97</sup> Dayıoğlu, p. 427.

<sup>98</sup> Dayıoğlu, p. 427.

the “United Democratic Forces,” the group then changed its name to the “Union for Democratic Forces” [UDF], in Bulgarian: “Sayuz na demokratichnite sili,” SDS); Christian democrats). While, the elections in 1990 and 1994 were gained by the BSP, the UDF proclaimed its victory after the elections in 1991 and 1997. During 1990s, due to economic transition, similar to other ex-communist countries, Bulgaria experienced heavy economic crisis and high level of corruption for which these two parties were unable to find a solution.

As a result, after 1990s, the political power of these parties were decreased, and newly established two parties proclaimed their dominance in politics; the National Movement Simeon II (NMSS, liberal party, led by the former Bulgarian king, Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha) and the Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria (CEDB, in Bulgarian: “Grazhdani za evropeysko razvitie na Balgariya,” [GERB], conservative party, established in 2006, led by Boyko Borisov old mayor of Sofia) mainly due to economic problems of the country.

**Table 1:** Parliamentary Elections in Bulgaria since 1990<sup>99</sup>

<b>Elections</b>	<b>BSP<sup>100</sup></b> Seats (%)	<b>UDF<sup>101</sup></b> Seats (%)	<b>NMSS<sup>102</sup></b> Seats (%)	<b>MRF</b> Seats (%)	<b>GERB<sup>103</sup></b> Seats (%)	<b>Ataka<sup>104</sup></b> Seats (%)
<b>1990<sup>105</sup></b>	211 (47,15)	144 (36,11)		<b>23</b> <b>(8,01)</b>		
<b>1991</b>	106 (33,14)	110 (34,36)*	-	<b>21 (7,55)</b>	-	-
<b>1994</b>	125 (43,50)*	69 (24,23)	-	<b>15 (5,44)</b>	-	-
<b>1997</b>	58 (22,07)	137 (52,26)*	-	<b>19 (7,60)</b>	-	-
<b>2001</b>	48 (17,15)	51 (18,18)	120 (42,74)**	<b>21</b> <b>(7,45)**</b>	-	-
<b>2005</b>	82 (33,98)**	50 (24,43)	53 (21,83)**	<b>34</b> <b>(14,07)**</b>	-	21 (8,14)
<b>2009</b>	40 (17,70)	15 (6,76)	-	<b>38</b> <b>(14,45)</b>	116 (39,72)*	21 (9,36)

**Key:** \* Single government after the elections  
 \*\* Coalition government member after the elections

After 1991 general elections, the United Democratic Forces formed a government with the support of the MRF. There were several small non-ethnic parties present in the parliament, which proved advantageous to the MRF, because it became the key party in establishing the government and its legislation between 1991 and 1994. For instance, in 1992, the MRF was able to take down the

<sup>99</sup> European Election Database, “Bulgaria” **Report**, [http://www.nsd.uib.no/european\\_election\\_database/country/bulgaria/](http://www.nsd.uib.no/european_election_database/country/bulgaria/) (05.01.2014).

<sup>100</sup> Bulgarian Socialist Party, in 1997 it participated in elections with the name of “Democratic Left”; in 2001, 2005, and 2009, it participated in elections with the name of “Coalition for Bulgaria,” because it has aimed to represent all leftist movements in Bulgaria.

<sup>101</sup> In 2009, the group participated in elections with the name “Blue Coalition,”

<sup>102</sup> The National Movement Simeon II (NMSS, in Bulgarian: “Nacionalno dvizhenie za stabilnost i vāzhod”).

<sup>103</sup> Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria.

<sup>104</sup> National Union Attack (ATAKA, in Bulgarian: “Natsionalen sayuz ‘Ataka’”), an ultra-nationalist party, established in 2005 by nationalist journalist Volen Siderov.

<sup>105</sup> The elections were mainly held to approve decisions of round table rounds.

government led by the UDF through to interpellation fueled by economic problems in the Turkish populated areas; their actions caused a political crisis in Bulgaria.

Later, neither the UDF nor the BSP were able to establish a new government. After a long parliamentary crisis, the MRF proposed a solution that nominated Professor Lyuben Berov, who was acceptable by all members of the parliament, as the candidate for prime minister. As a result, the MRF became the main driving force in establishing a government of technocrats during this period. The MRF was also successful in the local elections which took place at the same time and gained municipalities in all of the Turkish populated areas.

In the following elections, the MRF votes decreased from 7.55% to 5.44%. Marushiakova and Popov explain the reason behind this decrease at the elections as follows:

*“The MRF received fewer votes and fewer seats in parliament (only 15) which was due to their voters’ disappointment with the results achieved by the MRF while they were in power (at least formally), as well as to the extensive emigration which had decreased the Turkish population of Bulgaria.”*<sup>106</sup>

Similarly, according to Özgür, “due to the collapse in the tobacco, agriculture, and construction sectors, the unemployment in the Turkish and Pomak regions reached unbearable levels, and the expectations for a better future evaporated across the whole country.”<sup>107</sup>

The BSP was easily able to win the general elections in 1994 due to the economic problems between 1991 and 1994. In addition, the BSP had the power to establishment a united government without the help of other parties, including the MRF. In the local elections 1995, however, the MRF managed to keep its presence in the local governments of the Turkish populated areas.

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<sup>106</sup> Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, “The Muslim Minorities in Bulgaria”, **Balkan Ethnology**, <http://www.balkanethnology.org/files/library/E%20&%20V/Muslims.pdf> (29.12.2013).

<sup>107</sup> Nurcan Özgür-Baklacioglu, “Dual Citizenship, Extraterritorial Elections and National Policies: Turkish Dual Citizens in the Bulgarian-Turkish Political Sphere”, **Dual Citizenship, Extraterritorial Elections and National Policies**, 2006 [http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no9\\_ses/18\\_nurcan.pdf](http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no9_ses/18_nurcan.pdf) (13.01.2014).

Between 1994 and 2001, according to Dayioğlu, the BSP and UDF tried to weaken the MRF through the Constitutional Court.<sup>108</sup> For instance, in 1996, 92 members of Parliament led by the BSP made three appeals to the Constitutional Court to close the MRF because of its ethnic and religious nature and accused it of threatening the territorial integrity of Bulgaria. In answer to these attempts, the MRF argued that since Bulgaria had suffered from economic and social crisis, the BSP was purposing to alter Bulgaria's main agenda.<sup>109</sup> Similarly, according to Zhelyazkov, "the attacks [constitutional ban] against the MRF took place when the economic and political situation in the country was critical and when the socialists were losing ground and wanted to divert public attention at crucial moments of their campaign."<sup>110</sup> Consequently, similar to previous attempts, the Constitutional Court denied the pushes to close the MRF.

Later, in 1997, the MRF cooperated with some small centrist and royalist parties in the elections to increase its votes. However, these parties were unable to help the MRF in the elections. As a result, the MRF took 7.6% of the votes and won only 19 seats in parliament.<sup>111</sup>

Later, in the following elections, the MRF did not increase its seats, as it took more than 7% of the votes and subsequently won 21 seats in the parliament. Meanwhile, the elections in 2001 were won by the National Movement Simeon II (NMSS). Although the NMSS could have established a single party government, Bulgaria needed a strong government because of the NATO and EU accession processes, and the NMSS and MRF both strongly supported membership to these organizations.<sup>112</sup> Therefore, the NMSS established a coalition government with the MRF, where the latter was represented by two ministerial portfolios. Between 2001 and 2005, the government took significant political steps for the future of Bulgaria, including its NATO membership and its accession agreement with the EU.

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<sup>108</sup> Dayioğlu, p. 436.

<sup>109</sup> Dayioğlu, p. 436.

<sup>110</sup> Antonina Zhelyazkova, "Bulgaria in Transition: The Muslim Minorities", **Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations**, Vol. 12, No.3, 2001, p. 298.

<sup>111</sup> Dayioğlu, p. 437.

<sup>112</sup> Hajdinjak, p. 113.

Afterwards, although the NMSS failed in the 2005 elections, the MRF dramatically increased its votes and seats, and as a party gained 14.07% of the votes and 34 seats. According to Kresteva and Todorov, this success was the consequence of the low voter turnout in Bulgaria and the remarkable support from the Bulgarian Turkish citizens in Turkey.<sup>113</sup> Bulgarian citizens living in Turkey are able to vote for presidential and general elections in several cities, including Istanbul, Ankara, and Bursa.

After the elections, while the MRF and the BCP tried to establish a government, they failed to receive a vote of confidence from the parliament. Therefore, the MRF, the NMSS, and the BCP established the government together, which later signed the membership agreement with the EU in 2007. After the 2009 elections, the MRF continued to operate as an opposition party because the Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria (CEDB, in Bulgarian: "Grazhdani za evropeysko razvitie na Balgariya," [GERB], liberal conservative party, established in 2006, led by Boyko Borisov old mayor of Sofia) were able to form a cabinet on their own.

Consequently, although the MRF confronted several issues with the other Bulgarian parties and the constitutional court after the establishment, it became a member of the government in two occasions. In addition, the MRF has always increased its votes and number of representatives in the parliament after the elections in 1994. The MRF was also supported by the Turkish and Muslim populated areas and by the Bulgarian Turks in Turkey in last two elections. In a nutshell, the MRF became a significant political organization in Bulgaria supported by the minorities and the Bulgarian Turkish diaspora in Turkey.

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<sup>113</sup> Kresteva and Todorov, pp. 17-22.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ETHNIC PARTIES AND ELECTORAL COMPETITION

This chapter discusses the main argument of this study: “the intra-ethnic party competition” to explain the moderate demands of the MRF. Before delving into this particular topic, this study also clarifies the designations “ethnic party” and “moderate or extremist demands,” because these concepts are not clear terms accepted by all scholars. Consequently, the first part seeks to describe and clarify all the key terms that are used throughout the work.

The second part outlines some of the outstanding arguments that explain the moderate and extreme demands of ethnic parties within the existing literature. The ethnic politics literature concerning the demands of ethnic parties can be divided into three general groups: those focusing on international factors (international organizations and the homeland country), domestic factors, (e.g. economic, political, and constitutional issues), and leader-based factors. The last part of this chapter will examine “the intra-ethnic party competition” with regard to the Turkish ethnic parties in Bulgaria.

#### 2.1. ETHNIC PARTIES: A DEFINITION

According to Lipset and Rokkan, modern political parties are political organizations that mainly aim to represent and protect the interests of existing cleavages within modern society.<sup>114</sup> These cleavages are results of specific historical developments, such as the Protestant Reformation, the Democratic Revolution (the French Revolution), and the Industrial Revolution.<sup>115</sup> The Reformation and the Democratic Revolution created cleavages in society over values and beliefs, including those concerning religion and ethnicity. Meanwhile, the Industrial Revolution deepened cleavages over economic interests, which had

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<sup>114</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, “Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments,” **The West European Party System**, (Ed. Peter Mair) Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990, p. 124.

<sup>115</sup> Lipset and Rokkan, 124.



caused clashes between the bourgeoisie and the working class.<sup>116</sup> Consequently, Lipset and Rokkan argue that these cleavages have integrated into the existing political structures through political parties that have been created to protect and improve the people's interests.

Max Weber argues that since political parties represent the interests of these cleavages, they also aim to influence and control the existing political system.<sup>117</sup> According to Duverger, modern political parties particularly exhibit three components: "the creation of parliamentary groups, the appearance of electoral committees and the establishment of [a] permanent connection between these two structures."<sup>118</sup>

Based on these descriptions, this study considers political parties as political organizations that may represent a particular community or an economic class and that competes to influence and control the economic, cultural, and political policies of a government and state in order to solve the problems of its supporters by using violence, money, or elections. Several different types of political parties have been established to represent and protect the interests of existing cleavages in a society. According to Gunther and Diamond's classification, different types of political parties consist of elite-based (local and clientelistic), mass-based (socialist-, nationalist-, and religion-based), ethnicity-based (ethnic and congress), electoralist (personalistic, catch all, and programmatic), and movement (left-libertarian and extreme right) parties.<sup>119</sup>

Some political parties are established with the aim of representing particular ethnic groups. According to Chandra, defining ethnicity-based political parties is a complicated task for two reasons. First, before defining an ethnic party, characteristics of its ethnic representational group must be identified.<sup>120</sup> The classical definition of "ethnic group" encompasses a group whose members share

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<sup>116</sup> Lipset and Rokkan, 125.

<sup>117</sup> Max Weber, Hans Heinrich Gerth and Bryan S. Turner, **From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology**, Routledge, London, 2005, p. 195.

<sup>118</sup> Maurice Duverger, **Political Parties: Their organization and Activity in the Modern State**, Routledge, Kegan & Paul, Paris, 1964, p. xxiv.

<sup>119</sup> Richard Gunther and Larry Diamond, "Species of Political Parties: A New Typology," **Party Politics**, Vol. 9, No. 2, 2003, pp. 172-192.

<sup>120</sup> Kanchan Chandra, "What is an Ethnic Party?" **Party Politics**, Vol. 17, No. 2, 2011, p. 151.

common ancestry and cultural features.<sup>121</sup> According to Horowitz, “ethnicity is an umbrella concept that easily embraces groups differentiated by color, language, and religion; it covers ‘tribes,’ ‘races,’ ‘nationalities,’ and castes”.<sup>122</sup> Moreover, according to Chandra, the ethnic identity is “a subset of identity categories in which eligibility for membership is determined by attributes associated with, or believed to be associated with, descent.”<sup>123</sup>

Meanwhile, according to Fearon, an ethnic group has the following features; first, it has a common history, descent, language, customs, or/and religion that obviously differentiates it from other ethnic groups. Second, it has a homeland or at least remembers one. Third, these features have to be valuable and vital for the members of a group.<sup>124</sup> This study follows Fearon’s definition because it is a comprehensive one that is simply applicable to all ethnic groups in the world.

In addition, although scholars commonly argue that ethnic parties protect and represent the interests of a particular ethnic group, problems arise with the indicators that how to label a political party as an ethnic one.<sup>125</sup> According to Chandra, “there is no one universally correct indicator that yields a correct classification of ethnic parties for all questions.”<sup>126</sup> For instance, Horowitz argues that ethnic parties mainly exhibit three common features. First, they have, in general, the broad support of an ethnic group. Second, their sole purpose is attracting members of a particular ethnic group. Lastly, they adhere to protecting the interests of that particular ethnic group.<sup>127</sup>

Similar to Horowitz, according to Gunther and Diamond, ethnic-based parties, in contrast to mass-based parties, do not constitute a political or an economic program for of the whole society.<sup>128</sup> Instead, ethnic parties mainly seek

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<sup>121</sup> James D. Fearon, “Ethnic and Cultural Diversity by Country,” **Journal of Economic Growth**, Vol. 9, 2003, p. 200.

<sup>122</sup> Horowitz, p. 53.

<sup>123</sup> Kanchan Chandra, “What is Ethnic Identity and does it Matter?” **Annual Review of Political Science**, Vol. 9, 2006, p. 398.

<sup>124</sup> Fearon, p. 200.

<sup>125</sup> Chandra, “What is an ethnic party?” p. 151.

<sup>126</sup> Chandra, “What is an ethnic party?” p. 153.

<sup>127</sup> Horowitz, pp. 294-297.

<sup>128</sup> Gunther and Diamond, p. 183.

to secure material, cultural, and political benefits for their ethnic groups.<sup>129</sup> According to the existing literature, ethnic parties not only mobilize their ethnic groups, but also constantly attempt to exclude other ethnic groups.<sup>130</sup> According to Von Cott, a political party, whose majority of leaders and members identify themselves as belonging to a non-dominant ethnic group, can be defined as an ethnic one.<sup>131</sup> Similarly, according to Ishiyama and Breuning, an ethnic party can be defined as one where the majority (more than 50%) of its leadership and support comes from a “non-dominant” ethnic group.<sup>132</sup>

Gunther and Diamond argue that ethnic parties generally have lower levels of ideological commitment than other party types.<sup>133</sup> For instance, the Swedish People’s Party of Finland (SPP, in Swedish; Svenska folkpartiet i Finland, SFP) is a member of Liberal International, which is what?;<sup>134</sup> the South Tyrol People's Party (STPP, in German; Südtiroler Volkspartei, SVP), representing German people in Italy, is a member of the Christian Democratic European People's Party;<sup>135</sup> and the Social Democratic and Labor Party (SDLP), representing Catholic people in Northern Ireland, is a member of Socialist International.<sup>136</sup>

Meanwhile, while it is also possible to distinguish ethnic political parties based on their names of the ethnic parties, some of them are not allowed to use their ethnic identifiers in their party’s name by constitutional regulations. In other words, using an ethnic identifier in a political party name does not guarantee that the party has actively adopted ethnic policies.

As a result, this study follows Ishiyama and Breuning’s definition, since it is applicable to various ethnic parties present in the world; if the majority of supporters and leaders of a political party (more than 50%) belong not only to a

<sup>129</sup> Gunther and Diamond, p. 183-184.

<sup>130</sup> Horowitz, pp. 294-297.

<sup>131</sup> Donna Lee Van Cott, **From Movements to Parties in Latin America: The Evolution of Ethnic Politics**, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2005, p. 3.

<sup>132</sup> John Ishiyama and Marijke Breuning, “What’s in a Name? Ethnic Party Identity and Democratic Development in Post-Communist Politics,” **Party Politics**, Vol. 17, No. 2, 2011, p. 227.

<sup>133</sup> Gunther and Diamond, p. 184.

<sup>134</sup> Liberal International, “Members”, **Press Bulletin**, [http://www.liberal-international.org/editorial.asp?ia\\_id=724](http://www.liberal-international.org/editorial.asp?ia_id=724) (13.01.2014).

<sup>135</sup> Südtiroler Volkspartei, “About Us”, **Press Bulletin**, <http://www.svp.eu/de/english/> (13.01.2014).

<sup>136</sup> Socialist International, “Full Members” **About Us**, <http://www.socialistinternational.org/viewArticle.cfm?ArticlePageID=931> (13.01.2014).

particular ethnic group, but also a non-dominant ethnic group within country, a political party can be defined as an ethnic one.<sup>137</sup> With regard to the research conducted in Bulgaria, the Turkish people in Bulgaria belong to different economic classes, such as laborers and farmers; adhere to different ideologies, such as leftist or nationalist; or have different religious opinions, such as Islamist and secularist, but all of them vote for the Turkish party.<sup>138</sup> An ethnic group usually votes for their ethnic party not because they are leftist, nationalist, religious, and/or admire the leader, instead, they believe that their ethnic party is the only one that guards the interests of its ethnic group.<sup>139</sup> Therefore, similar to Gunther and Diamond, this study also argues that ethnic parties generally have lower levels of ideological commitment than other party types.

Lastly, there is also considerable terminological confusion about what to call ethnic based parties. Hepburn highlights this confusion<sup>140</sup> and argues that political parties based on ethnic groups are identified by scholars as being ethnic, nationalist, minority, minority nationalist, ethno-territorial, ethno-regionalist, or regionalist.<sup>141</sup> To clarify this confusion, this work simply classifies ethnic-based parties “ethnic parties.”

## 2.2. ETHNIC PARTY POLITICS: TO DEMAND OR NOT TO DEMAND

The classical definition of “political extremism” touts the idea of “taking a political idea to its limits, regardless of ‘unfortunate’ repercussions, impracticalities, arguments, and feelings to the contrary, and with the intention not only to confront, but also to eliminate, opposition.”<sup>142</sup> Meanwhile, the term

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<sup>137</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, “What’s in a Name? Ethnic Party Identity and Democratic Development in Post-Communist Politics,” p. 227.

<sup>138</sup> Field research in Bulgaria, July and August, 2012.

<sup>139</sup> Field research in Bulgaria, July and August, 2012

<sup>140</sup> Eve Hepburn, “Introduction: Re-conceptualizing Sub-state Mobilization,” **Regional and Federal Studies**, Vol. 19, No. 4-5, pp. 480-485.

<sup>141</sup> Eve Hepburn, “Introduction: Re-conceptualizing Sub-state Mobilization,” **Regional and Federal Studies**, Vol. 19, No. 4-5, pp. 480-485.

<sup>142</sup> Roger Scruton, **The Palgrave Macmillan Dictionary of Political Thought**, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2007, p. 237.

“moderate” can be defined as “a desire for conciliation rather than confrontation.”<sup>143</sup> Approaches on ethnic politics define the degree of “extremism” as the “distance” from state or government policies. Since ethnic parties are political organizations pursuing the protection of the interests of specific ethnic groups, their demands are primarily associated with ethnic, cultural, and territorial issues. Hence, the literature on politics of ethnicity mainly analyzes the “distance” of their “ethnic and territorial” demands from the policies of the state.

According to Rudolph and Thompson, ethnic and territorial demands can be particularly divided into four different types, ranging from the most moderate to the most extreme ones: demands for fundamental rights, demands affecting the existing political system (e.g. the Flemish nationalist parties in 1960s Belgium), demands for cultural autonomy (e.g. nationalist organizations in England and Belgium in the 1970s), and demands for an independent state (e.g. the Irish Republican Army in Northern Ireland and the Euskadi Ta Askatasuna in Spain).<sup>144</sup>

Furthermore, according to Zariski, ethnic political movements can be classified according to their degrees of violence, political exclusiveness, and irredentism.<sup>145</sup> Therefore, some scholars take the demands for administrative regulations and education in the minority language as moderate ones.<sup>146</sup> Meanwhile, they consider political or territorial autonomy that aims at establishing full political independence as an extreme approach.<sup>147</sup>

Recently, Erin Jenne has established a comprehensive and reliable model to classify the demands of ethnic parties. Jenne states that “demands are meaningful primarily in so far as they constitute a challenge to the existing state.”<sup>148</sup> According to Jenne, irredentism is the most extreme demand because it

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<sup>143</sup> Scruton, p. 444.

<sup>144</sup> Rudolph and Thompson, pp. 293-294.

<sup>145</sup> Raphael Zariski, “Ethnic Extremism among Ethnoterritorial Minorities in Western Europe,” *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 21, No. 3, pp. 253-254.

<sup>146</sup> Rogers Brubaker, **Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and National Question in the New Europe**, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2009, p. 60; Erin K. Jenne, Stephen M. Saideman and Will Lowe, “Separatism as Bargaining Posture: The Role of Leverage in Minority Radicalization,” **Journal of Peace Research**, Vol. 44, No. 5, pp. 540-541.

<sup>147</sup> Brubaker, p. 60. .

