

Political science - Bulgaria

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Georgi Karasimeonov

Political Science – Bulgaria

Discussant: Antony Todorov

1. Analysis of the pre-1989 situation

Under Communist Party leader Todor Zhivkov, who was in power from 1956 until the fall of the regime in 1989, Bulgaria combined formal allegiance to the Soviet Union with a specific nationally oriented policy in which the attempt to accommodate the intellectual elite played a significant part. It conducted a carrot-and-stick policy, allowing certain freedoms and deviations from the official communist ideology. This explains why some sciences initially labeled “bourgeois”, such as sociology and political science, were able in the 1970s and 1980s to find their way in the scientific community and even to institutionalize themselves, especially in Bulgaria’s major university, the University of Sofia (now the St. Kliment Ohridski University). Sociology was institutionalized in the early 1970s and very quickly became a popular scientific discipline and university course among students and teachers.

Political science had to follow a more difficult path than sociology because it dealt with notions directly associated with political power; these were seen as a threat to the political and ideological dominance of the Communist Party. The official line of the communist ideology was that political science was incorporated within “Scientific Communism”, which was a universal “science” introduced as an obligatory course for all social and natural sciences at institutions of higher education. Nonetheless, in the early 1970s, a small community of scientists began to look for ways to circumvent the official ideological position. It was able to make some headway with the introduction of topics close to political science in the Western sense and in expanding its influence in various social science faculties.

The first breakthrough was the early 1970s inclusion in Scientific Communism of a specialized course on politics at the party’s Academy for Social Management. Later, in the sociology department of Sofia University, political sociology was introduced. These developments had been foreshadowed somewhat earlier when two institutes – the Institute of Contemporary Social Theories and the Institute of International Relations – were set up at the Academy of Sciences; there, research was conducted in certain fields of political science. The Political Science Association was founded in 1974 and was able to bring together various scientists – mostly from law, sociology, and scientific communism – who showed an interest in political science.

The Bulgarian Political Science Association was under the control of the Communist Party’s ideological institutions. Nonetheless, it was able to further the cause of the development of political science and bring together scholars interested in political studies. It was the only institution that maintained contact with its colleagues in the West, mostly by participating in the world meetings of the International Political Science Association (IPSA) and various workshops organized by the latter. In the beginning, teachers from the law faculty at Sofia University dominated the Political Science Association, but later teachers from the sociology department were able to gain growing influence in the association and to play a determining role in its development and activities in the 1980s. By then it had already established itself as a permanent institution.

The Political Science Association helped establish the Department of History and Theory of Politics at Sofia University. Members of the Political Science Association were able to give courses in the new discipline. This was a major breakthrough, three years before the fall of the regime. Political science was introduced in Sofia University as a separate five-year undergraduate course of study, and the first 20 students were enrolled in 1986.

Most of the association's members participated in conferences organized during this period and in the publication of various articles and books, which developed certain themes typical of political science. Examples were the appearance in the 1980s of Mincho Semov's *Politics in History and Theory*, Georgi Karasimeonov's book on social democratic parties, and various studies on the Western political system and international relations by authors such as Nora Ananieva, Nansen Behar, Penka Karaivanova, and others.

In other words, before the great changes in 1989, the Political Science Association and the new department had already become a center where a great number of scientists – arguably including some of the most forward-thinking in Bulgaria – were able to group and create the basis for the expansion of political science in the new conditions after 1989. A great number of these scientists came from the younger generation, who were able to specialize for a shorter or longer period in Western universities and were prepared to meet the challenges of political science under the new conditions.

Although the regime and its hard-line ideologists tried to stop this process, under the influence of perestroika in the Soviet Union and the growing crisis of the communist regime, this shift constituted a major achievement of Bulgarian scientists' long efforts. It can also be viewed as part of the process of the imminent demise of the regime, which was unable to stop the growing trends towards democratization and freedom, especially in the realm of social sciences. It is no coincidence that the first major dissident groups emerged in Sofia University; some of their members were excluded from the Communist Party and fired from the university in 1987. Most of them were from the philosophy faculty, where political science had first been introduced and where the new department had been established. In a way, the institutionalization of political science was a sign and a symbol of the end of the communist regime and of the birth of a new atmosphere in the social sciences, which brought with it the notion of liberal democracy and liberal democratic institutions.