<sup>148</sup> Erin K. Jenne, “A Bargaining Theory of Minority Demands: Explaining the Dog that Did not Bite in 1990s Yugoslavia,” **International Studies Quarterly**, Vol. 48, p. 732.

challenges the territorial integration of the state.<sup>149</sup> Additionally, demands for regional autonomy are less extreme than irredentism, because they aim for power-sharing in the “ethnic regions,” but the state borders remain unchallenged.<sup>150</sup>

Jenne further assumes that demands for cultural autonomy are less extreme than political autonomy and irredentism, because they do not challenge the political and territorial institutions that are controlled by the majority. The demands for cultural autonomy, however, are more extreme than their affirmative action since they demand power sharing in the area of culture and education.<sup>151</sup> Finally, affirmative action can be defined as the most moderate one, because it aims to integrate with the institutions of the state and to protect the fundamental rights of an ethnic group.<sup>152</sup>

With regard to these arguments, ethnic moderate and extremist parties can be categorized in two different ways. As earlier defined, all political parties aim to affect and control the existing political structure. In addition, the means to reach these goals can help to distinguish between moderate and extremist ethnic parties. According to Weber, the modern state is an entity that claims a “monopoly on the legitimate use of violence.”<sup>153</sup> Based on this definition, since violent actions are the most unacceptable means for a modern state, ethnic parties that aim to destroy the existing political system through violence or have connections with terrorist groups can be categorized as the most extremist ethnic parties.

An ethnic party that challenges the territorial integration of the state can also be classified as extremist. Territorial autonomy remains a more extremist demand than cultural autonomy, because it directly challenges political institutions of the state. In contrast, cultural autonomy does not aim to challenge the borders of the state; instead it includes cultural rights, such as the right to education based on a mother tongue or the right to choose a religious leader. Lastly, an ethnic party that does not aim to alter the territorial and cultural

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<sup>149</sup> Jenne, pp. 732-733.

<sup>150</sup> Jenne, pp. 732-733.

<sup>151</sup> Jenne, pp. 732-733.

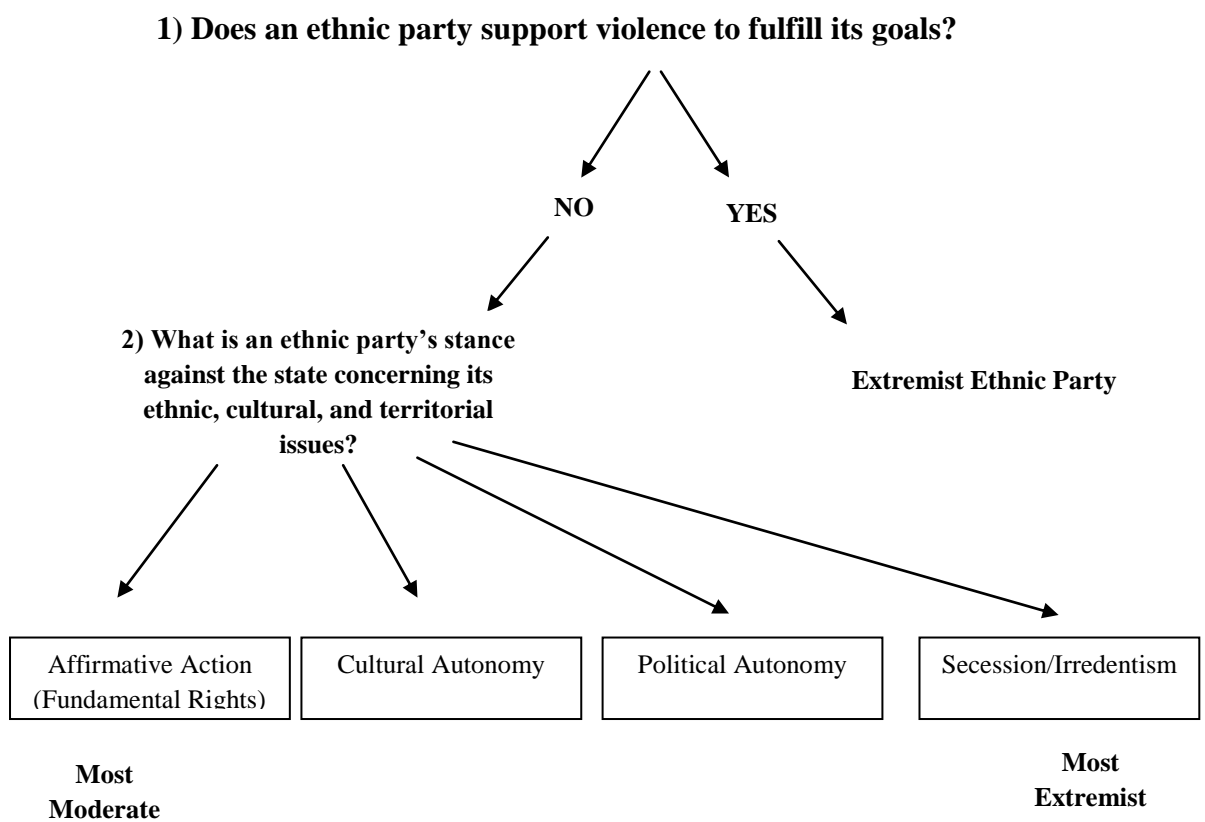
<sup>152</sup> Jenne, pp. 732-733.

<sup>153</sup> Max Weber, “Politics as vocation”, **SSCNET**, <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/polisci/ethos/Weber-vocation.pdf> (16.11.2013).

integration of the state can be classified as a more moderate one. In other words, the most moderate ethnic parties pursue integration with state institutions.

In a nutshell, based on these classifications and arguments, and aligning with Jenne's assertions, the demands of ethnic parties can be ordered as follows (from the most moderate to most extreme): affirmative action, cultural autonomy, political autonomy, and secession/irredentism.

**Figure 1:** The Classification of Ethnic Parties (Based on Jenne's Classification)<sup>154</sup>



Based on the above classification, several extremist ethnic parties support violence or terrorist activities to reach their goals in Europe. For instance, the ethnic Basque party, the Unity of the People Party (UPP, in Spanish: Herri Batasuna) in Spain was closed down due to its relations with the terrorist group, the “Basque Homeland and Freedom.” Similar to the Spanish example, several

<sup>154</sup> Jenne, p. 733; Erin K. Jenne, “The Impact of Group Fears and Outside Actors on Ethnic Party Demands,” *Czech Sociological Review*, Vol. 7, No. 1, p. 75.

ethnic Kurdish parties were closed because of their support of the terrorist party named the “Kurdistan Workers’ Party” (PKK, in Kurdish: Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan) in Turkey.<sup>155</sup>

Meanwhile, several ethnic parties either demand independence or political autonomy from their host states in Europe.<sup>156</sup> Extremist ethnic parties in Europe include the Plaid Cymru in Wales, the Galician Nationalist Bloc (GNB, in Spanish: Bloque Nacionalista Galego) in Spain, the Scottish National Party (SNP), the Sinn Fein (SF), the Northern League (in Italian: Lega Nord) in Italy, the People's Union (Volksunie) in Belgium prior to the late 1980s, and the Corsican Nationalist Party in France.<sup>157</sup>

Apart from these extremist ethnic parties, some ethnic parties have not generally aimed to challenge the territorial integrity of their host states. Instead, they basically seek to protect their ethnic group’s cultural rights, including their collective rights to education in a mother tongue and cultural autonomy. In Europe, these parties include the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (DUHR, in Romanian: Uniunea Democrată Maghiară din România, in Hungarian: Romániai Magyar Demokrata Szövetség, RMDSz), the Swedish People's Party of Finland, the Swiss Ticino League (Legadei Ticinesi), and the Democratic Party of Turks in Macedonia (in Macedonian: Demokratska Partijana Turcite, in Turkish: Türk Demokratik Partisi).<sup>158</sup>

According to the definitions adopted for the purpose of this study, the MRF is not an extremist ethnic party, because it does not demand any independence or political autonomy from the Bulgarian state, and no evidence indicates a relationship between the MRF and any terrorist organizations. Instead, the MRF has adopted affirmative action aimed at the integration of the Turkish community with state institutions. For instance, the MRF only focuses on the fundamental rights of its ethnic group, not on its cultural or political autonomy.

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<sup>155</sup> Merih Öden, **Türk Anayasa Hukukunda Siyasi Partilerin Anayasaya Aykırı Eylemleri Nedeniyle Kapatılmaları**, Yetkin Pub., Ankara, 2003, pp. 109-110.

<sup>156</sup> Anwen Elias, **Minority Nationalist Parties and European Integration**, Routledge, New York, 2009.

<sup>157</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, “What’s in a Name? Ethnic Party Identity and Democratic Development in Post-Communist Politics,” p. 226.

<sup>158</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, “What’s in a Name? Ethnic Party Identity and Democratic Development in Post-Communist Politics” p. 226.



The MRF has already integrated into state institutions, since it has become a member of the coalition government on two separate occasions. Moreover, the MRF is an open party to creating an alliance and coalition with political parties on both ends of the spectrum.<sup>159</sup>

Furthermore, ethnic parties in Turkey and Romania represent important examples in understanding the importance of explaining moderate demands of the MRF, because these countries are the neighbors of Bulgaria. The MRF remains more moderate ethnic political party than the Kurdish Party (Peace and Democracy Party) in Turkey and the Hungarian Party (the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania) in Romania due to following reasons. While the MRF has demanded learning Turkish in schools as selective course, the Kurdish and the Hungarian party has demanded education in a mother tongue.<sup>160</sup> In contrast to the MRF, while the Hungarian Party demanded to establish their cultural institutions, the Peace and Democracy Party has pursued the territorial autonomy of the Kurdish populated areas. In addition, the Kurdish Party has connection with the secessionist terrorist organization, the PKK, whereas the MRF has never supported violent actions that aim to destroy the state. Lastly, while the Hungarian Party has requested an external protection from its homeland country, Hungary,<sup>161</sup> there is not any indication that the MRF has requested such a protection from Turkey.

### **2.3. LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE DEMANDS OF ETHNIC PARTIES**

In the literature on ethnic politics, some scholars consider international factors, including the homeland country (one that has the same nationality as a minority group in another country) and the European Union, as independent variables that explain the political behavior of an ethnic party on various ethnic

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<sup>159</sup> Antoine Roger, **Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans**, p. 10.

<sup>160</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, "What's in a Name? Ethnic Party Identity and Democratic Development in Post-Communist Politics," p. 226.

<sup>161</sup> Zsuzsa Csergo and James M. Goldgeier, "Virtual Nationalism", **Foreign Policy**, 01.07.2001, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2001/07/01/virtual\\_nationalism](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2001/07/01/virtual_nationalism), (21.02.2014)

and territorial issues.<sup>162</sup> Meanwhile, another group of scholars mainly analyzes domestic factors, such as the economic structure,<sup>163</sup> constitutional order,<sup>164</sup> election systems,<sup>165</sup> and party competition<sup>166</sup> within a state to explain the extremist and moderate demands of ethnic parties. Lastly, still other scholars emphasize the effects of political elites on the political behavior of ethnic parties.<sup>167</sup> Through these arguments, some scholars also attempt to specifically explain the political behavior of the MRF.

This part analyzes all of these arguments with regard to the MRF in Bulgaria. Hence, this section also discusses why other arguments are unable to explain the political behavior of the MRF. This part of the chapter unfolds as follows; first section explains how the EU and the homeland country can influence ethnic politics of a country with regard to existing arguments. Some arguments do not only focus on the EU or the homeland country, but also analyzes ethnic party politics through both domestic and international factors. Later, second section indicates whether the EU or the homeland country can be considered as important factors in understanding the moderate demands of the MRF, or not. Afterwards, this part continues with domestic factors through analyzing its effect on the ethnic politics. After this section, this study also

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<sup>162</sup> Timofey Agarin and Malte Brosig, **Minority Integration in Central Eastern Europe Between Ethnic Diversity and Equality**, Rodopi, New York, 2009, pp. 7-8; Ishiyama and Breuning, **Ethnopolitics in the New Europe**, pp. 9-10; Erin Jenne, **International Studies Quarterly**, Vol. 48, p. 738; and Rogers Brubaker, "National Minorities, Nationalizing States, and External National Homelands in the New Europe."

<sup>163</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, **Ethnopolitics in the New Europe**, pp. 8-9; Jenne, Saideman and Lowe, **Journal of Peace Research**, Vol. 44, No. 5; and Horowitz, pp. 243-244.

<sup>164</sup> Juan Linz, "The Perils of Presidentialism," **Journal of Democracy**, Winter 1990, pp. 55-60.

<sup>165</sup> Pippa Norris, **Electoral Engineering, Voting Rules and Political Behavior**, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004, p. 210; Johanna Kristin Birnir, **Ethnicity and Electoral Politics**, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2007, pp. 44-47; Arend Lijphart, "Constitutional Design for Divided Societies," **Journal of Democracy**, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2004, pp. 100-106; and Daniel Bochsler, "Electoral Rules and the Representation of Ethnic Minorities in Post-Communist Democracies," **European Yearbook of Minority Issues**, Vol. 7, No. 8, 2010, pp. 153-80.

<sup>166</sup> Cathy Gormley Heenan and Roger Macginty, "Ethnic Outbidding and Party Modernization: Understanding the Democratic Unionist Party's Electoral Success in the Post-Agreement Environment," **Ethnopolitics**, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2008, pp. 45-52; for a similar argument, see: Daniel Bochsler, "Local politics and Intra-Ethnic Party Competition: Multi-party Systems among Ethnic Minorities in Central and Eastern Europe," 4th ECPR General Conference, Pisa, 6-8 September 2007, pp. 1-10; and Paul Mitchell, Geoffrey Evans and Brendan O'Leary, "Extremist Outbidding in Ethnic Party Systems is Not Inevitable: Tribune Parties in Northern Ireland," **Political Studies**, Vol. 57, 2009, pp. 399-400.

<sup>167</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, **Ethnopolitics in the New Europe**, pp. 13-14.

discusses, except the intra-ethnic party competition, why other domestic arguments are not the subject of this study. Finally, this part concludes with explaining leader based factors and reasons why these factors are unable to explain the moderate demands of the MRF.

### **2.3.1. International Factors**

The European Union can impact the political behavior of ethnic parties in Europe. Since the EU encourages its candidate and member countries to improve their minority rights, it makes previously isolated ethnic groups more visibility in the political arena. The EU intensifies the existing nationalist ideology among ethnic groups and ethnic parties. According to this argument “the EU, through its minority rights and regionalization policies, and the tendency toward “multi-level governance,” has created a transnational space for discourse and action in which minorities can now advance claims for self-determination and territorial autonomy.”<sup>168</sup> As a result, ethnic parties in Europe tend to adopt more extreme demands through examples, including<sup>169</sup> the Plaid Cymric in Wales which called for “full national status” for Wales within a Europe of the Regions”; the Volksunie in Belgium which demanded for the federalization of Belgium and independent state, the Galician Nationalist Bloc in Spain and the Scottish National Party claimed to independence for all nations in Europe.<sup>170</sup>

Furthermore, another line of the EU argument claims that the EU provided some member countries to integrate with their ethnic groups of other members. According to Csergo and Goldgeier, “many ethnic groups throughout Europe realize that European integration offers the best chance to assert their national

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<sup>168</sup> Lavinia Bucsa, “European Integration And Ethnic Mobilization In Newly Admitted Countries: The Case Of Hungarian Minority In Romania”, **University of Miami European Union Center for Excellence Symposium**, Vol. 5, No. 7, March 2008, p. 5.

<sup>169</sup> Timofey Agarin and Malte Brosig, **Minority Integration in Central Eastern Europe Between Ethnic Diversity and Equality**, Rodopi, New York, 2009, pp. 7-8; Lavinia Bucsa, European Integration And Ethnic Mobilization in Newly Admitted Countries: The Case Of The Hungarian Minority In Romania, **University of Miami European Union Center for Excellence Symposium**, 2008, pp. 5-6.

<sup>170</sup> Anwen Elias, “From Euro-enthusiasm to Euro-scepticism? A Re-evaluation of Minority Nationalist Party Attitudes Towards European Integration”, **Regional and Federal Studies**, October 2008, Vol. 18, No. 5, p. 559,

ambitions”.<sup>171</sup> For instance, Hungary has established a number of government agencies and funds to encourage Hungarian minorities in Slovakia, Romania and Serbia to remain members of the Hungarian nation without moving to Hungary.<sup>172</sup> In addition, the state of Hungary supported the EU membership of these countries, because the EU will eliminate the existing limitations of citizenship of member countries. Therefore, Hungary pursues to unite with outside Hungarians through the EU membership.<sup>173</sup>

Homeland country’s ethnic policies can also affect the political behavior of ethnic parties. According to Jenne, when an ethnic group receives a signal that the homeland state might be supportive of extreme demands, it radicalizes its demands in order to obtain privileges from its host country for cultural or political autonomy or independence.<sup>174</sup> In this case, it does not matter whether the host country guarantees protection of human rights to the minority or not since the minority group will have the support from the homeland state for political autonomy or independence.<sup>175</sup>

Jenne, Saideman, and Lowe also take this argument further and argue that when an ethnic group has patronage from external sources, such as its homeland country, outside states, international organizations, or interest groups, the ethnic group has a tendency to become more extreme about its ethnic and cultural demands.<sup>176</sup> For example, according to Jenne, Tamil separatists gathered momentum in Sri Lanka in the late 1980s once they had received military aid from the Tamil expatriates and assistance from the Indian state of Tamil Nadu.<sup>177</sup>

Rogers Brubaker combines both international and domestic factors in his work and argues that the political behavior of ethnic minorities is mainly formed

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<sup>171</sup> Zsuzsa Csergo and James M. Goldgeier, “Virtual Nationalism”, **Foreign Policy**, 01.07.2001, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2001/07/01/virtual\\_nationalism](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2001/07/01/virtual_nationalism), (21.02.2014)

<sup>172</sup> Zsuzsa Csergo and James M. Goldgeier, “Virtual Nationalism”, **Foreign Policy**, 01.07.2001, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2001/07/01/virtual\\_nationalism](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2001/07/01/virtual_nationalism), (21.02.2014)

<sup>173</sup> Zsuzsa Csergo and James M. Goldgeier, “Virtual Nationalism”, **Foreign Policy**, 01.07.2001, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2001/07/01/virtual\\_nationalism](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2001/07/01/virtual_nationalism), (21.02.2014)

<sup>174</sup> Erin Jenne, “A Bargaining Theory of Minority Demands: Explaining the Dog that Did not Bite in 1990s Yugoslavia,” **International Studies Quarterly**, Vol. 48, p. 738.

<sup>175</sup> Erin Jenne, **International Studies Quarterly**, p. 738.

<sup>176</sup> Jenne, Saideman and Lowe, p. 542.

<sup>177</sup> Erin Jenne, “Sri Lanka: A Fragmented State,” **State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror**, (Ed. Robert I. Rotber), Brookings Institution Press, Washington, 2003, pp. 228-229.

by three factors: the internal dynamics of the party, encouragement from ethnic “homeland,” and the host country’s behavior toward its minorities.<sup>178</sup> According to Brubaker’s argument, within the minority group, while some people actively seek the protection of their homeland or international organizations to intensify their demands, other people remain loyal to the host country. Therefore, the behavior of the homeland or international organizations against this protection request directly affects the behavior of ethnic party.<sup>179</sup>

Meanwhile, Antoine Roger adds another factor in addition to Brubaker’s argument: the enlargement process of the EU that affects both extremist factions and moderate factions within ethnic parties of member and candidate countries of the EU.<sup>180</sup> Roger claims that when the homeland state has a similar situation as the host state in terms of the EU enlargement process then over time the moderates, who remain loyal to host country, are able to eliminate the extremists, who seek to protection of their homeland country, within an ethnic party. In contrast, when the homeland country is a member of the EU and the host country is not, then the ethnic party adopts more extremist demands since they are able to control the party.<sup>181</sup>

Roger argues that “the economic situation of the ‘homeland’ exerts a determining influence on the political orientation of ethnic minorities in Eastern Europe.”<sup>182</sup> As a result, the EU remains an important factor for the policies of ethnic parties in Eastern Europe, because being a member of the EU enhances economic conditions and human rights of ethnic groups which have an impact on the factions within an ethnic party.<sup>183</sup>

According to this argument, since Turkey and Bulgaria were in similar positions in the EU enlargement process (during 2004); the moderates were able to control over the extremists in the MRF.<sup>184</sup> Roger also compares the Turks in Bulgaria with the Hungarians in Romania and argues that due to similar position

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<sup>178</sup> Brubaker, *Daedalus*, pp. 110-111.

<sup>179</sup> Brubaker, *Daedalus*, pp. 110-111; Brubaker, 1996, pp. 4-7.

<sup>180</sup> Roger, p. 23.

<sup>181</sup> Roger, p. 23.

<sup>182</sup> Roger, p. 11.

<sup>183</sup> Roger, p. 23.

<sup>184</sup> Roger, p. 23.

of Bulgaria and Turkey in the process of the EU membership “factions are slightly differentiated within the party... An alliance with all large governing parties is possible, as it does not require too many concessions from the outward-looking [extremists] faction.” However, since Hungary is in better position than Romania in terms of economy and human rights “the factions are sharply differentiated within the political party... The outward-looking faction being strong, its demands must be taken into account by the direction of the party, and that impedes efficient collaboration with large governing parties.”<sup>185</sup>

#### **2.3.1.1. The Homeland Country and the Movement for Rights and Freedoms**

Turkey, as the homeland country of the Turkish population, can have a great impact on the political preferences of the Turkish ethnic group. Turkey has been politically, economically and historically an important factor in the Balkans that can influence ethnic politics through the Muslim communities. In addition, with regard to Jenne’s argument, Turkey has never sent a message after the Cold War that it would be supportive of radical demands from the MRF.<sup>186</sup> Turkey has always tried to protect the status quo in the Balkans due to its foreign policy principles. For instance, at the beginning of the dissolution of Yugoslavia, Turkey remained one of few countries that supported the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia.

This study considers Turkey an important player in understanding political behavior of the MRF and the lack of intra-ethnic party competition. Turkey, for instance, has always supported the MRF as the single political representative of the Turkish population in Bulgaria. In other words, the Turkish governments have never sent a signal that it can be supportive for other Turkish politicians to establish their own political parties. In addition, there are many Bulgarian Turks emigrated from Bulgaria in 1989 who hold both Bulgarian and Turkish

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<sup>185</sup> Roger, pp. 23-24.

<sup>186</sup> Jenne, *International Studies Quarterly*, p. 738.

citizenships. The Bulgarian Turks have also right to vote in the presidential and parliamentary elections of Bulgaria in which they always support the MRF.

However, this study does not consider Turkey as the single factor in explaining the moderate demands of the MRF for following reasons. First, the institutional restrictions in Bulgaria have blocked radical ethnic parties. Therefore, if Turkey supports the extremist demands of the MRF, the constitution is more likely to close the MRF due to the ban on ethnic parties. Second, if Turkey supports more extremist Turkish ethnic party than the MRF, the electoral threshold does not allow two Turkish parties to enter the parliament due to the low percentage population of the Turks. However, Turkey enhances the monopoly of the MRF over the Turkish population, since it has never intervened into the ethnic politics in Bulgaria.. In addition, the Bulgarian Turks in Turkey always supports the MRF in the elections even though they do not follow the politics in Bulgaria.

As a result, this study analyzes Turkey in a separate part as an important factor in understanding the lack of intra-ethnic party competition and the political behavior of the MRF. This study mainly examines the role of Turkey with two factors; the Turkish foreign policy and the Bulgarian Turks in Turkey. In addition, this study also aims to discuss the efficiency of Turkey and the Bulgarian Turks over the Turkish population through the research in Bulgaria.

#### **2.3.2.2. Ineffective Role of the European Union on the Ethnic Politics in Bulgaria**

After the end of the Cold War, the European Union pursued to enlarge toward the post-communist countries due to economic, political and geostrategic reasons. In addition, the post-communist states also desired to join the EU mainly due to its economic benefits, as economic transition of these states caused many economic problems, in the region.

The fulfillment of the EU political and economic criteria for candidate and member countries can be defined as “the EU Conditionally” of which importance rose in the 1990s. According to Anastasakis and Bechev, “EU conditionality is

rooted in a set of criteria which represent, more than anything else, hurdles on the way to integration.”<sup>187</sup> The post-communist countries, thus, became the first target of political and economic conditionality linked with the process of transition towards democracy and market economy.

Similarly, the improvement of minority rights including political participation of minorities is also one of the main priorities of the EU for the full membership. According to Ram “the EU has given considerable attention to minority rights in CEE ... and has used membership as an incentive to enforce compliance with human rights norms and agreements.”<sup>188</sup> Moreover, compatibility with the EU law became a significant requirement in the formulation of domestic legislation of candidate countries.<sup>189</sup> For instance, the EU prohibits discrimination in terms of ethnicity in the areas of employment, training, social protection, education, and access to public goods and services.

In contrast, Rechel argues that the impact of the EU conditionality over candidate countries is mainly shaped by domestic factors, including the change of the political party in power and the rise of nationalism, which limits the implementation of the EU criteria within a country.<sup>190</sup> For instance, although the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities was an important treatment for candidate countries to become member of the EU, Latvia had not ratified the treaty when it became a member of the EU, in 2004.<sup>191</sup> In addition, according to Rechel, limited impact of the EU on domestic factors in terms of minority rights is also the result of the EU itself due to “a lack of minority rights standards within the EU, missing expertise on minority issues, the

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<sup>187</sup> Othon Anastasakis and Dimitar Bechev, “EU Conditionality in South East Europe: Bringing Commitment to the Process”, **South East European Studies Programme**, April 2003, [http://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/seesox/anastasakis\\_publications/EUconditionality.pdf](http://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/seesox/anastasakis_publications/EUconditionality.pdf) (11.01.2014).

<sup>188</sup> Melanie H. Ram, “Democratization through European Integration: The Case of Minority Rights in the Czech Republic and Romania” **Studies in Comparative International Development**, Summer, 2003, Vol. 38, No. 2, p. 28.

<sup>189</sup> Ram, p. 29.

<sup>190</sup> Bernd Rechel, “What Has Limited the EU's Impact on Minority Rights in Accession Countries”, **East European Politics and Societies**, Vol. 22, 2008, p. 172.

<sup>191</sup> Bernd Rechel, “What Has Limited the EU's Impact on Minority Rights in Accession Countries”, p. 172.



superficial monitoring of candidate states, a lack of concern for human rights, and a failure of addressing public attitudes towards minorities”.<sup>192</sup>

Bulgaria is one of the post-communist countries that mainly aimed to integrate with the European Union to strengthen its political and economic stability. Therefore, the Bulgarian governments undertook some steps to protect the minority rights, mainly due to the European Union regulations. In 1992, the Constitution Court decision stated that, “The Bulgarian Constitution acknowledges the existence of religious, linguistic and ethnic differences, and respectively, of bearers of such differences.”<sup>193</sup> Bulgaria also adopted the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in 1999.<sup>194</sup>

Furthermore, in 1997, the government established the National Council for Ethnic and Demographic Issues (now named the National Council for Cooperation on Ethnic and Demographic Issues), which aims to coordinate cooperation between government institutions, NGOs (non-governmental organizations) run by Bulgarian citizens, and ethnic minorities. This council seeks to address issues about ethnic tolerance and the protection of the human rights, identity, religion, language, tradition, and the cultural heritage of the minorities.<sup>195</sup>

Permission to use the Turkish language in newspapers was granted by the Bulgarian government immediately after the end of the communist regime. The government also allowed the Turkish language education in Turkish populated areas after the boycott of the Turkish minority in schools between 1991 and 1992. Later, in 1994, the Bulgarian government reached an agreement that Turkish language education would be adopted for four hours in a week as a selective

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<sup>192</sup> Bernd Rechel, “What has Limited the EU's Impact on Minority Rights in Accession Countries”, p. 173.

<sup>193</sup> Marko Hajdinjak, “Thou Shall Not Take the Names Ethnic or Minority, and I Will Bless Thee: Political Participation of Minorities in Bulgaria,” **Political Parties and Minority Representation**, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Skopje, 2008, pp. 88-89.

<sup>194</sup> Hajdinjak, pp. 88-89.

<sup>195</sup> Hajdinjak, p. 99.

foreign language. Finally, in 1999, Turkish language education became a compulsory elective course for students in both elementary and high school.<sup>196</sup>

All of these reforms were mainly driven by the EU membership process, because a candidate country must fulfill Copenhagen Political Criteria. As a result, Bulgaria was included in the enlargement process in Luxembourg Summit in 1997 and in Helsinki Summit. After that year, rather than human rights issues, economic problems of Bulgaria remained the main obstacle for the EU membership. Therefore, during 2000s, Bulgarian statesmen did not have a strong inclination to improve the rights of minorities.

Although the Post-Cold War period was generally characterized by the positive developments of minority rights due the “EU Conditionally”, there also continued to be a strong opposition against these developments and the political participation of minorities in politics.<sup>197</sup> Sociological studies have shown that only half of the Bulgarian population supported the political participation of minorities.<sup>198</sup> As earlier mentioned, Bulgaria remains one of the two countries, along with Albania; in south-east Europe that prohibits ethnic parties.<sup>199</sup> Furthermore, according to the EU and Turkish politicians, there still exists notable discrimination against the Turkish population, who cannot easily find jobs in Bulgarian populated areas and in the state overall.<sup>200</sup>

Similarly, according to Rechel, “the EU’s role was smaller than much of the literature on enlargement and conditionality would suggest, and progress in minority rights was overall very limited.”<sup>201</sup> Moreover, Rechel also argues that “the restrictions on the political participation of minorities in Bulgaria have scarcely been affected by its accession to the European Union.”<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Özlem, p. 356.

<sup>197</sup> Hajdinjak, p. 101.

<sup>198</sup> Hajdinjak, p. 101.

<sup>199</sup> Daniel Bochsler, “Komunizm Sonrası Seçim Sistemleri ve Etnik Azınlıkların Temsili,” **Seçim Sistemleri ve Etnik Azınlıkların Parleментар Temsili**, (Ed. Ersan Erkan), Beta Basım, İstanbul, 2010, p. 45.

<sup>200</sup> Interviews with Lutvi Mestan, President of the MRF; Çetin Kazak, Representative of the Kardzhali Region; and Necmi Ali, Representative of the Kardzhali Region, Sofia, July 25, 2012; Warhola and Betova, p. 267.

<sup>201</sup> Bernd Rechel, “What Has Limited the EU's Impact on Minority Rights in Accession Countries”, **East European Politics and Societies**, Vol. 22, 2008, p. 188 (171-191)

<sup>202</sup> Rechel, “State Control of Minorities in Bulgaria”, p. 366.

The Turkish politicians generally accept that during the establishment process of the MRF, the EU put pressure on the state of Bulgaria to accept the MRF as a legal political party. According to Mestan, the EU forced the state to accept the MRF during the decision process of the constitutional court.<sup>203</sup> In addition, according to Fikri Gülistan, a local MRF politician in the Kardzhali region, “the EU really took care of us [the MRF] during the establishment process. Several ambassadors of the EU state always asked...us whether we had any political needs or...not.”<sup>204</sup>

However, Mestan also argues that while Bulgaria signed several international agreements to protect the rights of minorities, there are many problems with regard to their implementation. Mestan points out that “the state of Bulgaria did not ratify articles for the collective rights of minorities in international agreements and it does not recognize collective rights.”<sup>205</sup> Bulgaria, thus, does not recognize cultural rights of minority groups, but it accepts basic human rights for all people in the country. Therefore, according to Mestan “the MRF believes that the rights and freedoms are not given as a gift by an external actor. Instead, the rights and freedoms are gained through struggle for them”. As a result, Mestan claims that although the EU has helped the MRF for several issues in terms of human rights and political participation of the MRF, there are still many problems about collective rights of the minorities and implementation of treaties.

Similarly, Necmi Ali states that although the Turkish representatives can give voice about the problems of the minorities in the EU parliament, the EU is unable to solve the problems of minorities including the political participation as a whole.<sup>206</sup> Finally, Çetin Kazak argues that

*“Until the membership, there were many positive developments in terms of economy and democracy for the minorities. However, after the membership, democratization process ended and the new government established in 2009 took several negative steps for the minorities in terms of discrimination for working in the state institutions.”*<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Interviews with Lutvi Mestan, President of the MRF, Sofia, July 25, 2012.

<sup>204</sup> Interview with Fikri Gülistan, local representative of the MRF, Kardzhali, August 2, 2012.

<sup>205</sup> Interview with Lutvi Mestan, President of the MRF, Sofia, July 25, 2012.

<sup>206</sup> Interview with Necmi Ali, Representative of the Kardzhali Region, Sofia, July 25, 2012.

<sup>207</sup> Interview with Çetin Kazak, Representative of the Kardzhali Region, Sofia, July 25, 2012.

In addition to the politicians, during the research, vast majority of Turks remained “either agree/nor disagree” about the impact of the EU on the rights.<sup>208</sup> They generally stated that although the EU has brought several advantages in terms of human rights and economy, the process of the membership did not end what they expect for the rights as there is still strong discrimination against the Turks in the society and state institutions. As a result, although they accepted the impact of the EU in terms of human rights, they do not agree that there are big developments that solve their problems.

Consequently, this study argues that the EU has not played a pivotal role in explaining the political behavior of the MRF for the following reasons. First, the MRF was established in 1990 when Bulgaria had not yet started its membership negotiations; it was only later, in 2007, that Bulgaria became a full member of the EU. .

Second, the argument claiming that the EU intensifies ethnic nationalism through democratization process does not explain the moderate behavior of the MRF, either, because before or during or after the EU membership process of Bulgaria, the MRF has not changed its moderate position and it has not challenged the territorial integration of Bulgaria. This argument also does not explain political behavior of Turkey with regard to the MRF, because, in contrast to Hungary, Turkey has never sought to integrate with the Turks in Balkans through the EU membership.

Furthermore, the argument of Roger, which considers main reason of the political behavior of the MRF is the result of similar position of Bulgaria and Turkey in the EU membership process, does not explain the moderate demands of the MRF. Although Bulgaria became a member of the EU in 2007 and Turkey still continues its membership process, the MRF has not changed its affirmative political stance since 2007.

Lastly, the EU has not forced Bulgaria to allow political participation and collective rights of minorities. In other words, the EU conditionally, which forces the candidate countries to fulfill democratic and economic criteria, did not work

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<sup>208</sup> 39% of the respondents remained “neither disagree nor agree” that the EU has improved the political rights of Turkish population.

for the Bulgarian case. For instance, Bulgaria is the sole member of the EU which bans the political participation of ethnic based parties. There are still many obstacles to implementation of treaties for the improvement of human rights as forced by the EU. Consequently, the impact of the EU on the ethnic politics remains limited which does not cause rise of nationalism for minorities, and does not allow the political participation of minorities, in Bulgaria.

### 2.3.2. Domestic Factors

Another line of debate with regard to ethnic politics emphasizes domestic factors. First, the economic structure of the ethnic group can have a great effect on ethnic party politics. There are two contradictory arguments about the effect of the economy on the demands of ethnic parties. According to the first argument, economically more developed ethnic groups seek independence to avoid subsidizing less developed regions in the state.<sup>209</sup> Examples of this include Slovenia in the former Yugoslavia, the Katanga region in the Congo, and Catalonia in Spain.<sup>210</sup> Slovenia in former Yugoslavia was the first country that proclaimed its independence, because it was an economically more developed state compared to other states in the federation. In addition, still, many Catalans pursue to have their own independent state due to economic development of their region which clearly remains higher than the rest of Spain.<sup>211</sup>

Second, an ethnic group, which is less developed than the majority group, can adopt political autonomy or independence to avoid exploitation by the majority group.<sup>212</sup> According to Jenne, Saideman, and Lowe, the best example of this argument can be found in Bangladesh, which proclaimed its independence in 1969 from Pakistan because it was less developed than Pakistan.<sup>213</sup> The main reason behind less economic development of the region is that the military

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<sup>209</sup> Horowitz, pp. 243-244.

<sup>210</sup> Horowitz, pp. 243-244.

<sup>211</sup> Josep Desquens, "Europe's Stateless Nations in the Era of Globalization - The Case for Catalonia's Secession from Spain" **BC Journal of International Affairs**, Spring 2003, <http://www.jhubc.it/bcjournal/articles/desquens.cfm>, (01.01.2014).

<sup>212</sup> Jenne, Saideman and Lowe, p. 542.

<sup>213</sup> Jenne, Saideman and Lowe, pp. 542-543.

defense of the East Pakistan (Bangladesh) against India lied in the West (Pakistan) which led to investment in infrastructure and communication network in the West (Pakistan) despite Bangladesh's larger contribution to the economy.<sup>214</sup> As a result, independence thus became an attractive for the politicians in Bangladesh against exploitation of Pakistan.<sup>215</sup> In sum, the enormous economic differences between minority and majority groups within a country can influence the political demands of an ethnic party.<sup>216</sup>

Apart from economic factors, there is significant debate over which representational system (the presidential or parliament system) is the most desirable for ethnically divided countries. According to the first line of argument, the presidential system can encourage politicians to broaden their support in order to win elections. To broaden their support, politicians can also seek the endorsement of ethnic minorities. As Horowitz argues, the presidential system can therefore provide a moderating effect on the demands of ethnic parties.<sup>217</sup>

According to Horowitz, the moderating effect of presidentialism is particularly explicit in Nigeria and Sri Lanka because the politicians have also sought the support of other ethnic groups.<sup>218</sup> For instance, in Nigeria, presidentialism was established in order to provide multi-ethnic political system between Christians and Muslims, because before the presidentialism, if any ethnic group gained majority of the parliament, it could form a government and rule the rest of ethnic groups.<sup>219</sup> In order to avoid domination of an ethnic group in the government, "to be elected president, a candidate was required to win a plurality of votes nationwide plus at least 25 percent of the vote in no fewer than two thirds of the nineteen states".<sup>220</sup> As a result, to be elected, a candidate must attract other ethnic groups through promising more moderate demands.

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<sup>214</sup> The Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, "What are the causes of Bangladesh's independence?", **Ask An Expert**, <http://www.idsa.in/askanexpert/WhatarethecausesofBangladeshsindependence> (01.01.2014).

<sup>215</sup> Jenne, Saideman and Lowe, pp. 542-543.

<sup>216</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, **Ethnopolitics in the New Europe**, pp. 8-9.

<sup>217</sup> Horowitz, p. 649.

<sup>218</sup> Horowitz, p. 649.

<sup>219</sup> Horowitz, p. 636.

<sup>220</sup> Horowitz, p. 636.

At the same time, however, it is also possible to claim that presidentialism exacerbates ethnic tensions, and thus promotes extremism and violent conflict. According to this argument, since there is a “winner takes all” mentality in presidential elections, it is more likely that the losers will not accept the results of an election. Moreover, the presidentialism system can at times cause political deadlock if polar opposites dominate the different branches (the president and the parliament). Therefore, scholars like Linz argue that there will be a greater likelihood of ethnic extremism if different ethnic groups dominate the different branches in a presidential system.<sup>221</sup>

Still other scholars have analyzed the role of election systems, which clearly shape the quality of representation. While a proportional representation system provides small parties the ability to attend a parliament, majoritarian representation protects large parties and excludes small ones.<sup>222</sup> Being present in parliament for ethnic parties represents great importance because they generally have a smaller number of supporters. In addition, especially in developing countries, ethnic groups have a chance to achieve patronage through parliament. Therefore, some authors argue that proportional representation remains more beneficial than majoritarian representation, because it provides broader representation overall, reducing ethnic extremism.<sup>223</sup>

In fact, the argument taking proportional representation as the independent variable is comprehensively analyzed by Ishiyama and Breuning to explain the demands of the MRF from the Bulgarian state. According to Ishiyama and Breuning, the structure of the election system in Bulgaria remains the main factor in moderating the demands of the MRF since “the broader the scope of political representation, the less likely it is that the ethno-political party will make

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<sup>221</sup> Linz, pp. 55-60.

<sup>222</sup> Noris, p. 210; Birnir, pp. 44-47; Arend Lijphart, “Constitutional Design For Divided Societies,” **Journal of Democracy**, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 100-106; Daniel Bochsler, “Electoral Rules and the Representation of Ethnic Minorities in Post-Communist Democracies,” **European Yearbook of Minority Issues**, Vol. 7, No. 8, pp. 153-80; and Ishiyama and Breuning, **Ethnopolitics in the New Europe**, pp. 11-12.

<sup>223</sup> Benjamin Reilly, **Democracy in Divided Societies**, Electoral Engineering for Conflict Management, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2004, pp. 20-22; Noris, pp. 210-212; and Ishiyama and Breuning, **Ethnopolitics in the New Europe**, p. 11.

extremist demands”.<sup>224</sup> In this case, the MRF is represented in the parliament with no trouble.<sup>225</sup> Due to the proportional representation system in Bulgaria, the MRF has become a pivotal and effective party after the elections held in 1991, 1994, 2001 and 2005 in Bulgarian politics since the Cold War.<sup>226</sup> In other words, this system enables the MRF to increase its votes. Therefore, the MRF has positioned itself as a moderate party to increase its votes and to become a member of the government.<sup>227</sup>

In contrast to this approach, some argue that the proportional representation can aid extremist or anti-system ethnic parties, which could then destroy democratic institutions. Once such parties gain entry into the political arena, there is no reason for them to tone down their extremist demands. According to the argument, majoritarian representation encourages the ethnic parties to make more moderate demands from the states.<sup>228</sup>

Some scholars consider the constitution that bans ethnic parties in Bulgaria an independent variable in explaining the moderate demands of the MRF.<sup>229</sup> Rechel argues that Article 11(4), which reflects the fear of potential Turkish separatism, was not introduced to ban all ethnic-based parties including Bulgarian nationalist parties but to control the activity of ethnic parties in general.<sup>230</sup> Furthermore, Johnson also argues that the constitution tolerates the MRF but prohibits extremist ethnic parties.<sup>231</sup> According to Rechel, “the threatened banning of the MRF, in the context of nationalist propaganda and negative popular attitudes to minority rights, has certainly contributed to its moderate demands for minority rights”. Therefore, according to this reasoning, the constitutional restriction on ethnic parties has compelled the MRF to become a moderate ethnic party.

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<sup>224</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, *Ethnopolitics in the New Europe*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>225</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, *Ethnopolitics in the New Europe*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>226</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, *Ethnopolitics in the New Europe*, p. 39.

<sup>227</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, *Ethnopolitics in the New Europe*, p. 39.

<sup>228</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, *Ethnopolitics in the New Europe*, p. 11.

<sup>229</sup> Rechel, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, p. 361; Rossen V. Vassilev, “Post-Communist Bulgaria’s Ethnopolitics,” *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2001, p. 49; and Protsyk and Sachariew, p. 15.

<sup>230</sup> Rechel, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, p. 357.

<sup>231</sup> Johnson, pp. 15-20.



Lastly, some other scholars consider “patronage ties” as moderating effect on the ethnic politics. According to Kurtoglu and Stroschein, “patronage includes a mechanism of shifting the content of exchange from an oppositional focus on ideology or identity to a focus on shared interests, in the form of material gains or power resources.”<sup>232</sup> In addition, Kurtoglu and Stroschein also claim that “patronage networks can serve as an informal institutional means to incorporate diverse actors into the control structures of the state”.<sup>233</sup> As a result, shared interests in the form of material gains can have moderating effects on ethnic politics.

Bulgaria has also a high level of corruption which provides the political leaders to have shared interests in the form of material gains. For instance, as Ganev states that in 2007 “Vesselin Georgiev, who was in charge of distributing European money...channeled hundreds of millions of euros into bank accounts owned by his brother”.<sup>234</sup> Similar to the Bulgarian politicians, the Turkish politicians have used the MRF to increase their economic wealth and position in the society, but not to protect the interests of the Turkish minority.<sup>235</sup> Likewise, Protsykh states, “the MRF’s representatives have been accused of prioritizing not service to the community but the achievement of such other goals as political career advancement, accumulation of personal wealth, or securing economic gains for narrowly defined interest groups.”<sup>236</sup> In other words, rather than becoming strict ideological or ethnic party, the MRF has become pragmatist and opportunist party due to the corruption of its political leaders.<sup>237</sup> As a result, interests for the material gains encourage the Turkish leaders of the MRF to adopt moderate demands to continue their political career and to increase economic wealth.

The corrupt political system clearly provides many advantages to the politicians of the MRF. Since the economic structure of the Turkish populated

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<sup>232</sup> Gul M. Kurtoglu Eskisar and Sherrill Stroschein, “Moderating Effects of Patronage in the Middle East and Eastern Europe”, **APSA 2009 Toronto Meeting Paper**, 2009, p. 30. ([http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1449061](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1449061) 21.02.2014).

<sup>233</sup> Eskisar and Stroschein, p. 30.

<sup>234</sup> Venelin I. Ganev, “Post-Accession Hooliganism: Democratic Governance in Bulgaria and Romania after 2007”, **East European Politics and Societies**, Vol. 27, November 2012, p. 31.

<sup>235</sup> Krasteva and Todorov, p. 33.

<sup>236</sup> Protsykh and Sachariew, p. 17.

<sup>237</sup> Ganev, p. 35.

areas is not developed, normally, the politicians have a tendency to use their political careers to increase their own economic wealth. According to this reasoning, as the main goal of politicians is to increase their wealth and position in society, they do not tend to adopt extremist demands that are banned by the constitution. As a result, although this study accepts the corruption factor as an important subject in understanding political behavior of ethnic parties, this study argues that parallel arguments including intra-ethnic party competition can have similar results for explaining the moderate demands of the MRF.

#### **2.3.2.1. Domestic Factors and the Moderate Behavior of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms**

The argument which claims that enormous economic differences lead to radicalization of ethnic demands does not explain the political behavior of the MRF for following reasons. Since the Cold War, the Turkish populated areas have remained less developed than other regions of Bulgaria.<sup>238</sup> Therefore, according to the aforementioned argument, the MRF would have adopted more extremist demands. In contrast, although the Turkish minority is economically less prosperous than the Bulgarian population, the MRF has not adopted any extreme demands. Therefore, this argument cannot be considered an independent variable in explaining the political behavior of the MRF. As a result, in contrast to Bangladesh example, the economic differences have not forced the Turkish population to become more political and to adopt more extremist demands.

However, this study does also take into consideration the possibility that economic problems might have forced the Turks to not be deeply interested in politics. During the research process of this study, as mentioned earlier, some Turkish people refused to participate in the survey because they stated that they had already started to work and live in Western European countries.<sup>239</sup> In other words, the Turks have not forced their political leaders to adopt more extremist

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<sup>238</sup> Field research in Bulgaria, July and August 2012.