Although, typically for the situation, the curriculum included so-called "ideological disciplines", by and large the program "copied" and was based on the American and West-European tradition in Political Science.

2. The development of political science since 1989

The development of political science was marked by two major tendencies in the scientific community and in society in general. One was a general distrust of political scientists and institutions that were engaged in political science. Anti-communists accused political scientists of being "false" scientists and of having served the old regime. This atmosphere of animosity created heavy moral and professional strains on those who had worked for the introduction of political science under the old regime. They had to face a certain ignorance and ideological animosity from those pretending to be the "true" bearers of democratic ideals. This had a detrimental effect on some institutions, especially in the realm of the Academy of Sciences. Two of the major institutions dealing with political science – the Institute of Contemporary Social Theories and the Institute of International Affairs – were disbanded, and most of their members were actually left without jobs and had to look for new professional careers. These institutes were victims of the first wave of anti-communist euphoria and of in many ways unfounded ideological attacks. Many of the people working in these institutes were competent scientists with a proficient knowledge of political science, and some of them, through their works, had played an important role in reforming the Communist Party and had helped to bring about the radical changes in 1989.

Also prey to the anti-communist wave were all university departments engaged in the ideological propaganda of the Communist Party, such as the departments of Scientific Communism and of History of the Communist Party and various Marxist-Leninist departments. In some ways this was a logical development, but many members of these departments were left without the possibility of continuing their work as scientists under the new conditions. At the same

time, many Marxist-Leninists tried to disguise themselves as political scientists in an effort to survive under the new circumstances.

But aside from these consequences of the radical political changes, in time brand new possibilities for the institutional development of political science appeared. This was clearly revealed in Sofia University, where the Department of Political Theory (so renamed after the changes) was able to augment its staff and attract many new students. Each year after 1989, the enrollment of students and their interest in political science grew, reaching a peak of 120 new undergraduates in 1998. For the year 2001, the number was somewhat reduced to 60. At the same time, political science was introduced for the first time in some new universities, both state and private. The New Bulgarian University in Sofia, established in 1991, introduced political science as a full four-year course with a growing number of students. The same was true for several other universities, which introduced some form of political science in their curriculum.

The most recent development in political science can be characterized as normalization and consolidation. The first challenges have been overcome. Many independent institutes were created, mostly as NGOs, to cater to a range of different types of research. In addition, many public opinion institutions have been founded and have established themselves as influential mediators in political life. Political science and political scientists have a high degree of popularity and prestige. Some of them are regular commentators in the media.

As already mentioned, political science is taught as a separate social science discipline at the Faculty of Philosophy of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" and in various combinations with law, sociology, economics and history at other universities. At Sofia University, where the traditions are longest, the curriculum encompasses four years for a Bachelor of Arts degree and one additional year for a Master's Degree, followed by a three-year doctorate. The undergraduate course includes the following courses in the major disciplines: theory of politics, political institutions, political parties, history of political ideas, political ideologies, international relations, political culture, empirical politicalology, history of political life, and a great number of elective courses. The MA includes three major groups of courses: international relations, comparative politics, and Bulgarian politics.

The New Bulgarian University also has an undergraduate and graduate course in political science. The curriculum in political science was influenced by the Institute of Political Studies in Paris.

The other universities mentioned combine political science with sociology or history and law. This is also true for the universities in Blagoevgrad, Plovdiv, and Varna. In 2001, the St. Cyril and Methodius University in Veliko Tirnov also started an undergraduate course in political science.

There are "state requirements", a list of subjects that are a compulsory part of a university discipline. For Political Science these are:

History of political ideas with a minimum of 240 hours; History of Bulgarian political life (90 hours); Theory of Politics (90); Methods of political analysis (90); Political organizations and institutions (90); Comparative political systems and regimes (90); Theory of international relations (90); Political culture (90); Local government (60); Social policy (60); and History of international relations (60).

Research in political science is being carried out at the universities and in non-state institutes, mostly NGOs. As mentioned, there is no longer an institute of political science at the Academy of Sciences, after the two earlier ones were disbanded. Among the best known of the new institutes of research – think tanks working on several projects with the aid of different foundations – are the Center for the Study of Democracy, the Center for Liberal Studies, the Center for Social Practices, the Institute for International and Regional Studies, and the Institute for Political and Legal Studies. Since they are still young institutions, research in all of them is still at the initial stage, but their first achievements are encouraging. Some of them have already published interesting books and conducted empirical studies, which have attracted considerable attention among political

scientists and others. A rather specific institution is the Laboratory of the Study of Bulgarian Political Life at Sofia University, which is engaged mostly in empirical studies.

At the same time, in the absence of financial support from the state, all these NGOs depend on aid from private sources or from foreign foundations or projects. This places them under constant pressure and inhibits long-term planning and program development in the quiet, normal atmosphere typical of Western institutions. This is why their research activities are mostly marked by the necessity to adapt to the specific moment and the existing financial sources.

Through grant support, many universities and NGOs have been provided computers, and the Internet is increasingly becoming an invaluable source of information. A great number of political scientists have E-mail and Internet links, which allows them to feel part of the world community of political scientists.

Following 1989, the Political Science Association restructured itself and expanded its membership, reaching 60 in 2001. It is attempting to become one of the main centers of intellectual activity in the discipline – organizing conferences and encouraging the publication of books and the propagating of political science in various periodicals and newspapers. In 1991, it was able to start the publication of its journal, *Political Studies*, which, though facing great financial difficulties, was able to publish major articles from the classics in political science as well as from Bulgarian political scientists. After its initial four issues a year, it appeared irregularly until recently. It plays a very important role in the curriculum, where students and teachers use it as a valuable source on political theory and practice. Unfortunately, financial restraints have temporarily forced it to stop its publishing activity.

The Political Science Association supported the creation of the Students' Political Science Association, which has played a very important role in bringing together students for research activities. It organizes an annual national conference and other seminars where undergraduate and graduate students are brought together to discuss various important topics in the field of political science and contemporary Bulgarian politics.

3. Core theoretical and methodological orientations

There was no pre-war tradition in political science in Bulgaria, but some major works, mostly by university teachers and researchers in law, treated topics that are today part of political science. The problems of the development of the state and democracy are discussed in works by Venelin Ganev, especially his study on "Democracy" (1946), and by Vladimir Vladikin, in his "Organization of the Democratic State" (1935). Vladikin wrote a remarkable essay on the essence of political science (1936).

Stefan Balamesov, one of the most famous writers in constitutional law, followed the French tradition later developed by Maurice Duverger and others, combining constitutional law with the study of political institutions.

In other words, there were scattered theoretical works leaning towards political science, mostly based on the institutional approach.

In the aftermath of the political change in 1989, which created brand new conditions for the development of political science, the main focus has been on current political developments. This is quite understandable – the post-communist change is so radical and unprecedented in history, and so many dynamic events took place in the span of a few years that Bulgarian political scientists were overwhelmed with various topics to be analyzed. They had to adapt to quite new circumstances and to a new environment, and their current involvement as citizens made it practically impossible to do fundamental research, at least in the early years of transition.

At the same time, the detrimental effects of the general distaste for the ideology and ideological themes connected in the public mind in part with the old dogmatic Marxism-Leninism made systematic research difficult. For this reason, most of the writings of political scientists reflected their participation in the development of the new party system and of the new political

structures. Many of them were engaged as experts in political parties and in the media as political commentators (Minchev, Krastev, Karasimeonov, Dainov, Dimitrov, Mitev, and others).

All these factors, especially in the first few years after 1989, led political scientists' activities and theoretical thoughts to concentrate mainly on day-to-day politics rather than on more fundamental issues. Indeed, most of the attention of political scientists concentrated on the analysis of empirical data produced by the newly established institutes for public opinion, such as BBSS Gallup Bulgaria, Sova-Harris, MBMD, Alpha-Research, and others. Some successful attempts to apply content analysis to compare party platforms were made (Mitev).

Much attention was devoted to overcoming the deficit in the literature on political science by translating important classical works in political science (for example, Locke, 1996; Schumpeter, 1996; Parsons, 1995; Rawls, 1993; Przeworski, 1995; Michels, 1994; Nozick, 1996; Lipset and Rokkan, 1993; Habermas, 1994; Duverger, 1994; Bentham, 1994; Arendt, 1992; Almond and Verba, 1999) and by publishing anthologies (Karasimeonov, 1992).