<sup>239</sup> Field research in Bulgaria, July and August 2012.

demands, since they cannot participate in politics due to more pressing economic problems.

Another argument that takes proportional representation as the independent variable to explain the moderate demands of the MRF remains an important argument because the MRF has always tried to increase its votes due to advantages of the electoral system. For instance, the MRF took more votes than the total of Turkish and Muslim voters in last two elections.

Another argument which assumes the constitutional ban as the main reason of the political behavior of the MRF is not independent variable of this study for following reasons. The constitution might have forced the MRF to act as a moderate ethnic party during its establishment. As mentioned earlier, the party's name was initially conceived as the "Movement for Rights and Freedoms for the Turks and Muslims." However, the name was changed by its leaders due to the constitutional ban on ethnic parties. Therefore, the constitution was able to push the MRF to not become a strict ethnic party that narrowly claims to represent the Turks and Muslims in Bulgaria. However, the main outcome of the constitutional ban has been to provide the MRF with the ammunition to become the single political representation of the Turkish population. As a result, this work does not analyze the constitution as the main influence behind the MRF's political behavior, because it was comprehensively analyzed by Rechel.<sup>240</sup> However, this study takes the constitution as one of the important causal factors for the lack of intra-ethnic party competition in Bulgaria.

### **2.3.3. Leader-Based Factors**

Elites controlling an ethnic party can play a significant role on its political behavior. Different kinds of elites tend to control ethnic parties under varying conditions.<sup>241</sup> Elites here include the political elite (politicians, civil servants, and the military), the cultural elite (teachers, writers, and clergy) and the economic

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<sup>240</sup> Bernd Rechel, "State Control of Minorities", **Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics**, Vol. 23, No. 3, 2007, p. 366.

<sup>241</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, **Ethnopolitics in the New Europe**, pp. 13-14.

elite (businessmen and trade union leaders).<sup>242</sup> Each of them acts differently toward nationalism and the nation state.

Among them, the cultural elite are more likely to adopt extremist policies, because their careers are dependent on ethnic identity. Teaching, writing, and broadcasting a national language provide these groups economic benefits and privileges. Meanwhile, according to the argument, the economic elite are less likely to adopt extremist policies since they are linked with the economic market and they do not want to lose it. Finally, the political elite generally act according to the priorities of the ethnic group, which may change from time to time since the political elite are primarily motivated by the pursuit of political power.<sup>243</sup>

According to Johnson, since political party leaders can play a critical role in the process of conflict regulation, they can make a direct positive contribution to achieving peace.<sup>244</sup> According to Ishiyama and Breuning, however, leaders cannot act freely if there are too many internal and external constraints.<sup>245</sup> For instance, when ethnic parties have a heterogeneous structure regarding opinions and ideologies, the leaders try to establish consensus within the party against external challenges, which can also increase the moderate behavior of the leaders.<sup>246</sup> When ethnic parties have a homogeneous structure, however, the leaders are less likely to establish consensus with internal factors. In such situations the leaders do not seek consensus outside of the party and tend to become more extremist.<sup>247</sup> However, in contrast with this argument, however, the political behavior of MRF's political elites has not changed since the establishment. In other words, this argument does not explain the moderate demands of the political elites of the MRF, which has not changed from time to time for priorities of the ethnic group.

The leader-based argument that when ethnic parties have homogeneous structure their leaders tend to become more radical does not explain the moderate behavior of the MRF either. As a closer look into the politics of the MRF

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<sup>242</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, *Ethnopolitics in the New Europe*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>243</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, *Ethnopolitics in the New Europe*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>244</sup> Johnson, pp. 15-16.

<sup>245</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, *Ethnopolitics in the New Europe*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>246</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, *Ethnopolitics in the New Europe*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>247</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, *Ethnopolitics in the New Europe*, pp. 13-14.

indicates, the party leader, Dogan, has eliminated any opposition groups within the party but he has not adopted any extremist demands regarding ethnic and territorial issues.

#### **2.4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: INTRA-ETHNIC PARTY COMPETITION AND INSTITUTIONAL RESTRICTIONS**

Intra-ethnic party competition leads to the radicalization of an ethnic party's demands, because unlike non-ethnic parties, ethnic parties must attract their supporters through such demands. Non-ethnic parties, for instance, can promise economic development, the improvement of human rights, or better social conditions to attract their supporters to increase or keep their votes. Ethnic parties must promise better protection of an ethnic group's rights though, because the ethnic group votes for the party are based largely upon its promises.

Based on this argument, under a lack of intra-ethnic party competition, an ethnic party is less likely to adopt extremist ethnic and territorial demands, because there is no need to promise more attractive demands.<sup>248</sup> The MRF has not adopted extreme demands, as it has not had a more extreme Turkish ethnic party competitor due to the institutional restrictions on ethnic parties, including the constitutional ban on ethnic parties and the standing electoral threshold. Since its establishment, the MRF has garnered the support of the Turkish community in any case, either because other Turkish parties were either banned by the Constitutional Court or they were unable to overcome the electoral threshold. As a result, the MRF does not need to promise more attractive demands because the Turkish population already regularly votes for it.

Before discussing the argument any further, it is essential to examine the competition between non-ethnic parties in the elections. Under the non-ethnic based party systems, electoral competition is less likely to cause the radicalization of the parties, because they believe that the majority of the voters are standing at the center of the scale.<sup>249</sup> For instance, a right-wing party is more likely to aim to

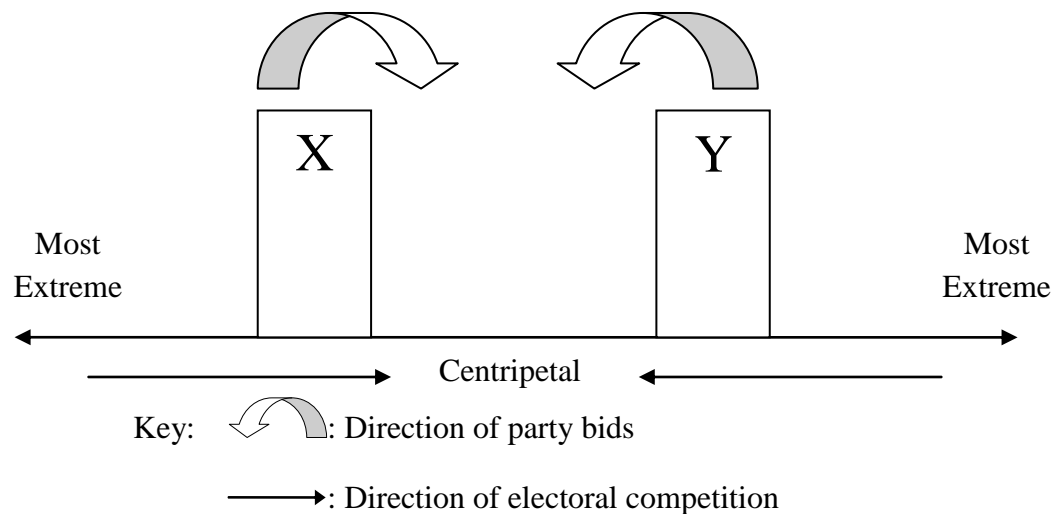
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<sup>248</sup> Daniel Bochsler, **4th ECPR General Conference**, p. 3.

<sup>249</sup> Horowitz, p. 347.

take the support of social democrats (center-left), because their population is higher than those of extreme rightists. Therefore, instead of seeking to gain the support of extremist nationalists or religious fundamentalists, the right-wing party is most likely to adopt some left wing policies that are more moderate than the extreme rightist ones. According to Horowitz, non-ethnic parties in the United Kingdom, the United States, and New Zealand tend to become more moderate in order to broaden their voter pools.<sup>250</sup>

**Figure 2:** Electoral competition in the non-ethnic party system Non-ethnic parties<sup>251</sup>



In contrast to ideological parties, ethnic parties adopt different policies, especially when they encounter an intra-ethnic party competitor in their elections. According to Heenan and Macginty, ethnic groups have subdivisions supporting different ethnic policies. These subdivisions can cause outbidding where one subdivision of a group establishes another ethnic party.<sup>252</sup> Similarly, according to Horowitz, when some members of the ethnic group are not satisfied with the politics of its ethnic party, they have a tendency to establish a new ethnic party—

<sup>250</sup> Horowitz, p. 347.

<sup>251</sup> Diagram based on Horowitz, 1985, p. 347.

<sup>252</sup> Cathy Gormley-Heenan and Roger Macginty, "Ethnic Outbidding and Party Modernization: Understanding the Democratic Unionist Party's Electoral Success in the Post-Agreement Environment," *Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2008, p. 45.

namely, a challenger.<sup>253</sup> Moreover, when an ethnic party establishes a coalition with another ethnic group to increase its votes, some members may call the leaders “traitors,” which again can cause political fragmentation of the ethnic group.<sup>254</sup>

Following the fragmentation, ethnic parties tend to become more extreme about ethnic and territorial issues, which is generally known as the “outbidding process.” The terms “outbidding” and “centrism,” according to Chandra, “refer to the location of party positions on a given dimension. Outbidding occurs when parties assume positions toward the endpoints on this dimension. Centrism describes the assumption of positions closer to the middle.”<sup>255</sup> This argument was originally developed by Rabushka and Shepsle (1972) and Horowitz (1985). According to Chandra, Rabushka and Shepsle’s outbidding model is based on rational choice theory, which assumes that political actors are rational calculators who are seeking to improve their power. Horowitz’s model, however, is based on a social-psychological approach, which tries to understand human motivations with regard to political issues.<sup>256</sup>

According to the intra-ethnic party competition argument, in contrast to a mass-based party, ethnic parties have a limited number of supporters based on the non-dominant ethnic group within the country. In other words, since ethnic parties are not capable of becoming the first party in a given election; they tend to stick to pursuing the interests of their own ethnic groups. Therefore, an ethnic party’s mobilization can be described as a “catch-us” strategy rather than a “catch-all” one.<sup>257</sup> In addition, promises made by ethnic parties in elections are mostly associated with ethnic issues, because their ethnic groups support them to protect their ethnic and cultural rights.

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<sup>253</sup> Horowitz, p. 335.

<sup>254</sup> Sherrill Stroschein, **Party Politics**, p. 191.

<sup>255</sup> Kanchan Chandra, “Ethnic Parties and Democratic Stability,” **Perspectives on Politics**, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 236.

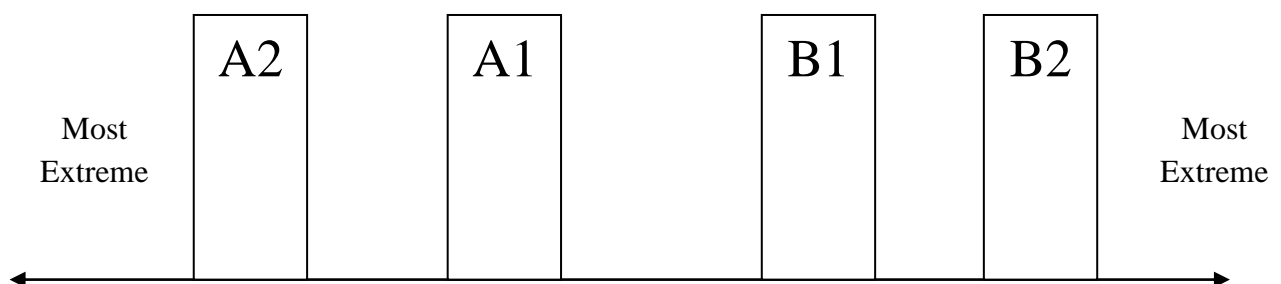
<sup>256</sup> Kanchan Chandra, **Perspectives on Politics**, p. 236.

<sup>257</sup> Paul Mitchell, Geoffrey Evans and Brendan O’Leary, “Extremist Outbidding in Ethnic Party Systems is Not Inevitable: Tribune Parties in Northern Ireland,” **Political Studies**, Vol. 57, 2009, p. 400.

As a result, ethnic parties usually tend to promote extremism rather than moderation in order to gain support a broad mass of voters.<sup>258</sup> According to Horowitz, political leaders of ethnic parties aiming to represent the same ethnic group adopt more extremist demands, because they need to compete with each other for the same votes.<sup>259</sup> In contrast, since its establishment, the MRF has not been challenged by a more extremist Turkish ethnic party competitor in any general elections because of the constitutional ban on ethnic parties and the electoral threshold; both of these factors have created an important institutional advantage for the MRF. According to the intra-ethnic party competition idea, however, when the MRF is confronted with a more extremist Turkish party, it is likely to adopt more extreme strategies to keep its voters.

According to the argument, when an ethnic party splits into two parties, the challenger must take a position that is even more radical than the old ethnic party to weaken the position of the old one and attract the members of the desired ethnic group. In other words, the only way for challengers to increase their votes is to outbid their intra-ethnic rivals. Therefore, a challenging party must take a position closer to either endpoint A or B.<sup>260</sup> In contrast to this assumption, some Turkish parties in Bulgaria, for instance, have never positioned themselves as more extremist than the MRF because the constitutional ban has never allowed them to adopt such demands.

**Figure 3:** Ethnically-based Parties: Positions of the Challengers (A2 and B2)<sup>261</sup>



<sup>258</sup> Sherrill Stroschein, "Demography in Ethnic Party fragmentation: Hungarian Local Voting in Romania," **Party Politics**, Vol. 17, No. 2, p. 191.

<sup>259</sup> Horowitz, p. 349.

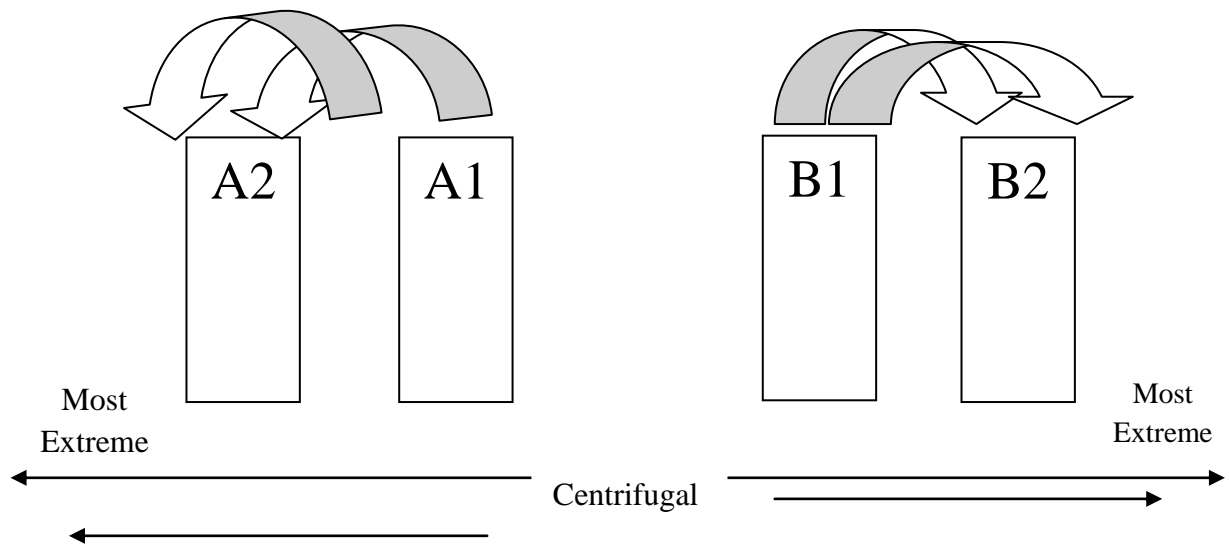
<sup>260</sup> Kanchan Chandra, **Perspectives on Politics**, p. 237.

<sup>261</sup> Diagram based on Horowitz, 1985, p. 347.



Later, when the outbidding occurs, the old ethnic parties have to become more extreme to defeat their challengers. Gradually, each ethnic party takes a position endpoint of A or B. Therefore, the ethnic outbidding process leads to the radicalization of the ethnic party's demands.<sup>262</sup> Under these conditions, for instance, the majority group A, in order to win the election, can eliminate the minority rights of group B. In contrast, minority group B will likely engage in violence to preempt the exclusive action of group A.<sup>263</sup>

**Figure 4: Ethnic Outbidding Model**<sup>264</sup>



Furthermore, according to the outbidding model, after the ethnic party competition has been settled, all the existing political issues will start to be interpreted in ethnic terms.<sup>265</sup> As a result, the ethnic outbidding leads to the polarization of ethnic groups and often exacerbates ethnic conflict.<sup>266</sup> In other words, as Horowitz states, after the intra-ethnic party competition, “there is no premium on moderation”<sup>267</sup> and moderate demands render ethnic party leaders vulnerable to the accusation that they are treacherous people or betrayers.<sup>268</sup> This situation has been witnessed in several instances, including in Sri Lanka and the

<sup>262</sup> Chandra, **Perspectives on Politics**, p. 237.

<sup>263</sup> Chandra, **Perspectives on Politics**, p. 237.

<sup>264</sup> Diagram based on Horowitz, 1985, p. 347.

<sup>265</sup> Chandra, **Perspectives on Politics**, p. 237.

<sup>266</sup> Mitchell, Evans and O’Leary, p. 400.

<sup>267</sup> Horowitz, p. 291.

<sup>268</sup> Mitchell, Evans and O’Leary, p. 400.

former Yugoslavia.<sup>269</sup> After the outbidding process, political leaders in these countries were unable to reach any agreement with other ethnic groups due to the intra-ethnic party competition. Therefore, each ethnic group adopted more extremist demands and actions to reach their goals.<sup>270</sup>

As earlier mentioned, when two ethnic parties compete for the same ethnic group, this process can be described as the intra ethnic party competition which leads to radicalization of demands. However, sometimes, only one ethnic party is able to run in the elections, which this study defines as the lack of intra-ethnic party competition. This study argues that under the lack of intra-ethnic party competition, there is no need to radicalize ethnic demands.

Furthermore, the lack of intra-ethnic party competition is mainly results from the institutional restrictions on ethnic politics. According to Spirova and Stefanova,

*“The visibility of ethnic political parties is determined by the opportunities and constraints created by constitutional and electoral arrangements. These rules provide incentives, encouragement, guarantees, or alternatively, restrict or ban ethnic minority parties.”*<sup>271</sup>

Moreover, according to Reynolds, “the electoral system chosen to constitute any elected body will have a significant impact on the access that minorities have to parliamentary representation”.<sup>272</sup> Similarly, Canon asserts that “the rules and institutions used to translate preferences into electoral outcomes have a profound impact on the nature of representation provided in a political system.”<sup>273</sup>

Against the political representation of minorities, there are two main types of institutional restrictions: “bans and other restrictive measures” and the “electoral threshold.”<sup>274</sup> Rather than aiming to moderate the political system

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<sup>269</sup> Mitchell, Evans and O’Leary, p. 400.

<sup>270</sup> Mitchell, Evans and O’Leary, p. 400.

<sup>271</sup> Maria Spirova and Boyka Stefanova, “The European Dimension of the Political Representation of Minorities”, **EUSA Conference**, 24.04.2009, [http://aei.pitt.edu/33140/1/stefanova\\_boyka.pdf](http://aei.pitt.edu/33140/1/stefanova_boyka.pdf) (07.01.2014).

<sup>272</sup> Andrew Reynolds, “Electoral systems and the protection and participation of minorities”, **Minority Rights Group International**, September, 2006, <http://www.minorityrights.org/download.php%3Fid%3D161+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk> (25.11.2013).

<sup>273</sup> David T. Canon, “Electoral Systems and Representation of Minority Interests in Legislatures,” **Legislative Studies Quarterly**, Vol. 14, No. 1, 1999, p. 331.

<sup>274</sup> Bieber, p. 20.

and/or encourage minority groups to participate in it, countries that ban the establishment of ethnic parties mainly propose to block ethnic radicalization.<sup>275</sup> The political elites of these countries also assume that unless they can control the political representation of minorities, the minorities are more likely to declare their independent status, which would promote ethnic tensions.<sup>276</sup>

In the Balkans, only two countries, Albania and Bulgaria, still ban ethnic-based parties. According to Bieber, “in Albania and Bulgaria, experience with such bans has been longer, but not much more effective, as the main parties of Turks in Bulgaria and Greeks in Albania—the two key minorities in both countries—have not been prohibited.”<sup>277</sup> Meanwhile, in the Balkans, many countries have adopted electoral thresholds, which vary between 3-5% of the population to prevent the political representation of minorities in general. This situation in the Balkans indicates that proportional representation with a relatively high threshold provides places for minorities to participate politically at a great disadvantage.<sup>278</sup> Bulgaria has adopted a proportional electoral system with a 4% threshold, which is higher than most Balkan countries.

Furthermore, due to the demographic situation of the Balkans, only minorities with a relatively sizeable population are able to overcome the threshold through one party representation, whereas many small minorities remain unrepresented. Therefore, the electoral threshold excludes small minorities and compels the minorities with larger populations to be represented by one party.<sup>279</sup> According to Bieber:

*“When considering the demographic map of Southeastern Europe, it is apparent that in most countries only the parties of the largest minority w[ill] be able to secure parliamentary representation, and then only if they were to run on a single ticket. Thresholds have thus stifled minority party formation among smaller minorities and, at times, resulted in [the] consolidation of a single minority party. Coalitions among several smaller minority groups to overcome the threshold have been rare.”*<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> Bieber, p. 20.

<sup>276</sup> Bieber, p. 20.

<sup>277</sup> Bieber, p. 17.

<sup>278</sup> Bieber, p. 17.

<sup>279</sup> Bieber, p. 22.

<sup>280</sup> Bieber, p. 22.

As a result, the institutional restrictions including the electoral threshold and the constitutional ban on ethnic parties block the intra-ethnic party competition.

On the one hand, since political parties are political organizations representing and protecting the interests of existing cleavages in society and aiming to control and influence the existing political structure, without the support of the community, these parties explicitly remain unable to represent a particular community or to control and influence the political system. Therefore, normally, political parties continuously strain to preserve and improve the number of supporters they have by adopting more attractive demands and policies for their supporters. The competition during elections thus forces political parties to adopt more attractive demands to increase or keep their supporters.

On the other hand, if a political party attains all the votes after each election, though, and other parties are unable to participate in the elections due to institutional restrictions, the political party does not need to adopt more attractive demands, because people will again vote for the party on any grounds. Similarly, if an ethnic party has a monopoly over its ethnic group, there is no need for the radicalization of their demands because the members of the ethnic group will vote for the ethnic party anyway.<sup>281</sup> Consequently, provided that all other factors remain stable, under a lack of intra-ethnic party competition, ethnic parties are less likely to radicalize their territorial and ethnic demands.