The lack of a longer tradition in political science and the youth of the discipline are the major reasons for a certain chaos and eclecticism in theoretical and methodological approaches. Some teachers and researchers from the older generation are under the influence of the Marxist tradition and heritage. The majority of them have tried to adapt their courses and work to various dominant Western theories. The most popular such theories are the institutional, system, and structural-functional methods. A few have been attracted to behaviorism or to organizational and game theory (see table 1).

Although there is still a lack of systematic and well-structured research in Political Science, the main fields in the discipline are relatively well represented.

In the fields of History and Theory of Politics and Political Ideas, several textbooks were published. In the Theory of Politics, these are the works of Semov and of Fotev. More books appeared on the History of Political Ideas (Ivanov, Jankov, Todorov). A young and promising political scientist has written on the topic of conservatism, especially Edmund Burke (Malinov).

4. Thematic orientation and funding

The *transition* of the totalitarian regime to democracy was and is a major object of study for political scientists. Their works mainly follow the methodology developed by transitologists like O'Donnell, Shmitter, Gunther, Higley, Linz, Stepan, and others who analyzed transition to democracy in South America and Southern Europe. The collapse of communism in Eastern and Central Europe has given new impetus for testing the established theories of transition to democracy and the consolidation of new emergent democratic regimes. Several Bulgarian political scientists were included in international projects and publications dealing with various aspects of political transformation in Bulgaria and the establishment of new democratic institutions (Kanev, Karasimeonov, Kolarova, Dimitrov, Mitev, Todorov, Krastev).

The choice of themes is influenced by several factors. On the one hand, the political development sets the agenda for choosing the dominant topics (for example, institution building, the electoral process, party politics, etc.). On the other hand, the new university courses in political science determine the orientations of most teachers, who have to adapt to state requirements placed on the discipline.

At the same time, many themes are determined by the priorities set in international projects involving Bulgarian political scientists. Major themes determined by such projects in the years following 1989 include the emergence and consolidation of democracy, the establishment and functioning of new political institutions, local government, the emergence and role of civil society, the state of human and minority rights, and international and local conflict resolution.

The impact of thematic orientation is mostly felt at teaching institutions where the discipline is in a dynamic state. Many new and so-called "choice courses" are determined by the major thematic orientation, although there is a relatively open space for individual choices.

Much more restricted in their choices are think tanks and the so-called “third sector”, which are dependent on external funding, which in turn is tied to research in thematic fields set by the project.

Funding of teaching and research in political science is mostly based on public financing through the budget. In a period of economic depression and restructuring, this source is woefully insufficient to support the normal development of universities and faculties. This is not meant to downplay the major significance of state funding for the official recognition and establishment of political science as part of the social disciplines, including the establishment of new departments in that field. But today, public funding is quite insufficient to maintain the standards necessary for the development of the discipline by creating possibilities for teaching positions for a new generation of teachers. A great deficiency is the lack of or very limited funding for research, be it at the state universities or the Academy of Sciences. That is why research in political science is mostly dependent on the personal efforts of political scientists and on external funding and foreign sources.

Private funding by private business or donations is practically nonexistent, to a great extent a result of the lack of laws permitting tax exemptions for such funding in support of scientific research. The New Bulgarian University, which has the most developed political science department after the one at Sofia University, relies on private funding, mostly student fees.

5. Public space and academic debates

Most of the major monographs and studies analyze the Bulgarian political system and its new political institutions. This is quite understandable. The radical political transformation most definitely took place in the state and in other intermediary political institutions that emerged with the transition from the totalitarian to a democratic political system.

So the most frequent topics of research are the establishment and role of the new political institutions that substantiated the democratic legitimacy of the state embodied in the new constitution adopted by the Constituent Assembly in July 1991. The new constitution defined Bulgaria as a parliamentary republic. For the first time in the country’s contemporary history, new institutions were established – the Presidency and the Constitutional Court.