As a result, the lack of intra-ethnic party competition remains the most convincing argument to explain the demands of the MRF for several reasons. First, since its establishment, the MRF has not competed with more radical Turkish ethnic parties due to the constitutional ban. Second, other Turkish parties adopting less radical demands have been unable to overcome the electoral threshold due to the low population of the Turkish community. The institutional restrictions on ethnic politics resulted from the past experiences of Bulgarian politicians and have blocked any intra-ethnic party competition among the Turkish population. In turn, the MRF has not needed to radicalize its demands

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<sup>281</sup> Daniel Bochsler, **4th ECPR General Conference**, p. 3.

because members of the Turkish ethnic group will vote for the MRF on any ground due to their lack of political choices.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **INTRA-ETHNIC PARTY COMPETITION IN BULGARIA**

The MRF has not been confronted with a more extremist Turkish competitor since its establishment due to the state restrictions on ethnic parties. Turkey and the Bulgarian Turks also support the MRF as the single representative of the Turkish population. Therefore, the MRF has a monopoly over the Turkish population and there is no need for it to radicalize its demands. On the one hand, previous chapter has explained the reasons why intra-ethnic party competition causes the radicalization of an ethnic party's demands. On the other hand, this chapter substantiates the former arguments on the issue through findings from the field research conducted in Bulgaria.

This chapter, first, analyzes the impact of Turkey on the Turkish ethnic politics in Bulgaria through Turkish foreign policy, Turkish-Bulgarian relations, Turkey-MRF relations and the Bulgarian Turks in Turkey. This part finally examines how Turkey enhances the monopoly of the MRF over the Turkish population. Later, the following part analyzes other Turkish ethnic parties since the end of the Cold War that have been either been blocked by the Bulgarian constitution or were unable to overcome the electoral threshold. This chapter closes with a discussion of the findings of the research done in Bulgaria, which aims to explain the political tendencies of the Turkish population with regard to the MRF and other Turkish parties and their ethnic demands.

#### **3.1. TURKEY AND ETHNIC POLITICS IN BULGARIA**

Turkey has a great impact on Balkan countries, due to its geographical position, historical background (the Ottoman Empire had governed the Balkans more than 500 years) and cultural similarities with the Muslim population in the Balkans. In addition, considering the population, economy and military power of the Balkan countries, Turkey remains to be one of the important countries that could directly intervene into their policies of the countries. In addition, with regard to Jenne's argument, Turkey, the homeland of the Turkish population, can

have a great effect on the policy preferences of the Turkish population in Bulgaria.

There are mainly two ‘homeland’ factors that can influence the Turkish population and the MRF. First, the Republic of Turkey can shape the demands of the MRF through economic and political support. Second, there are many Bulgarian Turks in Turkey who holds both Turkish and Bulgarian citizenship as they were forced to immigrate to Turkey in 1989. They also have the right to vote for the presidential and the general elections of Bulgaria in Turkey.

This part, first, analyzes the relations between Bulgaria and Turkey through explaining foreign policy priorities of Turkey on the Turks in the Balkans since the establishment. Second, this part examines the result of survey which aims to clarify the role and efficiency of Turkey over the Turkish population. Finally, this part concludes with the impact of the Bulgarian Turks in Turkey over the Turkish population through the research.

### 3.1.1. Turkish Foreign Policy and Ethnic Politics

According to Oran, one of the most important structural elements of the Turkish Foreign Policy is to protect the *status quo* in the region.<sup>282</sup> This policy was mainly based on two reasons. First, the Turkish Republic was the continuation of the Ottoman Empire which had many memories about dissolution of territories after the Balkan wars and the First World War. Therefore, Turkish political leaders have always been skeptical about big powers as they believed that the big powers always pursue to divide and destroy territories of Turkey.<sup>283</sup> According to Aydın, “Turkish diplomats are famous today for being skeptical and cautious”.<sup>284</sup> Aydın described this skeptical foreign policy as the ‘Sevres Syndrome,’ which reflects the Sevres Treaty of the Ottoman Empire after the First

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<sup>282</sup> Baskın Oran, “TDP’nin Kuramsal Çerçevesi”, (Baskın Oran, ed..) **Türk Dış Politikası, Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar**, Cilt 1, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2001, p. 47.

<sup>283</sup> Mustafa Aydın, The Determinants of Turkish Foreign Policy, and Turkey’s European Vocation, **The Review of International Affairs**, Vol.3, No.2, Winter 2003, p. 313.

<sup>284</sup> Mustafa Aydın, “Turkish Foreign Policy Framework and Analysis”, **SAM**, <http://www.sam.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/mustafaaydin.pdf> (13.01.2014).

World War that disintegrated the territories of the Ottoman Empire, not only of the Balkans or Middle East, but also of Anatolia.<sup>285</sup>

Another important structural factor is based on Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's (founder of modern Turkey) principles, which always pursued to establish peace in the region, not to expand territories of the country. Therefore, during Atatürk's period, Turkey signed several treaties with neighbor countries such as the Balkan Pact and the Baghdad Pact. In addition, in contrast to other defeated countries after the First World War, during his period, Turkey did not try to recapture lost territories except 'Hatay' province given to Syria by France. Furthermore, Kemalist principles including foreign policy aims remained the dominant ideology among Turkish political leaders, military and bureaucrats, since the establishment of modern Turkey.<sup>286</sup> As a result of past memories and the impact of Kemalism, Turkey the Turkish politicians have never sought an adventure which aims to re-unite with the Turkish population in the Balkans.

As a continuation of this foreign policy principle, Turkey has not adopted irredentism as a foreign policy principle for the Turkish minorities in neighborhood countries, except the Cyprus intervention in 1974.<sup>287</sup> Furthermore, Turkey did not take part in the Second World War despite strong encouragement by both Germany and United Kingdom. Turkey has not intensified any ethnic issues in the Balkans, since it has had to deal with its own Kurdish problem that has been present since the establishment of the republic.

As a result, the Turkey did not pursue a foreign policy which aimed to recapture Turkish or Muslim populated regions in the Balkans. Similarly, the Turkish foreign policy has always supported the protection of its border countries in the Balkans and the Middle East, such as Iraq, Lebanon, and Yugoslavia.<sup>288</sup> For

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<sup>285</sup> Aydın, p. 313.

<sup>286</sup> Mustafa Aydın, "Turkish Foreign Policy Framework and Analysis", **SAM**, <http://www.sam.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/mustafaaydin.pdf> (13.01.2014).

<sup>287</sup> Baskın Oran, "TDP'nin Kuramsal Çerçevesi", (Baskın Oran, ed..) **Türk Dış Politikası, Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar**, Cilt 1, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2001, p. 47.

<sup>288</sup> İlhan Uzgel, "Balkanlarla İlişkiler", (Baskın Oran, ed..) **Türk Dış Politikası, Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar**, Cilt 2, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2001, p. 491.



instance, when the Yugoslavian states started to proclaimed their independence, Turkey supported territorial integrity of Yugoslavia, at the beginning.<sup>289</sup>

### 3.1.2. Turkish-Bulgarian Relations: the Turkish Minority

Turkish-Bulgarian relations started after the Russian-Turkish war in 1878, which provided the Bulgarians to establish their own independent state. Before the establishment of the republic, Bulgaria waged war against the Ottoman Empire along with other Balkan countries due to revisionist policies of the state and other Balkans states. After the war, over a million Turkish and Muslim people immigrated into the Ottoman lands. After the independence of the republic, Turkey and Bulgaria had not confronted with any serious issue until the Cold War era, because, as earlier mentioned, Bulgaria did not have any impact on the Turkish minority due to the consolidation process of the regime.

During and after the Cold War period, the main issue between Turkish and Bulgarian relations was the status of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria. In 1952, Turkey and Bulgaria confronted an issue due to the Turkish minority as the Turks were forced by the communist regime to immigrate to Turkey as a result of collectivization of lands. However, although Turkey reacted against this forcible immigration policy of Bulgaria, there was not a significant problem that deteriorated the relations between two countries.<sup>290</sup> During this period, while Turkey hesitated about the ethnic policies of the communist regime over the Turkish population, which can be used to put pressure on Turkey in international area; Bulgaria feared that Turkey could use the Turkish population to weaken the communist regime.<sup>291</sup>

Until the 1980s, both countries foreign policy preferences were greatly shaped by their allies; the USA and the Soviet Union. In addition, again, Turkey and Bulgaria did not experience any serious problem during that period, except

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<sup>289</sup> İlhan Uzgel, "Balkanlarla İlişkiler", (Baskın Oran, ed.) **Türk Dış Politikası, Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar**, Cilt 2, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2001, p. 491. .

<sup>290</sup> Birgül Demirtaş Coşkun, Turkish Bulgarian Relations in the Post-Cold War Era: the Exemplary Relations in the Balkans, **The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations**, Vol. 32, 2001, p. 26.

<sup>291</sup> İlhan Uzgel, "Balkanlarla İlişkiler", (Baskın Oran, ed.) **Türk Dış Politikası, Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar**, Cilt 2, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2001, p. 177.

for the immigration of the Turkish population in 1968 and in 1978 based on the treaty, which aimed to unify the Turkish families separated after the immigration in 1952. During 1970s, similar to the Turkish-Soviet Union relations, Turkish-Bulgarian relations also remained friendly.<sup>292</sup> Later, at the beginning of 1980s, Turkey and Bulgaria continued their good relations as there were official visits by the head of states.<sup>293</sup> However, when the communist regime started to implement assimilation policies against the Turkish population, the relations quickly deteriorated.

In contrast to earlier periods of the Turkish Foreign Policy, during 1980s, Turkey adopted an active foreign policy which mainly purposed to expand the political and economic impact of Turkey in the region mainly due to the personality of Turgut Özal (prime minister between 1983 and 1989).<sup>294</sup> According to Oran, the period between 1983 and 1991 differs from other periods of the Turkish Foreign Policy due to the leadership of Özal.<sup>295</sup> Özal excluded other state institutions during the process of decision making and adopted revisionist policies including the First Gulf War.<sup>296</sup> In addition, the impact of public opinion also rose, which was able to pressure on the state about foreign policy preferences.<sup>297</sup> As the homeland of Turks, Turkey was also very sensitive about Bulgaria's assimilation policies due to the pressure from public opinion.<sup>298</sup>

As a result, during this period, Turkey, with the support of the international community, put political and economic pressure on Bulgaria for its

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<sup>292</sup> İlhan Uzgel, "TDP'nin Uygulanması", (Baskın Oran, ed.) **Türk Dış Politikası, Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar**, Cilt 1, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2001, p. 87.

<sup>293</sup> Coşkun, p. 27.

<sup>294</sup> Sedat Laçiner, "Turgut Özal Period in Turkish Foreign Policy: Özalism", the Journal of Turkish Weekly, 2009, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/article/333/turgut-ozal-period-in-turkish-foreign-policy-ozalism.html> (01.12.2013).

<sup>295</sup> İlhan Uzgel, "TDP'nin Uygulanması", (Baskın Oran, ed.) **Türk Dış Politikası, Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar**, Cilt 1, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2001, p. 84.

<sup>296</sup> Uzgel, Cilt 1, p. 84.

<sup>297</sup> Uzgel, Cilt 1, p. 84.

<sup>298</sup> İlhan Uzgel, "Balkanlarla İlişkiler", (Baskın Oran, ed.) **Türk Dış Politikası, Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar**, Cilt 2, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2001, p. 179.

assimilation politics and aimed to isolate Bulgaria in the world.<sup>299</sup> For instance, according to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey,

*“50 countries have officially deplored Bulgaria's treatment of its Turkish minority. Both the Council of Europe and the Islamic Conference have sent fact-finding missions to Bulgaria. On Oct. 4 [1989], the foreign ministers of the 46-member Islamic Conference will hold a special session on the issue.”*<sup>300</sup>

The Prime Minister (became the president in 1989), Özal, was also personally active in protecting the rights of the Turkish people.<sup>301</sup> Therefore, the tensions between Bulgaria and Turkey had risen sharply as a result of the remarks of Özal during this period.<sup>302</sup> For instance, Özal threatened Bulgaria to make military intervention to save the Turkish population from the assimilation by showing the Cyprus military intervention of Turkey which aimed to protect the Turkish population in Cyprus.<sup>303</sup>

Later, in 1989, Todor Zhivkov promised all its citizens to give tourist passports and asked Turkey to open its borders. In contrast to this request, Özal responded that the borders were open and had never been closed.<sup>304</sup> Later, when Bulgaria forced thousands of Turks to immigrate, the relations worsened and Turkey tried to stop the immigration because over 300,000 Turkish people came to Turkey. Within same year, Turkey had to close its borders as thousands people came to Turkey.<sup>305</sup>

Later in 1989; Bulgaria also opened its regime to democracy and ended its assimilation policies. Therefore, Turkey and Bulgaria started to re-build their

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<sup>299</sup> Sedat Laçiner, “Turgut Özal Period in Turkish Foreign Policy: Özalism”, the Journal of Turkish Weekly, 2009, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/article/333/turgut-ozal-period-in-turkish-foreign-policy-ozalism.html> (01.12.2013).

<sup>300</sup> Marvin Howe, “Ankara, at the U.N., Will Press Bulgaria on Turks”, **New York Times**, 01.10.1989, <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/10/01/world/ankara-at-the-un-will-press-bulgaria-on-turks.html> (29.12.2013)

<sup>301</sup> Sedat Laçiner, “Turgut Özal Period in Turkish Foreign Policy: Özalism”, the Journal of Turkish Weekly, 2009, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/article/333/turgut-ozal-period-in-turkish-foreign-policy-ozalism.html> (01.12.2013).

<sup>302</sup> Henry Kamm, “Bulgarian-Turkish Tensions on Minority Rise”, **New York Times**, 04.10.1987, <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/10/04/world/bulgarian-turkish-tensions-on-minority-rise.html?src=pm> (29.12.2013).

<sup>303</sup> Henry Kamm, “Bulgarian-Turkish Tensions on Minority Rise”, **New York Times**, 04.10.1987, <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/10/04/world/bulgarian-turkish-tensions-on-minority-rise.html?src=pm> (29.12.2013).

<sup>304</sup> Lilia Petkova, “The Ethnic Turks in Bulgaria: Social Integration and Impact on Bulgarian – Turkish Relations, 1947-2000”, **The Global Review of Ethnopolitics**, Vol. 1, no. 4, June 2002, p. 44.

<sup>305</sup> Petkova p. 44.

political and economic relations. However, since the main political parties in Bulgaria tried to exclude the Turkish party in 1990 and 1991, Turkey, along with the EU, started to put pressure on the state of Bulgaria. For instance, Turkey criticized the City Court's decision claiming the MRF as an illegal political party and pressured the government and the constitutional court to allow the MRF's participation in all elections.

During the decision process of the Constitutional Court, the Prime Minister of Turkey, Mesut Yılmaz, sent a letter to the prime minister of Bulgaria and stated that "if the MRF is blocked by the constitution; it means that the state also blocks the political participation of the Turkish population. As a result of such an action, the relations between Turkey and Bulgaria will be negatively affected".<sup>306</sup> According to several politicians of the MRF, Turkey supported the Turkish population's goal to have its own political parties during the establishment process due to the ethnic repression of the communist regime.<sup>307</sup> As a result, the MRF was accepted by the state in large part because of the EU and Turkey's pressure.

According to Gülistan, a local politician in Kardzhali region, one of the most important factors of acceptance of the MRF in the Bulgarian politics was based on the policies of Turkey.<sup>308</sup> In addition, Gülistan accepts the efficiency of Turkey in the Balkans and states that

*"The Bulgarians were aware the fact that if they start ethnic war against the Turks, like the Serbians did in Bosnia, Turkey will intervene to this ethnic war. Therefore, it would have caused more damage for the Bulgarians than for the Turks in case of war."*<sup>309</sup>

Akif Akif also argues that at the beginning of 1990s, Turkey has always interacted with the MRF and supported the Turkish population to have their political organization due to the assimilation policies of the communist regime.<sup>310</sup>

After the establishment of the MRF, however, Turkey has never sought to intervene into the ethnic policies of Bulgaria. In addition, during 1990s, both countries signed several agreements to increase their level of cooperation,

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<sup>306</sup> Özgür, p. 336.

<sup>307</sup> Field research in Bulgaria, July and August, 2012.

<sup>308</sup> Interview with Fikri Gülistan, local representative of the MRF, Kardzhali, August 2, 2012.

<sup>309</sup> Interview with Fikri Gülistan, local representative of the MRF, Kardzhali, August 2, 2012

<sup>310</sup> Interview with Akif Akif, Mayor of Momchilgrad, Kardzhali, July 24, 2012

including Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighborly Relations, and Cooperation and Security, signed on May 6, 1992. Later, the level of cooperation also increased after 1993 due to high-level presidential visits that occurred during 1993-1997. Among these visits, the most important of which being visit of president Peter Stoyanov in 1997 due to his speech in front of the Turkish National Assembly as he asked for forgiveness for the repressions and the hardships inflicted upon the Turkish minority during the ‘revival process’.<sup>311</sup> Furthermore, during this period, a newspaper reported that “for Turkey's part, friendship with Bulgaria is a welcome change in a country with uncomfortable, if not hostile, relations with all its other neighbors. It also makes economic sense. Bulgaria is likely to join the EU before Turkey.”<sup>312</sup>

According to Oran, the relations between Turkey and Bulgaria represented a good example in the Balkans, during 1990s.<sup>313</sup> For instance, while Turkey and Greece were confronted with several military crises due to problems in the Aegean Sea, Turkey and Bulgaria signed an agreement for disarmament in the borders.<sup>314</sup> Turkey also supported Bulgaria to become a member of NATO and the EU. As a result, Turkey and Bulgaria were not confronted with any serious problems after the Cold War in terms of ethnic and political issues. During that period, Turkey also supported the MRF to become a moderate party. For instance, in 1994, ambassador of Turkey in Sofia stated that

*“the MRF is a political organization like other organizations in Bulgaria for us. Its members are citizens of Bulgaria. We [Turkey] do not consider the MRF as different entity in Bulgaria. However, our support for the MRF is moral one, nothing more, since the most of the members belong to the Turkish community”.*<sup>315</sup>

Moreover, Turkey economically supported the Turkish populated areas due to the economic crisis after 1994. However, there was not any indication that

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<sup>311</sup> Petkova, p. 57.

<sup>312</sup> The Economist, “Turks and Bulgars make up”, 25.02.1999, <http://www.economist.com/node/187724> (13.01.2014).

<sup>313</sup> İlhan Uzgel, “Balkanlarla İlişkiler”, (Baskın Oran, ed.) **Türk Dış Politikası, Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar**, Cilt 2, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2001, p. 490.

<sup>314</sup> İlhan Uzgel, “Balkanlarla İlişkiler”, (Baskın Oran, ed.) **Türk Dış Politikası, Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar**, Cilt 2, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2001, p. 490.

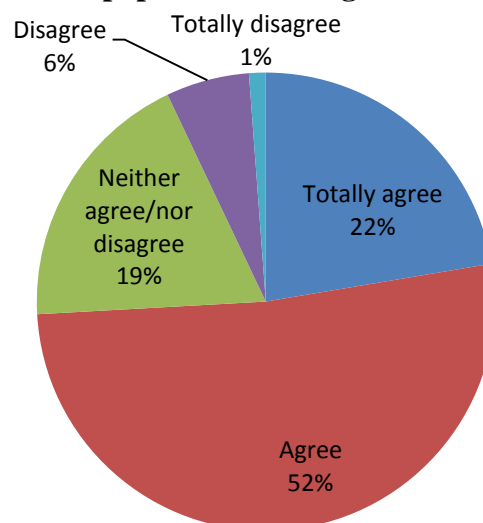
<sup>315</sup> Özgür, p. 338.

Turkey would be supportive about extremist demands of the Turkish population or for other Turkish parties, during that time.<sup>316</sup>

During a meeting held in Sofia in 2001, between politicians, academicians and diplomats to discuss inter-ethnic peace of Bulgaria after the Cold War period, a foreign diplomat highlighted the role of Turkey on the ethnic peace in Bulgaria and stated that

*“Turkey always supported democracy in Bulgaria, hoping that problems will be solved peacefully and through the efforts of the whole Bulgarian society. Turkey continues to worry about the Turkish minority in Bulgaria but strives not to make them public, and also to place them in the context of bilateral relations between the Bulgarian and the Turkish governments. During its informal contacts with the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, Ankara has always recommended that the community be moderate and realistic in its demands”.*<sup>317</sup>

**Do you think that Turkey protects the rights of the Turkish population in Bulgaria?**



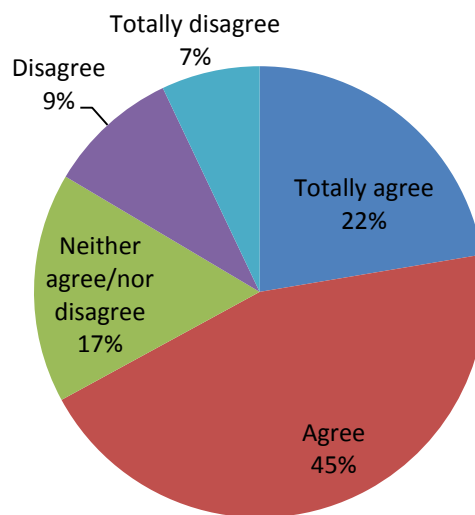
In addition to the Turkish foreign policy on the ethnic politics in Bulgaria, this study also clarifies the political efficiency of Turkey on the Turkish population in Bulgaria. According to the results of the first question, the vast

<sup>316</sup> Özgür, p. 340.

<sup>317</sup> Project on Ethnic Relations, “The Bulgarian Ethnic Experience”, **Report**, 20.09.2002, [http://www.per-usa.org/Reports/PER\\_Bulgaria\\_9\\_20\\_02.pdf](http://www.per-usa.org/Reports/PER_Bulgaria_9_20_02.pdf) (08.01.2014).

majority of respondents clearly believe that Turkey protects the rights of the Turkish population in Bulgaria as 74% of them remained either “totally agree” or “agree” that Turkey protects their rights. During the survey, many people stated that “without Turkey, Bulgarians will definitely destroy our Turkish and Muslim identity, as it tried to make in the past numerous times”.<sup>318</sup> In addition, they also argue that since Turkey is a big political and economic power in the Middle East and the Balkans, it is strong position for the Turkish population to have the political support of such a country against a small country such as Bulgaria.

**Do you think that Turkey should intervene to the politics of the Turkish population in Bulgaria?**



The aim of the second question is to find out whether the Turkish population is willing to allow the political intervention of Turkey on the Turkish ethnic politics, or not. Similar to the first question, vast majority of respondents clearly support the political intervention of Turkey, as 67% of them remained either “totally agree” or “agree” that Turkey should intervene to the Turkish ethnic politics.

In contrast, politicians generally are not willing to have the political intervention. For instance, Gülistan argues that Turkey should not intervene to all

<sup>318</sup> Field research in Bulgaria, July and August, 2012.

political issues of the MRF and he states that “we [the MRF and Turkish population] prefer to shake hands with Turkey, not to the kiss hands of Turkey”. Lastly, Gülistan accepts the efficiency of Turkey on the Turkish population and claims that “everything in the Turkish politics in Bulgaria is, of course, dependent on Turkey.”