During the constitutional debates, political scientists also voiced their views on the scope of the role of the new institution and the scope of the presidential prerogatives. They joined their colleagues from Constitutional Law to express their arguments for a “weaker” or “stronger” presidency (Semov, Karasimeonov, Kanev, Kolarova, Minchev, etc.). That debate continues, based on the experience of the past years and the evolution of the separation of powers between the president and the executive. Political scientists continue to have divergent views. Some argue for a change to a stronger presidency, arguing that this would create greater stability, others support the status quo (Krastev, Pirgova, Blishnashki, Spassov).

The parliament and its role in the consolidation of democracy have also been a topic of research. Its role in government formation and its legislative activity have been researched in comparisons of the Grand National Assembly (1990 -1991) and its follow-ups – the 37th, 38th and 39th regular assemblies (Kanev). More detailed analysis of the activities of parliamentary parties and the functioning of parliamentary committees have been the topics of several studies (Kanev, Karasimeonov).

The role and decisions of the Constitutional Court have also drawn considerable attention. This brand new institution in Bulgarian politics has produced many controversial reactions among political circles and political scientists. Some of the political scientists see in it a *de facto* political institution that has played an overly political role and has not been able to keep a non-partisan position. Others say that although it has not been perfect in its activity, the constitutional court has been a very important barrier to the tyranny of the majority syndrome (Kolarova).

Some political scientists (Stefanova) have written on local government institutions in the process of democratization and on the means for developing local self-government.

Electoral Studies has evolved into a major field of research in Bulgarian political science. The founding and follow-up elections provided a major impetus for detailed analysis of electoral results. Political scientists discuss the effects of the electoral system as a factor of institutional stability or instability. Another topic is elections and election results in the process of establishing the new party system (Dimitrov, Kanev, Krastev, Todorov, etc.).

The emergence and establishment of political parties have been predominant issues in political research. Their major role in the process of transition and the consolidation of democracy, the dynamic changes in and restructuring of the party system, and the development and political profiles of the new post-communist parties have received the attention of a very large number of political scientists. A textbook on political parties (Karasimeonov) and many studies have been written in the past 12 years (Krastev, Kanev, Dainov, Malinov, Todorov, Minchev, Pirgova).

Major themes have been the role of parties in elite formation, their links to civil society, their role as a factor for stability or instability, their governing capacities, etc.

The definition of the party system as a bipolar confrontation reflected the initial harsh opposition between the ex-communist Socialist Party and the newly established Union of Democratic Forces. In their analysis of the party system, political scientists reach the conclusion that political parties, although very important in the process of transformation, have not been able to adequately fulfill their major functions and in many ways have failed in their aim to create conditions for citizens' active political participation. One of the reasons for this situation is the highly confrontational party model that has been established in Bulgaria; a second, the absence of sufficient links with civil society, which closed the party system to the demands of the people. From an organizational perspective, most parties display clientelistic tendencies and an absence of channels to facilitate regular changes in party leadership.

Bulgarian authors also discuss the appearance of new cleavages relevant to party formation. Some of them attempt to adapt Stein Rokkan's typology to post-communist realities.

Residual (historical) cleavages are those inherited from pre-communist society and which, to varying degrees, manifest themselves in post-communist society. In some countries, they determine electoral and party preferences. They are more evident in the countries of Central Europe where the communist regimes were unable to completely eradicate old values and culture or where they accepted some elements of the market economy and tolerated forms of private property.

Transitional cleavages are those that determine political divisions and party formation at the initial stage of changes after the fall of the regime, but later disappear or are "swallowed" by new cleavages appearing as the post-communist societies are consolidated. They are the products of the initial pro- and anti-communism polarity that determined many of the party conflicts and divisions immediately after 1989.

Current cleavages are new cleavages marked by the specific contradictions and conflicts of post-communist societies; these result from the economic and political reforms. They are specific cleavages resulting from the changes in the social structure and property relations. To a great extent, they determine electoral behavior and party preferences when the major transitional cleft based on the communism/anti-communism polarity is partially or mostly resolved and society moves to resolve new conflicts and issues typical for the consolidation phase.