In addition, according to Akif, until the rule of the Justice and Development Party (JDP), Turkey did not try to intervene to the ethnic politics in Bulgaria. However, Akif argues that recently there are some attempts by the JDP to change the leaders of the MRF.<sup>319</sup> In contrast to these attempts, Akif states that “all political parties which come to power in Turkey must work with the MRF since it is the single political representation of the Turkish population.”<sup>320</sup> Meanwhile, top political leaders of the MRF generally stated about the necessary of economic support of Turkey. For instance, Çetin Kazak states that “all we expect from Turkey is that Turkey should make more economic investments in the Turkish populated areas”.<sup>321</sup>

Consequently, the Turkish foreign policy, which has supported the moderate position of the MRF, has not changed since the end of the Cold War. During Bulgaria’s assimilation policies, Turkey led an active foreign policy to protect the rights of the Turkish population and to put political pressure on the communist regime. In addition, Turkey also backed the MRF to be accepted by the Constitutional Court in 1991. After the MRF was accepted by the Constitutional Court and was able to run in elections without any problem, though, Turkey stopped its active foreign policy concerning ethnic issues in Bulgaria,<sup>322</sup> because Turkey have never intervened ethnic issues in the Balkans for the radical demands of ethnic groups. In other words, after Bulgaria guaranteed basic human rights and political participation of the Turkish population, Turkey has not supported the MRF to adopt radical demands. In addition, the Turkish prime minister highlighted the MRF to the Kurdish party in hopes of encouraging

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<sup>319</sup> Interview with Akif Akif, Mayor of Momchilgrad, Kardzhali, July 24, 2012

<sup>320</sup> Interview with Akif Akif, Mayor of Momchilgrad, Kardzhali, July 24, 2012

<sup>321</sup> Interview with Çetin Kazak, Representative of Kardzhali Region, Sofia, July 25, 2012

<sup>322</sup> Jenny Engström, **Democratisation and the prevention of violent conflict: lessons learned from Bulgaria and Macedonia**, Ashgate Publishing Limited, Burlington, 2009, pp. 76-77.



integration with state institutions instead of the adoption of secessionist demands, which arose in 2007.<sup>323</sup>

More importantly, Turkey also supports the MRF as the single political representative of the Turkish population. Since Turkey does not intervene into the ethnic politics in Bulgaria due to its foreign policy preferences, Turkey does not have any intention to support another Turkish party. Turkey only supports the Turkish population to be represented in the parliament with no trouble. Therefore, Turkey is aware the fact that if there will be another Turkish party, the political representation of the Turkish population will decrease due to the electoral threshold.

It is also important to note that among the Turkish population, Turkey, as the homeland, should be considered one of the main factors behind the Turk's political mobilization or lack thereof. Based on the research in Bulgaria, many Turks living in Bulgaria still consider Turkey their big brother who would protect them from the Bulgarians if needed. They argue that Turkey is a guarantor state of their basic rights since Turkey does not allow an assimilation policy anymore. Moreover, Turkey has not encouraged the Turkish politicians to establish other Turkish parties. Therefore, since there is high level of impact of Turkey, this policy of Turkey reinforces the monopoly of the MRF over the Turkish population.

Lastly, up until now, Turkey has always supported the MRF as the single political representative of the Turkish population along with its moderate demands. The Justice and Development Party defending Islamic conservatism, however, has recently supported Islamic movements in Palestine, Egypt, and Syria. The MRF is not a party that supports Islamism or conservatism, so it is also possible that the government in Turkey might support a new Turkish party that is even more conservative than the MRF. However, this study argues that since the electoral threshold does not leave a blank for two parties, the possible attempt for new Turkish party will be more likely to fail.

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<sup>323</sup> BIANET, "Erdoğan'dan DTP İçin HÖH Gibi Şartı", **Press Bulletin**, 19.06.2007, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/97766-erdogandan-dtp-icin-hoh-gibi-sarti>, (27.11.2013).

### 3.1.3. The Bulgarians Turks in Turkey and the Movement for Rights and Freedoms

In addition to the Republic of Turkey, there are many Bulgarian Turks in Turkey who have both Turkish and Bulgarian citizenships and the right to vote in the general and presidential elections in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian Turks in Turkey still hold their relationships with the Turkish population in Bulgaria. For instance, many of them generally visit their families once in a year and spend their time in Bulgaria during vacations and elections. As a result, since the Bulgarian Turks currently residing in Turkey act as a politically active diaspora, and they can also affect the political behavior of the MRF.

The right to vote for elections of Bulgaria for the Bulgarian Turks was accepted at the end of 1990s. According to Özgür, all Bulgarian parties, in particular the MRF supported the dual citizenship policy which allows citizens of Bulgaria in foreign countries to vote in the elections because a significant percent of the young population had left the country for economic reasons after 1994.<sup>324</sup> The MRF was also more active than other parties due to dramatic decrease its votes in the general elections in 1994. Özgür states that “after this experience [fall of the votes], MRF started to search for ways to attract the vote of the emigrants in Turkey and promoted the accommodation of dual citizenship status.”<sup>325</sup> Later, in 1998 with the support of the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) the dual citizenship policy was legalized.

Although, the UDF expected a hundred thousand Bulgarian votes from abroad in the general elections in 2001, the vote of the Bulgarians abroad remained limited to 4,000, which was unacceptable compared to the voted of the

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<sup>324</sup> Nurcan Özgür-Baklacioglu, “Dual Citizenship, Extraterritorial Elections and National Policies: Turkish Dual Citizens in the Bulgarian-Turkish Political Sphere”, **Dual Citizenship, Extraterritorial Elections And National Policies**, 2006 [http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no9\\_ses/18\\_nurcan.pdf](http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no9_ses/18_nurcan.pdf) (13.01.2014).

<sup>325</sup> Nurcan Özgür-Baklacioglu, “Dual Citizenship, Extraterritorial Elections and National Policies: Turkish Dual Citizens in the Bulgarian-Turkish Political Sphere”, **Dual Citizenship, Extraterritorial Elections And National Policies**, 2006 [http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no9\\_ses/18\\_nurcan.pdf](http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no9_ses/18_nurcan.pdf) (13.01.2014).

Bulgarian Turks in Turkey which was close to 39,000.<sup>326</sup> As a result, the MRF gained three representatives through support from Turkey after the elections in 2001.<sup>327</sup> Furthermore, Kreteva and Todorov argue that “the MRF has obviously great interest in and counts on these Bulgarian citizens in Turkey. In the 2001 and 2005 elections, these voters accounted for about 18% of the overall MRF vote”.<sup>328</sup> Mestan claims that the MRF is satisfied with the electoral support from the Bulgarian Turks in Turkey and states that “the MRF gained 4 more representatives through the votes from Turkey after the elections in 2009”.<sup>329</sup> However, Çetin Kazak argues that “although many Turkish Bulgarians [70,000] voted for the MRF, when considering all Bulgarian Turks [300,000] in Turkey, the support from the Bulgarian Turks must be improved”.<sup>330</sup>

There are mainly two reasons of the electoral success of the MRF in Turkey. First, the Bulgarian Turks vote for the MRF due to its ethnic nature. For instance, even though they do not follow the politics in Bulgaria, they vote for the MRF or a candidate supported by the MRF, without any hesitation.

Second, the MRF has strong organization in Turkey through non-governmental organizations of the Bulgarian Turks. During the presidential elections of Bulgaria held in 2012, several officers of non-governmental organizations of the Bulgarian Turks waited in the polling stations to encourage people to vote for the candidate that is supported by the MRF.<sup>331</sup> Actually, the candidate was a candidate of the Bulgarian Socialist Party. However, since the candidate is supported by the MRF, many Turks supported the candidate of BSP, which was responsible for the immigration of the Bulgarian Turks.

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<sup>326</sup> Nurcan Özgür-Baklacioglu, “Dual Citizenship, Extraterritorial Elections and National Policies: Turkish Dual Citizens in the Bulgarian-Turkish Political Sphere”, **Dual Citizenship, Extraterritorial Elections And National Policies**, 2006 [http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no9\\_ses/18\\_nurcan.pdf](http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no9_ses/18_nurcan.pdf) (13.01.2014).

<sup>327</sup> Nurcan Özgür-Baklacioglu, “Dual Citizenship, Extraterritorial Elections and National Policies: Turkish Dual Citizens in the Bulgarian-Turkish Political Sphere”, **Dual Citizenship, Extraterritorial Elections And National Policies**, 2006 [http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no9\\_ses/18\\_nurcan.pdf](http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/coe21/publish/no9_ses/18_nurcan.pdf) (13.01.2014).

<sup>328</sup> Kreteva and Todorov, p. 34.

<sup>329</sup> Interview with Lutvi Mestan, President of the MRF, Sofia, July 25, 2012.

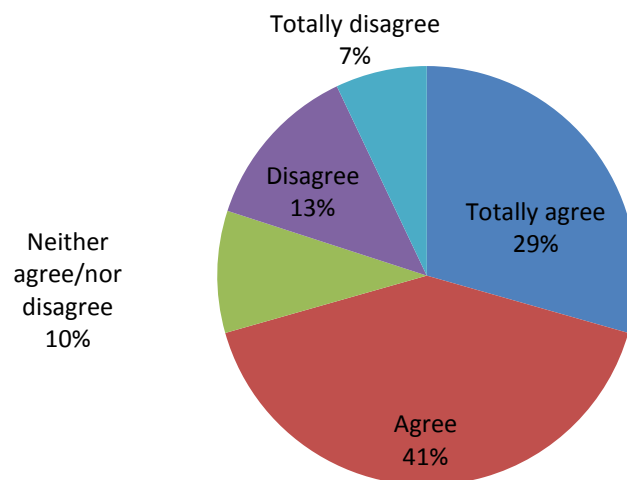
<sup>330</sup> Interview with Çetin Kazak, Representative of Kardzhali Region, Sofia, July 25, 2012.

<sup>331</sup> The Author of this study attended to this election to observe the elections of Bulgaria in Turkey.

Furthermore, if some members new generation of the Bulgarian Turks did not know the Bulgarian language, the officers of the MRF and non-governmental organizations indicated that “you just sign the number 12 which is the candidate of the MRF”. In addition, when the author of this study asked to these officers “what about other candidates, why we should not vote for them”, their answer was clear “since you are a member of the Bulgarian Turks in Turkey, you must vote for number 12. Otherwise, you will betray our nation”.

For establishing a new Turkish party, the leaders must take the support of the Bulgarian Turks who have an impact on the politics in Bulgaria. In other words, this study argues that to become a politically effective and economically powerful party, a new Turkish party needs gain the support of the Bulgarian Turks and Turkey. The MRF, however, seems to be controlling the non-governmental organizations of the Bulgarian Turks so they currently continue to support the MRF during general elections.

**Do you think that the Turks in Turkey which are also citizen of Bulgaria should intervene to the politics of the Turkish population in Bulgaria?**



Based on the results of this question, the vast majority of respondents remained either “total agree” or “agree” that, the Bulgarian Turks have a right to intervene into the Turkish politics in Bulgaria. For instance, a teacher from Kardzhali region agrees that “the Bulgarian Turks should intervene into the

Turkish politics in Bulgaria, since they are the Bulgarian citizens and lived in Bulgaria before 1989.”<sup>332</sup>

Consequently, although the Bulgarian Turks cannot be considered as the main factor behind the political behavior of the MRF due to its population and political mobilization, it remains an important actor to enhance the monopoly of the MRF over the Turkish population. Although most of the Bulgarian Turks do not follow the politics in Bulgaria, during the elections they have an intention to vote for the MRF as a duty. Moreover, all non-governmental organizations in Turkey also support the MRF in the elections. Therefore, during the elections, all Bulgarian Turks support the MRF as the single political representative of the Turkish population in Bulgaria.

### **3.2. TURKISH ETHNIC PARTIES AND INSTITUTIONAL RESTRICTIONS**

As earlier mentioned, Bulgaria adopted strict ethnic policies over the political participation of minorities which banned ethnic based parties and accepted the 4% electoral threshold, during its democratization process in 1990. The 4% electoral threshold has seemingly excluded minorities with small populations, such as Gypsies (4.6%), Pomaks (from 2-3%), and Macedonians (less than 1%) in Bulgaria. Although, the largest minority, the Turkish population, has overcome this threshold, it has compelled them to form one party due to the still relatively low percentage of the Turks (9%) in the country, which would make it difficult for them to form two Turkish parties.

The threshold creates no possibility for a second Turkish party, because the MRF generally gains close to 8% of the total national vote. Since the threshold is 4%, if the Turks were to split into two parties, it would be difficult for both the new party and the MRF to overcome the electoral threshold.<sup>333</sup> This is common information among the Turkish population and makes it difficult for other Turkish

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<sup>332</sup> Field research in Bulgaria, July and August, 2012.

<sup>333</sup> Protsyk and Sachariew, p. 16.

politicians to establish themselves as viable political competitors against the MRF.<sup>334</sup>

In tandem with the general knowledge on the electoral threshold and the minority's political behavior, according to a local politician in the Kardzhali Region, Fikri Gülistan, many Turkish people do not desire multiple Turkish parties because the fragmentation could cause their underrepresentation.<sup>335</sup> Therefore, Gülistan claims that even though "the threshold was introduced to block [the] political representation of the Turkish minority...it has helped the MRF to become [the] single political representative of the Turkish population."<sup>336</sup> Similarly, a man from the Kardzhali region also said that "the Turks must vote for one party, because if we separate into two or three parties, later, we cannot enter into the parliament." The electoral threshold has blocked other Turkish parties from becoming effective political organizations among the Turkish minority no matter what they might represent or demand.

The politicians of the MRF, meanwhile, generally support the electoral threshold as long as the Turks unite behind the MRF during election time. For instance, Mestan argues that

*"The threshold in Bulgaria is not a high one considering [the] other political problems of Bulgaria, but if they [other Bulgarian parties] separate us into two or more parties [,] it will create difficulties for the representation. Therefore, we [the Turks] have to be [a] single party."*<sup>337</sup>

Mestan further compares the MRF with the other Turkish parties in the Balkans (Macedonia and Kosovo) and argues that:

*"Our power arises from our unity. Other Turkish parties in other countries in the Balkans occasionally cannot overcome the election threshold due to their fragmented political structure. It is not necessary to establish [an] election system which guarantees our political representation, because the MRF can overcome the threshold, with no trouble."*<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>334</sup> Protsyk and Sachariew, p. 16.

<sup>335</sup> Interview with Fikri Gülistan, local representative of the MRF, Kardzhali, August 2, 2012.

<sup>336</sup> Interview with Akif Akif, Mayor of Momchilgrad, Kardzhali, July 23, 2012.

<sup>337</sup> Interview with Lutvi Mestan, President of the MRF, Sofia, July 25, 2012.

<sup>338</sup> Interview with Lutvi Mestan, President of the MRF, Sofia, July 25, 2012.

Likewise, Çetin Kazak, a representative of the Kardzhali region, argues that “the threshold was implemented in order to block the political representation of minorities, but since we [the Turks] have been represented by one party, the threshold has not challenged our representation.”<sup>339</sup>

Since the establishment of the MRF, several Turkish parties have come forth to protect the rights of the Turkish population. On the one hand, these Turkish parties have pursued more extremist demands, such as political and cultural autonomy, than the MRF and were never allowed to run in Bulgaria’s general elections. On the other hand, as mentioned in chapter these same Turkish parties, which had positioned themselves as moderate parties, never overcame the electoral threshold and quickly became ineffective political organizations within Bulgarian politics.

The first unofficial competitor Turkish party to the MRF was established by Adem Kenan, a former representative of the MRF; it was named as the Turkish Democratic Party (TDP) and has been active since 1992. Adem Kenan resigned from the MRF in 1992 due to cooperative behavior of the MRF with other Bulgarian parties. During the approval process of the constitution, Kenan left the parliament Member of Parliament Adem Kenan publicly opposed the constitution, because he insisted on official recognition of the Turkish national minority.<sup>340</sup> His party, the TDP remained a more extremist party than the MRF with regard to ethnic and territorial issues. For instance, Kenan demands changes in the Bulgarian Constitution, including the establishment of autonomous territories in Turkish populated regions and the introduction of Turkish as the second official language in the country.<sup>341</sup>

Due to name of the party and its ethnic program, however, the constitution denied the TDP’s attempt to register and run in the country’s elections. According to Ishiyama, the TDP was denied by the court, because the MRF also convinced the Bulgarian politicians that the TDP’s agenda could lead to ethnic polarization. After the establishment of the TDP, the MRF accused the TDP of trying to

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<sup>339</sup> Interview with Çetin Kazak, Representative of the Kardzhali Region, Sofia, July 25, 2012.

<sup>340</sup> Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, “The Muslim Minorities in Bulgaria”, **Balkan ethnology**, <http://www.balkanethnology.org/files/library/E%20&%20V/Muslims.pdf> (29.12.2013).

<sup>341</sup> Hajdinjak, p. 114

collaborate with some Islamic states to further the cause of Islamic expansion, in 1992.<sup>342</sup> As a result, Bulgarian politicians and the Constitutional Court fear the new party due to the possibility that it might adopt secessionist policies and feel disinclined to let it participate in elections.<sup>343</sup>

Later, in 2005, Kenan attempted to register the party again, but his efforts were halted by the Constitutional Court due to name and program of the party. In reaction to this decision, Kenan stated that “Sofia should be subjected to a bomb raid by NATO troops [because] Bulgaria was violating the rights of the ethnic Turks on its territory.”<sup>344</sup> Moreover, since Kenan has defined the Bulgarian nation as a “nation of freaks,” he was punished by the court and made to pay a substantial amount of money. Meanwhile, the MRF accused Kenan of cooperating with the ultra-nationalist party, the ATAKA, to intensify ethnic relations.<sup>345</sup> Since the party has not participated in any elections in Bulgaria, the TDP has failed to attract significant support from the Turkish population.

Another Turkish Party was established at the same period when the MRF and the Bulgarian Socialist Party, which had followed a hostile policy against the Turks during the country’s previous assimilation politics, reached an agreement in the parliament against the United Democratic Forces concerning economic liberalization and the privatization of state companies. This agreement was unsurprisingly criticized by many, including the MRF deputy from Kardzhali, Mehmed Hodzha. Hodzha also accused Dogan of being a secret security agent of the state, a corrupted and authoritarian leader of the MRF. Later, Hodzha and some other members resigned from the MRF in 1994 in order to establish a new political party.<sup>346</sup> Consequently, Hodzha established a new party named the “Party for Democratic Changes” (PDC) in that same year.

Hodzha accused MRF leaders of cooperating with Bulgarian nationalists (or old communists) who were responsible for the assimilation policies during the communist regime. According to Hodzha, his party remains a non-nationalist and

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<sup>342</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, *Ethnopolitics in the New Europe*, pp. 38-40.

<sup>343</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, *Ethnopolitics in the New Europe*, pp. 38-40.

<sup>344</sup> Hajdinjak, p. 114.

<sup>345</sup> Balkanpazar, “Bulgaristan Türkleri, Provakasyonlara Karşı Uyanık Olmalı”, <http://www.balkanpazar.org/bulgaristanturkleri3.htm> (13.01.2014).

<sup>346</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, *Ethnopolitics in the New Europe*, pp. 38-40.



right-wing political party that aims to cooperate with all non-communist political wings. Similar to the MRF, Hodzha did not use an ethnic voice in the party's program in order to avoid the constitutional ban.<sup>347</sup> In contrast to Adem's party, the program of the PDC does not say that it seeks to establish cultural or political autonomy as one of its goals in order to attract the Turkish population's votes.<sup>348</sup>

Although this new party did not recognize itself as a nationalist or Islamist party, the MRF accused it of becoming an extremist one that seeks to intensify ethnic issues in Bulgaria.<sup>349</sup> The MRF claimed that the PDC is "an exclusively ethnic party and an 'outside-inspired' attempt to split the MRF....[I]t would suffer the same fate as did the defunct and illegal TDP."<sup>350</sup> Consequently, although the party took part in the 1994 elections, the PDC did not attract a significant number of Turkish votes, as it won only 0.27% of the total votes in Bulgaria.<sup>351</sup>

During the same period, the chief mufti (the religious leader of the Muslim population in Bulgaria) of the communist regime in the late 1980s, Nedim Genchev, also established a party to attract the support of not only the Turks, but also of other Muslim groups in Bulgaria. At first, the party name, "Muslim Democrat Party," was considered but the name was rejected by the Constitutional Court. Later, Genchev declared it the "Democratic Justice Party" (DJP), which recognized itself as leftist party that was compatible with Islamic beliefs. The party aimed to represent the Muslim community in Bulgaria and to establish an Islamic fund to help poor people with the assistance of Saudi Arabia. Before the elections in 1994, although the party pursued cooperation with other leftist parties including the BCP, all of its initiatives failed.<sup>352</sup> As a result, the DJP participated in 1994 elections, but, similar to the PDC, it gained only a small percentage of the vote amounting to 0.46%.<sup>353</sup>

Even though these two parties took part in the 1994 elections, they did not receive any serious support from the Turkish population. Their effect on the

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<sup>347</sup> Özgür, p. 229.

<sup>348</sup> Özgür, p. 230.

<sup>349</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, *Ethnopolitics in the New Europe*, pp. 39-41.

<sup>350</sup> Ishiyama and Breuning, *Ethnopolitics in the New Europe*, pp. 39-40.

<sup>351</sup> Nitzova, p. 735.

<sup>352</sup> Özgür, p. 332.

<sup>353</sup> Nitzova, p. 735.

Turkish politics remained minimal, because they were unable to overcome the electoral threshold. Moreover, similar to the position of the MRF, which claims that the Bulgarian parties always try to divide the Turks, Eminov argues that these parties were actually created by the BCP and the UDF in order to weaken the MRF, as evidenced by the later appointment of Genchev to the chief mufti position again, an act endorsed by the Bulgarian Socialist Party.<sup>354</sup>

Later, between 1999 and 2005, the single competitor of the MRF was the National Movement for Rights and Freedoms (NMRF), which could not overcome the electoral threshold either.<sup>355</sup> According to Hajdinjak, the UDF encouraged some Turkish politicians to establish the NMRF, which later became a coalition partner of the UDF in its general elections.<sup>356</sup> During the interview period, some local politicians of the MRF claimed that the NMRF was established by the UDF to reduce the power of the MRF, citing that the party chose a similar name to the MRF to engender confusion.<sup>357</sup> The party, however, had no impact on the MRF and Bulgarian politics since it did not attain any significant numbers in the local elections in 1999 or 2003, or in the general elections of 2001 and 2005. For instance, the NMRF gained about 65,500 votes in the local elections of 1999. Later, although it cooperated with the UDF in the general elections of 2001, along with other small parties, it only received 47,500 votes, which had no serious impact on the MRF.<sup>358</sup>

Another Turkish party, the Balkan Democratic League (BDL), was established to partake in the 2005 elections by three important Turkish politicians in the Kardzhali region. The MRF created several obstacles to block the Democratic League's attempts to run in this election though. For instance, the MRF accused this unofficial Turkish party of using the Turkish language and the religious symbol of an Imam during its election campaign.<sup>359</sup> As noted earlier,

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<sup>354</sup> Ali Eminov, "The Turks in Bulgaria: Post-1989 Developments," **Nationalities Papers**, Vol. 27, No. 1, 1999, p. 38.