Potential cleavages are those major issues and conflicts in post-communist societies that might become current cleavages as a consequence of the evolution of the economic and political system. They are dependent on the nature of the transition and on the effect of the policies of the various political parties in power. All of these types of cleavages are present in post-communist societies, in various proportions and appearances. They have a distinct effect in each country, depending on its pre-communist, communist, and post-communist development, specifically the process of transition and consolidation (Karasimeonov, 1998).

One of the most extensively researched and debated issues is the evolution of the Communist Party, which was able to preserve a dominant role in the first phase of transition to democracy. The delayed differentiation and the postponement of the issue of its identity led to a crisis in its development and to an erosion in membership, but never to a real division between the social-democratic and the neo-communist wing. A very peculiar phenomenon is its development into a clan-type party in which major sectors of the leadership are connected to various groups of the former nomenclature. Because of its initial post-communist development as a conglomerate of various groups and interests whose values conflict, it is at the same time closely linked to the “new capitalists”, as well as to groups suffering from the transition crisis. The postponed identity debate and growing internal controversies led at the end of 1996 and the beginning of 1997 to an internal crisis and to a loss of influence after the peak reached in the election of 1994, when it won the parliamentary elections. It lost the pre-term elections in April 1997 (Kanev, Todorov, Pirgova).

A new unexpected topic entered the public agenda and political theory as well – the emergence in 2001 of a new political movement led by exiled monarch Simeon II. Only two months after its appearance in public life, the National Movement Simeon II won the parliamentary elections by a landslide and formed the government. It was able to undermine the positions of the two major, right- and left-wing parties. How that was possible and the reasons for this phenomenon are a constant issue of debate among political scientists, who take divergent and even opposing views.

One of the dominant views is that the development in the post-communist countries has shown that the consolidation process does not exclude volatility of the party system. This is a result of the radical transformation of the economic and social structures that affect interests, values, and lifestyles of millions of people. It will take two or more generations to adapt to a new economic and social environment resulting from the establishment of the market economy and new principles of redistribution of social goods. Many social groups are unable to adapt to these new conditions and become marginalized. They are the losers of the transformation process. Politically, they feel they are disadvantaged outsiders of the system of representation; this is the social basis of new protest movements in the post-communist countries (Kanev, Malinov).

This is why democracies and the system of the representation have been periodically challenged by groups of outsiders who are inclined to support populist political parties and movements combining nostalgic and anti-system values. The main opponent of such movements is the *particracy*, which in post-communist countries is a new privileged class of politicians, party activists, state bureaucrats, and the new bourgeoisie, a product of political clientelism, corruption, and crime (Karasimeonov).

The emergence, rise, and success of such movements and parties in Hungary (Curka), Romania (Tudor), Slovakia (Meciar), and lately in Bulgaria (Simeon II) demonstrate the social malaise in relation to newly established parties and their capacity to respond to the losers and outsiders in societies.

Bulgaria is a special case. The political movement founded by ex-King Simeon II is not a retro-nostalgic, xenophobic, anti-European nationalistic movement, but a modern version of a populist alternative to the political and particularly the party model that was established in the country after 1989. It is the antipode of the confrontational bipolar party system dominated by the ex-communist BSP and the radical anti-communist UDF, which developed from the pro- and anti-communism cleft of the early 1990s that constantly divided the country (Karasimeonov).

On the other hand, the movement is a moral challenge to party clientelism and corrupt practices that marked Bulgarian politics in the last 12 years.

Political scientists note the multiple challenges to this fragile movement, which will either break it apart or transform it into a more stable, party-like formation in the coming years (Kanev, Krastev). Some of these challenges are linked to the new movement's ability to govern, its internal homogeneity, and its creation of organizational structures.

If the new movement stabilizes as a party, it will forge a new party configuration to replace the traditional 2+1 party configuration – a left and a right and a small ethnic party.

The role of civil society and the development of a new political culture reflecting political transformation have been an important topic of discussion and research. The process of the emergence of a post-communist civil society bears the imprint of a transition from passive attitudes of subjects to a new civic culture of active participation in the democratic process. Bulgarian political scientists are unanimous that this process will be prolonged, conflictual, and accompanied by generational transformations (Kanev, Tanev, Krasteva).

The nature of political transformation and transition has constantly stirred political scientists' interest in analyzing specific traits of the Bulgarian transition to democracy – the Round Table talks (Kolarova, Dimitrov) – to the various elements and stages of consolidation to democracy (Karasimeonov).