<sup>355</sup> Hajdinjak, p. 105.

<sup>356</sup> Hajdinjak, p. 114.

<sup>357</sup> Field research in Bulgaria, July and August, 2012.

<sup>358</sup> Protsyk and Sachariew, p. 26.

<sup>359</sup> Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, "Republic of Bulgaria Parliamentary Elections 5 July 2009", **OSCE/ODIHR Limited Election Observation Mission Final Report**, 30.09.2009, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/38934> (13.01.2014).

using the Turkish language for an election campaign is prohibited by the law governing political parties. The leaders of the MRF were also adversely affected by the law as they were punished for using the Turkish language themselves several times.<sup>360</sup> As a result, due to the lack of electoral support and funds, the Democratic League did not participate in 2005 elections.<sup>361</sup>

Later, in 2009, Ali Uzeyir and Uzeyir Uzeyirov, who had no connections with the MRF, established another Turkish and Muslim party, the United for Muslim Democrats (UMD). Similar to Kenan's party, however, the UMD was rejected by the Constitutional Court. Uzeyir Uzeyirov reacted against the decision and stated that "there is already a legal Christian Democrat Party in Bulgarian politics, why is there not a Muslim Democrat Party? The Bulgarian authorities are undemocratic and have a strict tone over the rights of the Turkish population."<sup>362</sup>

While stating his defense in court against the decision, Uzeyir also used the Turkish language. Therefore, the court retained a translator to understand his speech. According to Uzeyir, "This [was] the first time in the history of Bulgaria that a Turkish use[d] Turkish language with the official authorities [;] this is a great victory."<sup>363</sup>

Afterwards, Uzeyir constructed a statue called the "unknown soldier," which contains the symbol of Islam, a crescent, and is representative of the Muslim soldiers who died in the Balkan Wars. The statue apparently provoked nationalist Bulgarians, who organized some protests during this period. As a result, the statue was destroyed by the Bulgarian authorities due to its illegal status.<sup>364</sup>

Later, in 2010, Uzeyir Uzeyir and Ali Uzeyir attempted to establish another party, named "Ottoman" (in reference to the Ottoman Empire). Ali Uzeyir

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<sup>360</sup> Radikal, "Mitingde Türkçe Konuştuğu için Ceza Kapıda", 11.10.2011, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalDetayV3&ArticleID=1066047&CategoryID=81#> (13.01.2014).

<sup>361</sup> Field research in Bulgaria, July and August, 2012.

<sup>362</sup> Ajans5, "Müslüman Adıyla İlk Parti Kuruldu", 28.09.2009, <http://www.ajans5.com/detay/2009/09/28/musluman-adiyla-ilk-parti-kuruldu.html> (13.01.2014).

<sup>363</sup> Haber3, "Bulgaristan'ı Karıştıran Türk", 13.09.2011, <http://www.haber3.com/bulgaristani-karistirani-turk--986279h.htm> (13.01.2014).

<sup>364</sup> Haber3, "Bulgaristan'ı Karıştıran Türk", 13.09.2011, <http://www.haber3.com/bulgaristani-karistirani-turk--986279h.htm> (13.01.2014).

became the representative candidate of this party during the country's presidential elections. Some ethnic Bulgarians, who are remain sensitive about the Ottoman Empire, reacted against this party due to its name.<sup>365</sup> Consequently, the last attempt did not accomplish much as the total number of its members were not sufficient for it to register for the elections.<sup>366</sup> Against these attempts, one of non-governmental organization established by the Turkish Bulgarian citizens in Turkey, which supports the MRF, stated that "these parties are created and supported by the Ataka and the state in order to divide Turkish votes, because they feared that united Turkish votes with [the] Pomak and Roma population c[ould] make a Turkish person [the] prime minister, in the future."<sup>367</sup>

As a side note, aside from these Turkish parties, the Roma (the Democratic Roma Union) and Macedonian (UMO Ilinden-Pirin) parties also remained unaccepted by the Constitutional Court. For instance, the Macedonian party was denied by the Constitutional Court in 2000 from participating in the country's elections, because, according to the court, it threatens Bulgaria's national unity, which violates Article 44(2) of the constitution.<sup>368</sup> Although, the Court's decision was criticized by the European Court of Human Rights several times, the staunch position of the Bulgarian authorities has remained unchanged.<sup>369</sup>

As a result, the structure of the constitution has also left no place for other ethnic political parties, including the Turkish Democratic Party, and the Democratic Roma Union and the UMO Ilinden-Pirin Party (Macedonian), which were not accepted by the Constitutional Court. According to Vassilev, the ban was not introduced to close the MRF, because it was already part of political system and was commonly supported by the Turkish population. Instead, the constitutional ban aimed to control and closes the separatist ethnic minority parties that can be direct threats to the territorial integrity of Bulgaria.<sup>370</sup> Therefore, the MRF has achieved a monopoly in Turkish regions and in some

<sup>365</sup> GazeteVatan, "Osmanlı Partisi Krizi", 29.09.2011, [http://haber.gazetevatan.com/Osmanli\\_Partisi\\_krizi/290921/30/Haber#.UFY7MY0aOvt](http://haber.gazetevatan.com/Osmanli_Partisi_krizi/290921/30/Haber#.UFY7MY0aOvt) (13.01.2014).

<sup>366</sup> 5,000 signatures are required for the registration of a party in Bulgaria (Bieber, p. 22)

<sup>367</sup> Emre Kızılkaya, "Bulgarları Çıldırtan Yeni Osmanlı Üzeyir", *Hürriyet*, 13.08.2011, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/planet/18478572.asp> (13.01.2014).

<sup>368</sup> Rechel, *Europe – Asia Studies*, p. 1210.

<sup>369</sup> Rechel, *Europe – Asia Studies*, p. 1210.

<sup>370</sup> Vassilev, p. 49.

cases, in Muslim (both Pomak and Roma) populated areas. In addition, since the MRF has not made any political demands that threaten the state of Bulgaria, it has continued to hold its monopoly since the end of the Cold War.<sup>371</sup>

Consequently, the Bulgarian constitution and electoral threshold have prevented intra-ethnic party competition. Although several Turkish politicians who resigned from the MRF have tried to establish new Turkish parties, all of them have met defeat; some of them were rejected by the Constitutional Court and others did not even try to become a legal political party. Moreover, the MRF has continually supported the decisions of the Constitutional Court to ban other Turkish ethnic parties, because it wishes to keep its electoral success.

### **3.3. THE MONOPOLY OF THE MOVEMENT FOR RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS OVER THE TURKISH POPULATION**

This section discusses the political tendencies of the Turkish population with regard to the MRF and other Turkish parties, and their ethnic political demands. Ethnic parties have subdivisions supporting different ethnic policies. Moreover, it is possible for members of an ethnic group to be unsatisfied with the policies of their party. These different tendencies cause the political fragmentation of ethnic groups, which intensifies intra-ethnic party competition. As a result, this portion of the work aims to examine whether or not there are different opinions on the ethnic demands made by the Turkish population. The results indicate why the MRF is the single political representative of the Turkish population, because if the Turkish population has a tendency to vote for another party due to political differences, the institutional restrictions on the ethnic politics in Bulgaria are more likely to be the main reason of the lack of intra-ethnic party competition..

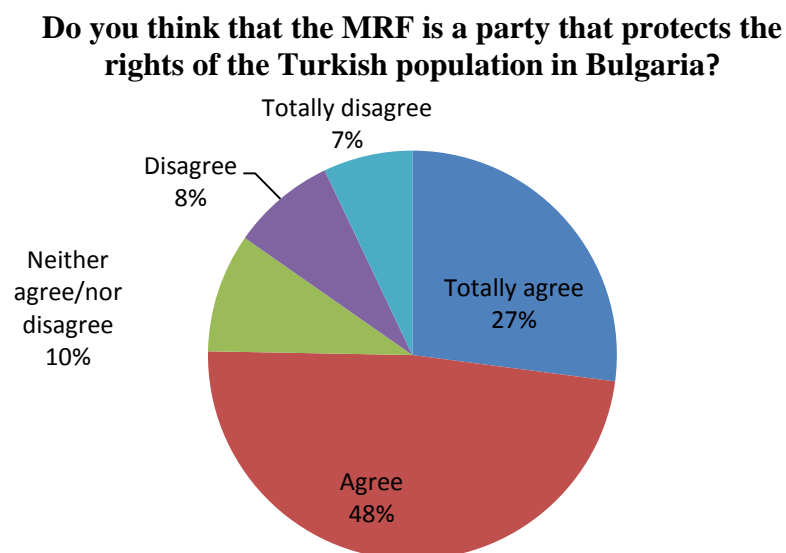
The first question purposes to examine whether or not the MRF is perceived as an ethnic Turkish party according to the Turkish minority. Meanwhile, the other two questions were also asked to understand whether or not the Turks are satisfied with their MRF politicians. The fourth question,

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<sup>371</sup> Anagnostou, p. 102; Rechel, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, p. 357.

meanwhile, aims to measure whether or not the Turkish population would like to choose another Turkish party alongside the MRF in Bulgaria's elections. Lastly, the fifth and sixth questions mainly aim to understand whether or not the Turks have a tendency to desire more extremist demands than the MRF has adopted.

As previously discussed, ethnic groups have a tendency to vote for their party because they believe that their party remains the only one that will protect their rights and freedoms. During the course of the research, many Turks stated that they still remain second class citizens in the country and believed that their rights need improvement. If the Turks consider the MRF the party that protects their rights, there is a possibility that some individuals are dissatisfied with the ethnic policies of the party, which would intensify intra-ethnic party competition. Based on this definition, the first question aims to measure whether or not the Turkish community believes that the MRF is the only party that guards their interests. According to the Turkish population, the protection of rights and freedoms refers to the protection of their political rights, including the right to speak and learn the Turkish language and practice their religious duties.<sup>372</sup> As a result, 75% of the interviewees either "totally agree" or "agree" that the MRF is the party that protects their rights.



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<sup>372</sup> Field research in Bulgaria, July and August, 2012.

Although MRF politicians explicitly define their party as a liberal party for all Bulgarians, all of them commonly concede that at the beginning, the party was established to protect the rights of the Turkish population.<sup>373</sup> Lütvi Mestan, vice president of the MRF, states that “although we do not define [our organization] as an ethnic party, the Turks have mostly supported the party, because the MRF remains [the] single party that protects the interests of the Turkish population in Bulgaria.”<sup>374</sup> Mestan also supported this sentiment, stating that “it is true that we started to protect and improve the rights of Turks banned during the communist period.”<sup>375</sup>

Members of non-governmental organizations, Turkish journalists, and a local politician from the GERB claim that although the MRF has proclaimed its liberal stance in Bulgaria and the international stage, the entirety of Turkish society definitely votes for the MRF due to its ethnic nature.<sup>376</sup> Fikri Gülistan summed it up by asserting that “no matter what the politicians of the MRF state, all Bulgarians and Turks know that the MRF is the Turkish party.” In addition, according to some people, during the elections, the politicians of the MRF always indicate that “if you are a member of the Turkish community [,] you must support...the MRF, as it is the Turkish party.”<sup>377</sup> As a result, the Turkish and Bulgarian populations still seem to consider the MRF an ethnic party regardless of its program and actions.

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<sup>373</sup> Interviews with Lutvi Mestan, President of the MRF, Sofia, July 25, 2012; Çetin Kazak, Representative of the Kardzhali Region, Sofia, July 25, 2012; and Necmi Ali, Representative of the Kardzhali Region, Sofia, July 25, 2012

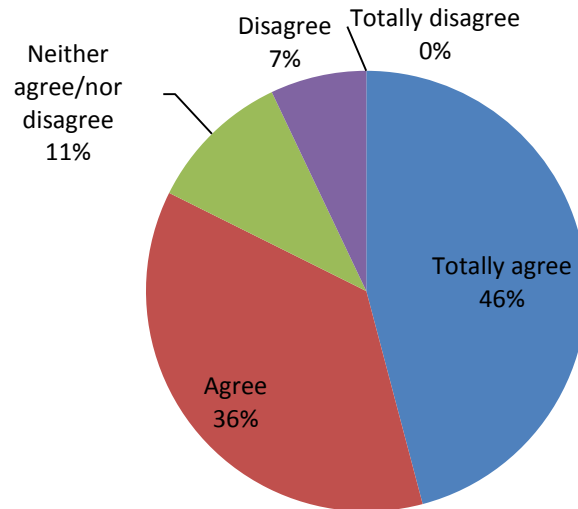
<sup>374</sup> Interview with Lutvi Mestan, President of the MRF, Sofia, July 25, 2012.

<sup>375</sup> Interview with Lutvi Mestan, President of the MRF, Sofia, July 25, 2012.

<sup>376</sup> Interview with Nahit Doğu, journalist, Kardzhali, July 23, 2012; interview with Halil Kahraman, head of a non-governmental organization, Kardzhali, August 1, 2012

<sup>377</sup> Field research in Bulgaria, July and August, 2012.

**Do you think that the leaders of the MRF should change?**



The purpose of second question is, in particular, to examine whether or not the Turkish people are satisfied with the current leaders of the MRF. The questionnaire results reflect that many Turks are apparently not satisfied with them as 46% of the total interviewees “totally agreed” and 36% “agreed” that the leaders of the MRF should change. According to those individuals, since its establishment, the MRF has been governed by the same leaders who now have become elderly and corrupt politicians.

Nahit Doğu, a local journalist in the Kardzhali region, for instance, argues that since its establishment, the MRF has been governed by the same politicians who no longer serve the political and economic needs of the Turkish people.<sup>378</sup> Doğu claims that the Turkish people have expected to see an increase their economic and political rights but the MRF has been unable to satisfy these demands.<sup>379</sup> Similarly, a Turkish woman from the Kardzhali region recounted how “especially after 2001, we expected to increase our political rights and economic wealth because the MRF became a member of [the] government

<sup>378</sup> Interview with Nahit Doğu, journalist, Kardzhali, July 23, 2012.

<sup>379</sup> Interview with Nahit Doğu, journalist, Kardzhali, July 23, 2012.



between 2001 and 2009. However, the party did not change anything in [the] Turkish regions.”<sup>380</sup>

Meanwhile, according to the representatives of the MRF, the constitutional structure of Bulgaria, which is different from that of Macedonia and Kosovo, where minorities are officially recognized and their political participation is guaranteed by the constitution, restricts the MRF from legislating for some basic rights.<sup>381</sup> Mestan argues that Bulgarian parties always act negatively toward minority rights, despite the fact they have a different political ideology. According to Mestan, since the MRF does not retain the majority of parliament, it is difficult to legislate on basic human rights.<sup>382</sup>

Moreover, several Turkish politicians have claimed that the MRF has truly tried to improve the political rights and economic wealth of the Turkish people.<sup>383</sup> For instance, Mestan contends that “the MRF has always attempted to legislate to an article which aims to increase the number of minorities in the state institutions including [the] judiciary and military.”<sup>384</sup> In contrast, however, during the research, many Turkish people complained about the MRF and its leaders, who have not changed anything after becoming coalition members in 2001.<sup>385</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> Field research in Bulgaria, July and August, 2012.

<sup>381</sup> Interviews with Necmi Ali, Representative of the Kardzhali Region; Lütvi Mestan, President of the MRF; and Çetin Kazak, Representative of the Kardzhali Region, Sofia, July 25, 2012.

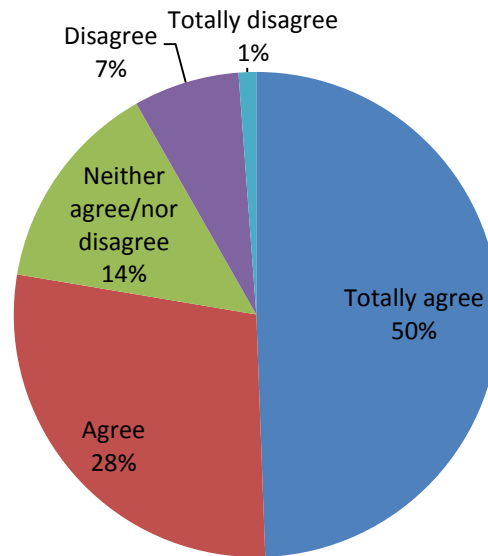
<sup>382</sup> Interview with Lütvi Mestan, President of the MRF, Sofia, July 25, 2012.

<sup>383</sup> Interviews with Necmi Ali, Representative of the Kardzhali Region; Lütvi Mestan, President of the MRF; and Çetin Kazak, Representative of the Kardzhali Region, Sofia, July 25, 2012 and interview with Akif Akif, Mayor of Momchilgrad, Kardzhali, July 23, 2012.

<sup>384</sup> Interview with Lütvi Mestan, President of the MRF, Sofia, July 25, 2012.

<sup>385</sup> Field research in Bulgaria, July and August, 2012

**Do you think that the politicians of the MRF are corrupt?**



This question aims to observe whether or not the Turkish population trusts the MRF politicians. Those people who tended to answer with “neither agree/nor disagree” at the beginning of this question changed their answers to either “agree” or “totally agree” after the author stated, “This research does not have any relation with the MRF and the state of Bulgaria, rather the research has only...academic purposes.”

The interviewees felt that they cannot freely state their answers concerning political corruption for two main reasons. First, since the Turks settle in economically underdeveloped rural areas, they hope to find a job through either municipalities of the MRF or small companies owned by the politicians. Understandably, they would prefer not to lose their existing jobs connected with the municipalities and the politicians. Second, the Turkish people still fear criticizing the state and its politicians based on the memories of the former repressive communist era.<sup>386</sup>

The research results suggest that the Turkish population considers the MRF’s politicians as corrupt: 50% of interviewees answered the question with “totally agree” and 28% of them “agreed.” Those people who answered with

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<sup>386</sup> Field research in Bulgaria, July and August, 2012.

either “disagree” or “totally disagree,” are a small 8% of total answers and are all either employees of municipalities or owners of small companies.

The results from this question are not surprising, because politicians or people who have strong relations with the MRF certainly seemed wealthier than the rest of the population. Similarly, according to Halil Kahraman, head of a non-governmental organization in Kardzhali area, “the Turkish people are very angry with the Turkish politicians because they increased their economic wealth through politics.”<sup>387</sup> Another local politician, Gülistan stated that “at the beginning the MRF had a divine mission [:] the protection of the rights of the Turkish people. However, later, the party became an ordinary party whose politicians started to use it for their own purposes.”<sup>388</sup> A teacher from the Kardzhali region also argued that “the politicians always state that the MRF is the only party that protects our rights, but we [do] not experience any development, instead we observe [the] economic development of the politicians.” As these comments suggest, many Turkish people in Bulgaria does not trust the MRF politicians and believe that they use the MRF for their economic interests, not the betterment of the Turks.

Economic difficulties also increase the levels of corruption present in politics. When politicians start to use politics as a way to increase their economic wealth, they normally only consider their own economic wealth, not the interests of their supporters. Since Bulgaria has high levels of corruption among its all politicians, it is unsurprising that they often use politics as a way to increase their own economic wealth, which can be a motivating factor in keeping the MRF’s monopoly over the Turkish population and the party’s more moderate demands. It is also possible that the MRF politicians do not try to change their political behavior due to the constitutional ban on ethnic parties since they desire to keep their political presence.

Finally, the Turkish people who wish to become politicians have a tendency to enter the MRF since it provides them with an opportunity to increase their own economic wealth. Indeed, according to Ganev, the political leaders of

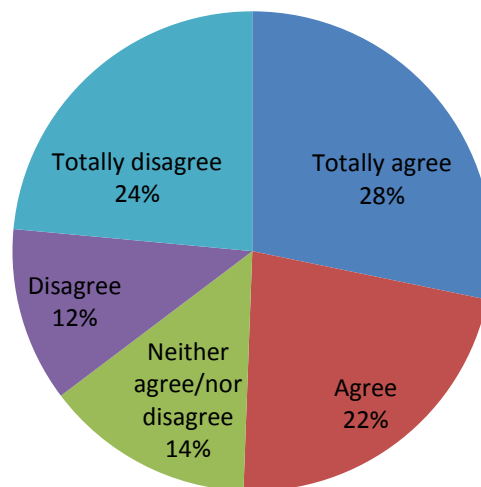
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<sup>387</sup> Interview with Halil Kahraman, head of a non-governmental organization, Kardzhali, August 1, 2012.

<sup>388</sup> Interview with Fikri Gülistan, local representative of the MRF, Kardzhali, August 2, 2012.

the MRF have used the EU funds to increase their economic wealth and political power. According to Ganev, Ahmed Dogan who remained the president of the MRF until 2012 has explicitly admitted that “he is uniquely positioned to distribute European subsidies.”<sup>389</sup>

**If there is another Turkish party besides the MRF, would you consider voting for it?**



The fourth question aims to measure whether or not the Turkish population would support another Turkish party. Therefore, the findings of this question also indicate the possibility of intra-ethnic party competition, because it is also possible that the Turks do not prefer another Turkish party beside the MRF. The results show that the Turkish population seems to be divided into two groups; people either support “the MRF” or “another Turkish party.” Opponents of the MRF, 50% of total interviewees, responded with either “totally agree” or “agree.” People who only “agreed” also stated that they would vote for another Turkish party according to its leaders and program for the most part. In other words, they likely would not support another Turkish party.

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<sup>389</sup> Ganev, p. 35.

In contrast, 36% of the total interviewees either “disagreed” or “totally disagreed” with the idea of supporting another Turkish party. According to those people, the Turks must be united behind one Turkish party against the Bulgarian parties, which really do not protect their rights. Many Turkish people also stated that when the Turks are separated into two parties, they become less powerful during the elections due to the electoral threshold.

Half of the interviews who were older than 60 years old “totally disagreed” about supporting another Turkish party. Meanwhile, the young and middle age population seemed more inclined to vote for another Turkish party than their elder counterparts. An old woman from a village in the Kardzhali region who replied with “totally disagree” in the survey argues that “although we are not satisfied with some of the policies of the MRF, we must unite behind it to be represented in the parliament.”<sup>390</sup> The elderly, in general, believe that although the MRF does not improve all of their political and economic rights, it is better to be represented in the parliament than underrepresented or not represented at all as a Turkish population.

The politicians of the MRF argue that other Turkish parties only reduce the political power of the Turks. According to Necmi Ali, the representative of the Kardzhali region, the economic and political success of the MRF remains the main reason for not establishing another Turkish party. Ali believes that “we [Turks] do not have [an]other option beside the MRF and other parties only diminish the representative power of the Turkish community.”<sup>391</sup> Ali went on to say that “the Bulgarian parties, in general, have encouraged vice presidents of the MRF to establish [a] new party in order to split us.”<sup>392</sup>

According to Lütvi Mestan, improving the strength of the MRF is the only way to protect the rights of the Turkish population. Mestan also claims that when the MRF acquires more than 45 representatives, it becomes a crucial party whose support plays a key role in forming the government of Bulgaria.<sup>393</sup> The mayor of Mestanlı municipality, Akif Akif, meanwhile, argues that “today, the Turks must

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<sup>390</sup> Field research in Bulgaria, July and August, 2012.

<sup>391</sup> Interview with Necmi Ali, Representative of the Kardzhali Region, Sofia, July 25, 2012.

<sup>392</sup> Interview with Necmi Ali, Representative of the Kardzhali Region, Sofia, July 25, 2012.

<sup>393</sup> Interview with Lütvi Mestan, President of the MRF, Sofia, July 25, 2012.

unite behind the MRF due to their population, but in the future (15 or 20 years later), when the population will increase, new Turkish parties can be established.”<sup>394</sup> In addition, the politicians seem not be against the electoral threshold, because they argue that it is a necessary tool to either “block unstable governments” or “to block radical parties.” Moreover, all of them claim that the electoral threshold is actually implemented by almost every country in the world and that the threshold is not a problem for the MRF as long as the Turks are represented by a single party.<sup>395</sup>

Meanwhile, the people who remain “totally agree” to the question also state that they would have answered it as “totally disagree” ten years ago. Now, however, they desire another Turkish party due to the MRF’s economic and political failures; the MRF has not legislated to some basic rights for the Turks. They also cited some difficulties in the establishment of a new Turkish party, including the electoral threshold, the constitutional ban, and the lack of sufficient funds.<sup>396</sup> For instance, a young man from the same region argues that “even we support another Turkish party [,] which is [a] more extremist one than the MRF [,] the constitutional court will not allow it to run in the elections.” This young man also claims that “it is...impossible to find fund[s] to establish another party, since the MRF controls [the] whole economy in the Turkish populated areas.”<sup>397</sup>

In contrast to the politicians, non-governmental organizations and journalists in general argue that another Turkish party should be allowed to participate in elections beside the MRF, because the politicians have used the MRF for their economic interests, and not for the interests of the Turks. Therefore, they believe that a new Turkish party would provide the politicians with a threat that they could actually lose their political careers. A local journalist, Nahit Doğu, argues that “without competition, there will not be any development and [no] new party will correct the mistakes and corrupt structure of the MRF.”<sup>398</sup>

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<sup>394</sup> Interview with Akif Akif, Mayor of Momchilgrad, Kardzhali, July 23, 2012.

<sup>395</sup> Interview with Lutvi Mestan, President of the MRF; Interview with Necmi Ali, Representative of the Kardzhali Region, Sofia, July 25, 2012.

<sup>396</sup> Field research in Bulgaria, July and August, 2012.

<sup>397</sup> Field research in Bulgaria, July and August, 2012.

<sup>398</sup> Interview with Nahit Doğu, journalist, Kardzhali, July 23, 2012.

Doğu also argues that since the end of the Cold War, the MRF has established a political and economic monopoly in every aspect of Turkish society. For instance,

*“When you try to do anything about the Turkish community[,] for example, if you would like to publish a book written in Turkish, you must go the publisher which has [a] connection to the MRF, because there is no other publisher that will publish a Turkish book.”*<sup>399</sup>

The politicians consistently claim that the MRF remains the single party protecting the rights of the Turkish population and that the Turkish population must be represented by a single party due to the electoral threshold. Members of non-governmental organizations and journalists, however, argue that the politicians are corrupt and a new Turkish party would certainly improve the governance in the Turkish populated areas due to the competition that would force the MRF to adopt more desirable policies.

Meanwhile, According to Hajdinjak, in contrast to the rest of the Bulgarian voters, the supporters of the MRF suffer from the lack of any other political choice, because the MRF has a monopoly over the minority vote and has established de facto one party rule in the Turkish populated areas.<sup>400</sup> The electoral threshold and the constitutional ban have left no political space for other Turkish parties. Protsyk and Sachariew argue that “neither of the political alternatives—other ethnic Turkish parties that have been registered and have been allowed to contest elections—has been successful in establishing itself on the political scene and in gaining a considerable electoral following.”<sup>401</sup>

Moreover, to continue its monopoly over the Turkish and the Muslim populated areas, the MRF has opposed other ethnic parties. For instance, in 2004, when the Pomaks planned to form a new Pomak Party, Lütvi Mestan recalled how the Bulgarian ethnic model does not embrace ethnic and religious parties.<sup>402</sup> Therefore, the BSP often blames the MRF for isolating the Turkish minority in order to control its votes and for blocking the integration of this minority into Bulgarian society.<sup>403</sup>

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<sup>399</sup> Interview with Nahit Doğu, journalist, Kardzhali, July 23, 2012.

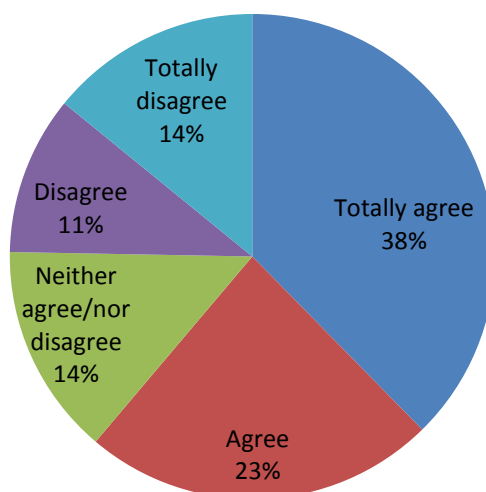
<sup>400</sup> Hajdinjak, p. 106.

<sup>401</sup> Protsyk and Sachariew, p. 16.

<sup>402</sup> Rechel, **Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics**, p. 361.

<sup>403</sup> Hajdinjak, p. 114.

### Do you support education based on Turkish language?



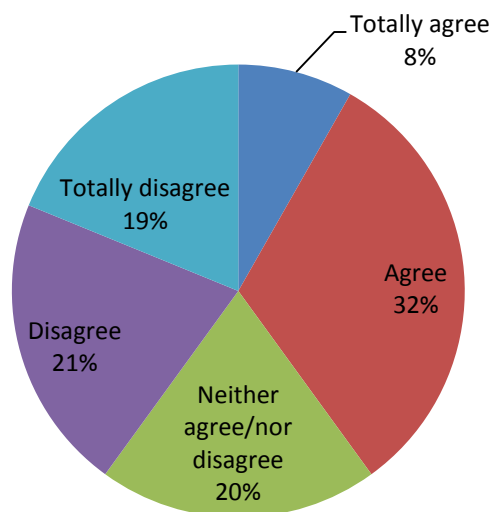
The fourth question seeks to measure whether or not the Turkish minority supports more “radical” demands than the MRF has adopted. The Turkish language is not currently recognized as a main educational language alongside Bulgarian. This question also helps to find out whether or not the Turkish population supports Turkish language education, and indirectly, the population’s cultural autonomy. According to this study’s classification, the MRF has adopted an “affirmative action” stance that aims to integrate with state institutions and to protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of the Turks.

According to findings, 25% of Turks either “disagree” or “totally disagree” with officially establishing Turkish language education. The young population has a greater tendency to answer this question with “disagree” or “totally disagree” than the rest of the population, because they believe that Turkish language education cannot provide them any employment opportunities; they are often unable to find respectable jobs in Bulgaria due to language concerns. For example, a young woman from the Kardzhali region who also studies chemistry at a university said that “after graduation I have to [have] good command of Bulgarian to find a job, and to speak it very well, I have to learn it during [my] whole education, as we usually speak Turkish with friends and family members.”



In quite the reverse direction, 38% of total interviewees “totally agree” and 23% of them “agree” on supporting Turkish language education. Those people who either “agree” or “totally agree” argue that the young population gradually forgets their Turkish and Muslim identity. Turkish education, therefore, is a necessary tool for keeping the Turkish identity intact. According to the head of a non-governmental organization, Halil Kahraman, “The state of Bulgaria still continues the assimilation policies against the Turks, because we do not have education based on [the] Turkish language.” Kahraman also argues that “many young Turkish people do not use Turkish while speaking with Turks. Therefore, they are assimilated by the state and we have to have cultural autonomy to keep our identity.” In brief, almost 60% of the Turkish population tends to support education based on the Turkish language, which remains a more radical demand than any the MRF has adopted.

**Do you support political autonomy in the regions where the Turks are the majority of population?**



This question mainly measures whether or not the Turkish population supports more radical demands, such as political autonomy, over Turkish language education. According to the survey, 19% of people “totally disagree” and 21% “disagree” on the topic of political autonomy. These people generally state that political autonomy is not a necessary tool to protect Turkish rights.

In contrast, 40% of interviewees either “totally agree” or “agree” that the Turkish areas should have their own territorial autonomy. Those people state that territorial autonomy must be implemented for the protection of their rights and identity, because they consider that the Bulgarians still seek to destroy their Turkish and Muslim identity. Some Turkish people stated that they need to have territorial autonomy not only to protect their political rights but also to increase their economic development. In conclusion, a very significant percentage of Turks, which is sufficient to fuel intra-ethnic party competition, supports political autonomy in the Turkish populated regions.

In a nutshell, the Turks are apparently unsatisfied with the MRF politicians since most of them argue that their leaders should change and are corrupted. Hence, half of the Turkish population would vote for another Turkish party besides the MRF in the country’s general elections. Moreover, it is quite clear that almost half of the Turks in Bulgaria desire more extremist demands than the MRF has currently adopted since they support education based on the Turkish language and political autonomy in Turkish populated areas.

Due to these political tendencies of the Turkish population, when a new Turkish ethnic party adopts a more extremist stance than the MRF, almost half of them, which is a sufficient amount for intra-ethnic party competition, are likely to support the new party in the general elections. Since the establishment of the MRF, however, a more extremist Turkish ethnic party has never participated in Bulgaria’s general elections due to the constitutional ban. Moreover, other Turkish parties that have adopted moderate ethnic demands and partaken in elections were still unable to overcome the electoral threshold. Consequently, half of the Turks in Bulgaria vote for the MRF not because they are satisfied with their politicians, not because they believe that the Turks should be represented by one Turkish party, and not because they support only fundamental rights, but because there is no other Turkish party to protect their rights and freedoms. In other words, the MRF is widely regarded as “the least of all evils” by the Turkish population in Bulgaria.

## CONCLUSION

Ethnic politics became more visible after the Cold War and many ethnic groups have established their own ethnic mobilization through violent acts or political parties. Some groups have supported violent actions, such as the Basques in Spain and the Kurds in Turkey. Meanwhile, other ethnic groups have chosen peaceful ways to protect their rights by working through political parties. Among these ethnic parties, on the one hand, some have demanded independence or political autonomy from their host states. On the other hand, some have adopted more moderate demands, including the desire for cultural autonomy and the cultural rights of their population, aiming to integrate into state institutions. Extremist demands sometimes intensify ethnic issues and cause ethnic conflicts in the world. In contrast, moderate demands generally reduce ethnic tensions in countries that have ethnic parties.

Meanwhile, intra-ethnic party competition remains a significant component to understanding the radicalization of ethnic party demands. Since political parties mainly aim to influence and/or control the existing political structure, they must increase their support through more attractive promises during election time. According to this argument, ethnic parties are more likely to adopt extremist demands in order to attract their ethnic groups to support them when they encounter a challenger. In addition, ethnic parties can only attract their supporters through ethnic and territorial demands. As a result, when a new ethnic party comes into politics, according to this argument, the old ethnic party must adopt more extremist territorial and ethnic demands in accordance with the expectations of the ethnic group.

However, in some cases, ethnic parties does not confronted with ethnic competitor mainly due to restrictions on ethnic parties. According to the institutionalist perspective, government institutions shape the political behavior of their political actors. The institutions, for instance, can decide whether political parties can attend elections or not. In addition, the ethnic institutions also determine who qualifies as a political actor in ethnic politics. In the Balkans, there

are two main institutional restrictions on ethnic parties; the electoral threshold and the ban on ethnic parties.

Bulgaria has adopted strict ethnic policies, including both the electoral threshold and the constitutional ban on ethnic parties, in order to control the political activity of ethnic politics within the country. These strict policies have been largely motivated by Bulgaria's past experiences. The Bulgarians have a mostly negative opinion about the Muslim community, which is associated with the Turkish population, due to the Ottoman period. Hence, in contrast to other countries in the Balkans, Bulgaria has not only failed to protect the political participation of its minorities, but it has also banned the formation of ethnic-based parties since the Cold War. In addition, during the establishment of various institutions, the Bulgarian politicians also adopted a 4% electoral threshold to block minorities with a small population from political participation.

The Movement for Rights and Freedoms is a political mobilization of the Turkish ethnic group in Bulgaria established by the members of illegal Turkish organizations who resisted the assimilation policies of the communist regime. Later, the party was accepted by the Constitutional Court as a legal political party that was able to run in the 1992 elections. Since its establishment, the MRF has participated in all elections without any obstacle and has consistently bypassed the 4% threshold due to the Turkish population, which in itself is higher than the electoral threshold.

Although it was expected that the MRF would adopt extremist demands due to its ethnic nature and historical background, it has in actuality positioned itself as a moderate party that does not challenge the political institutions of the state. Instead, the MRF has run in all elections and has become a member of the coalition government on two different occasions. In addition, the moderate demands of the MRF have also helped reduce the ethnic tensions between the Bulgarians and Turks based on the assimilation policies of Bulgaria during the 1980s.

Scholars have analyzed several important arguments in order to explain the moderate position of the MRF, taking into account the EU, the election system, the constitution, and the country's corruption. This study regards the political

institutions as an important factor for ethnic politics. As a result, it assumes that the lack of intra-ethnic party competition has resulted from the institutional restrictions on ethnic politics, including the constitutional ban on ethnic parties and the electoral threshold; both of these restrictions explain the moderate demands of the MRF.

This study investigated the role of the lack of intra-ethnic party competition as a decisive factor on the moderate demands of the MRF in Bulgarian politics by analyzing the country's institutions and findings from research conducted in Bulgaria. According to the research, the Turkish community prefers to support other Turkish parties, but the possibility of fragmentation is mainly blocked by the country's institutions, including the constitutional ban on ethnic parties and the electoral threshold. Turkey, meanwhile, also reinforces the monopoly of the MRF since it has not intervened in the ethnic politics in Bulgaria.

The leaders of the MRF have always highlighted their liberal identity rather than their ethnicity. According to findings from the research and results from all of the elections, however, the Turkish population has supported the MRF due to its ethnic nature, not its liberal stance. The MRF has continued to hold its political monopoly over the Turkish minority since its establishment, either because other Turkish parties were not allowed to run in elections by the Constitutional Court or were unable to overcome the electoral threshold. Therefore, the Turkish population has lacked a political choice, with the MRF steadily remaining the sole Turkish party in Bulgarian elections.

Furthermore, as the homeland country of the Turkish population, Turkey also enhanced the moderate demands and the lack of intra-ethnic party competition through supporting the MRF as a single political representation of the Turkish population. In addition, the Bulgarian Turks in Turkey have always supported the MRF in the general elections. Other political parties or movements among the Turkish population were not accepted by Turkey and the Bulgarian Turks. Turkey remains an important actor for the Turkish population due to the results of the survey.

However, this study argues that the constitutional restrictions have more effect on the monopoly of the MRF than Turkey due to following reasons. First, if Turkey encourages the MRF to radicalize its demands, the constitutional court can proclaim the MRF as an illegal political party. Second, if Turkey supports more extremist Turkish party beside the MRF, the threshold does not allow two Turkish parties to enter the parliament. In addition, due to its Kurdish problem, Turkey is unlikely to support any ethnic Turkish political party with radical demands in Bulgaria.

Several Turkish parties have been established to protect the rights of the Turkish population. On the one hand, the Turkish Democratic Party and the United for Muslim Democrats remained more extremist parties than the MRF because they demanded either territorial autonomy or cultural autonomy. The Constitutional Court, however, did not allow these parties to partake in the elections. Therefore, the MRF was not forced by other Turkish parties to promise more attractive demands for the Turkish population. Meanwhile, other parties that were allowed to run in general elections were unable to overcome the electoral threshold. Hence, these parties have never joined the Bulgarian parliament and gradually became ineffective political parties for the Turkish population.

However, according to the findings of this research, the Turkish population prefers new Turkish politicians as opposed to those currently in the MRF. Most of them also believe that the MRF politicians are corrupt because they do not protect the rights of the Turks. Another important result of the research is that the Turkish population supports more extreme demands than the MRF has adopted.

Additionally, half of the Turkish people believe that a more extremist party than the MRF would be beneficial to them. Therefore, if a new Turkish party decides to adopt more extremist demands, the number of votes the MRF receive may decrease. The constitutional ban and the electoral threshold, however, have blocked the possibility of intra-ethnic party competition in Bulgaria. The politicians of the MRF are aware of the fact that if a new Turkish party adopts more extremist demands, the Constitutional Court will not allow it to run the country's elections. Therefore, the MRF has also manipulated these constitutional restrictions in order to keep its monopoly over the Turkish minority.

For further research on the MRF and ethnic parties in general, this study also has some insights on ethnic politics. First, this study argues that when a new extremist Turkish party is established, it does not mean that intra-ethnic party competition automatically begins among the Turkish population. The leaders and political mobilization of the new party can also count as an important factor in increasing a party's supporters. As a result, the establishment of a new extremist Turkish party would not automatically guarantee intra-ethnic party competition among the Turkish population.

In addition, the MRF has not only established a political monopoly, but it has also developed an economic monopoly in Turkish populated areas. For further research on ethnic politics, this study also briefly considers the funds needed to establish a new party as an important factor. In other words, without sufficient funds, it would be exceedingly difficult to establish a new party, which makes it impossible for intra-ethnic party competition to exist. The Turkish populated areas clearly remain less developed than other parts of the country and many people have a tendency to move Western European countries.

Moreover, in the Turkish populated areas, all economic activities are under the control of the MRF through various municipalities and business enterprises that are owned by Turkish leaders. As a result, it is really difficult for a newly established party to obtain funds for a political campaign including the ability to hold meetings with supporters and print propaganda to reach people. A political party can take aid from the state if the party is able to overcome 1 percent threshold for the fund support in the general elections. Therefore, before the elections it would be difficult to find fund to make propaganda in the Turkish populated areas.

Furthermore, this study also considers that ethnic politics is not only based on the preferences of the ethnic parties. Therefore, ethnic demands of an ethnic group can be also considered as an important factor in understanding ethnic politics, because mobilization of ethnic group can force the ethnic party to adopt more extremist demands.

Moreover, the intra ethnic party competition argument does not analyze the nationalist or religious parties. In other words, the competition between

religious parties can also lead to radicalization of demands, since they have to promise more attractive demands. For instance, it is also possible that when two religious parties run in the elections, one party can promise education based on the religion to its supporters. In contrast, the other party can promise more extremist demand such as establishment of law based on religious rules. As a result, the intra-ethnic party competition can be analyzed for other radical parties.

In addition, for further research on ethnic politics, the economic situation of ethnic groups remains one of the lesser explored, albeit important determinant in the political behavior of ethnic parties. Although arguments concerning economic conditions do not entirely explain the political behavior of political parties like the MRF, they can help to understand their inclination to avoid the MRF adopting extremist demands.

Lastly, this study discussed the impact of lack of intra-ethnic party competition on the behavior of ethnic parties. Although this argument can explain the political behavior of the MRF, to compare its effectiveness over the ethnic politics with other rival theories including “patronage ties”, this study argues that there needs to be more observations on the other ethnic parties in the world and on other Bulgarian parties.

To conclude, with regard to the intra-ethnic party competition, the MRF continues its monopoly over the Turkish population due to the constitutional restrictions on ethnic politics and the support from Turkey. Based on this observation, this study does not expect any changes to occur in ethnic Turkish politics in Bulgaria. However, due to the history of the Balkans, a researcher, who mainly studies on the Balkans, cannot be surprised by rapid political changes in the Balkan politics.



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## **APPENDICES**

## **Appendix 1: Questions of the Survey**

1) Do you think that the MRF is a party which protects the rights of the Turks?

A) Totally Agree B) Agree C) Neither agree/nor disagree D) Disagree E) Totally Disagree

2) Do you think that the politicians of the MRF are corrupted?

A) Totally Agree B) Agree C) Neither agree/nor disagree D) Disagree E) Totally Disagree

3) Do you think that the leaders of the MRF should change?

A) Totally Agree B) Agree C) Neither agree/nor disagree D) Disagree E) Totally Disagree

4) If there is another party beside the MRF, do you vote for it?

A) Totally Agree B) Agree C) Neither agree/nor disagree D) Disagree E) Totally Disagree

5) Do you think that the state of Bulgaria protects the rights of the Turks?

A) Totally Agree B) Agree C) Neither agree/nor disagree D) Disagree E) Totally Disagree

6) Do you think that Turkey protects the rights of the Turks in Bulgaria?

A) Totally Agree B) Agree C) Neither agree/nor disagree D) Disagree E) Totally Disagree

7) Do you think that Turkey should intervene the Turkish ethnic politics in Bulgaria?

A) Totally Agree B) Agree C) Neither agree/nor disagree D) Disagree E) Totally Disagree

8) Do you think that the Bulgarian Turks in Turkey should intervene the Turkish ethnic politics in Bulgaria?

A) Totally Agree B) Agree C) Neither agree/nor disagree D) Disagree E) Totally Disagree

9) Do you think that the European Union membership process of Bulgaria has improved the rights of the Turkish population in Bulgaria?

A) Totally Agree B) Agree C) Neither agree/nor disagree D) Disagree E) Totally Disagree

10) Do you think that the Turks must be represented by single party due to ATAKA?

A) Totally Agree B) Agree C) Neither agree/nor disagree D) Disagree E) Totally Disagree

11) Do you support political autonomy in Turkish populated areas?

A) Totally Agree B) Agree C) Neither agree/nor disagree D) Disagree E) Totally Disagree



12) Do you support education based on the Turkish language?

A) Totally Agree B) Agree C) Neither agree/nor disagree D) Disagree E)  
Totally Disagree

## **Appendix 2: Questions of Interviews**

1) How do you define the MRF? Why?

A) Turkish Party B) Minority Party C) Liberal Party D) Leftist Party E) Other

2) Do you think that how the MRF can protect the rights of the Turks?

Why? A) Very Good B) Good C) Medium D) Bad E) Very Bad

3) What do you think about minority policies of state of Bulgaria?

4) What do you think about the electoral threshold in Bulgaria? Why?

A) To protect the political participation of minorities B) To block unstable governments C) To block radical political parties D) Other (please specify)

5) What do you think about the constitutional ban on ethnic parties in Bulgaria?

6) Do you think that the European Union provides better development about minority rights?

A) Very Good B) Good C) Medium D) Bad E) Very Bad

7) What do you think about the policies of ATAKA over the MRF and Turks?

8) Do you think that the ATAKA increases the votes of the MRF?

A) Totally Agree B) Agree C) Neither agree/nor disagree D) Disagree E) Totally Disagree

9) What do you think about corruption among Turkish politicians?

10) What do you think about Turkish foreign policy over the Turks in Bulgaria and the MRF?

11) Do you think that there should be another Turkish party beside the MRF? Why?

A) Totally Agree B) Agree C) Neither agree/nor disagree D) Disagree E) Totally Disagree

12) What do you think about ethnic policies of other Turkish parties?