International relations have also been a hotly debated topic, since Bulgarian public opinion is divided on whether Bulgaria should join NATO or remain neutral. Most political scientists try to define the challenges and the brand new situation in which Bulgaria finds itself: without any clear alliances or “big brothers” for the first time in all its history. This makes it necessary to develop a real independent foreign policy based on a clear definition of Bulgaria's national, regional, and global relationships and priorities. With serious conflicts evolving in the Balkan region, the study of regional conflicts and their possible resolution is a constant topic of debates in the political science community (Minchev, Dronsina).

In general, the debates among political scientists in Bulgaria in recent years clearly show that they have to face many new, still undefined paradigms requiring further, very serious research. Many simplistic answers and conceptions simply do not hold, and a unique historical situation demands exceptional intellectual and theoretical knowledge and efforts. At the same time, political scientists – not only at home, but also at various international conferences – have been able to give their own assessment of the situation and to be critical of many Western and Eastern European assumptions about political and economic change in Eastern Europe.

6. Views on further development and major challenges

Political science went through its own transitional period, with its own phases. The first stage was the legitimization of political science and its institutionalization in the major academic institutions. The second stage was consolidation, characterized by the normal functioning of an established community of scholars and university staff with the necessary theoretical knowledge and resources to assure the discipline's development.

The major challenge political science faces today is the need to speedily overcome the lack of scholars who have sufficient knowledge of modern political science. Efforts to overcome this major deficiency are accompanied by serious efforts to fill the void in theoretical literature, by creating special libraries for political science, by translating major works, and by publishing specialized journals. Many political science students specialize abroad, working on their MA or PhD degrees. Some of these students hopefully will return to the country and join the political science community.

There is a great need for political scientists to conduct systematic research and to debate on major trends in political theory and new developments in political science. There are not enough political science community forums discussing the development of the discipline. The lack of a regular political science journal also hampers regular debates on major topics.

Another major deficiency among political science scholars is the dominance of descriptive approaches and “applied” political science – i.e., reaction to day-to-day political events. Well known scholars devote enormous amounts of time to political commentaries in the media and little to systematic research in political science. As a by-product of this tendency, some political scientists take ideological and partisan approaches. But a growing number try to analyze events

and carry out research on a nonpartisan basis and to achieve results based on scientific knowledge, rather than on political bias.

The new generation of political scientists, in particular, faces a major challenge to establish a specific Bulgarian school in political science. The group of PhD students has grown significantly, but the lack of university positions for them leads to their dispersal and disqualification as researchers and teachers. A major cause of this is insufficient funding from the state budget or other sources. This can hamper the natural transition from the older to the younger generation.

The lack of professional opportunities for political scientists graduating from universities is cause for concern. Many of them look for other jobs, which disqualifies them in the long run. This leads to the brain drain of students and graduates who have joined the massive immigration of young people to the West – although the situation is even more acute with computer specialists.

Many Bulgarian political scientists have published in the well known international journals in the field like the *Journal of Communist Studies*, the *Journal for Political Research*, *East-European Politics*, *Party Politics*, *Süd-Osteuropa-Forschungen*, *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie*, and others.

Enhancing international cooperation is essential for the development of political science. The growing participation of native political scientists in various forms of international cooperation enhances their knowledge in various fields of teaching and research. The Bulgarian Political Science Association is a member of IPSA, but has financial difficulties regularly paying its membership fee.

Only the department of political science at the University for National and World Economy is a member of European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR), which is quite insufficient for regular contacts during ECPR sessions.

The establishment of the European Political Science Network and its institutionalization in June 2001 was a great step forward in enhancing international cooperation among political scientists from Western and Eastern Europe. For the first time since 1989, a political science association has been created on a partnership basis with scientists and teachers from all 27 EU and associated member countries. The association's flexible membership conditions and fees will make it the most representative institution in Europe up to now. A Bulgarian political scientist was chosen as a member of the first Interim Executive Committee of the newly established European Political Science Network.

The impact of the process of accession is being felt in a more positive way since Bulgaria was invited to join the EU in 2000. It was included in the Socrates program and other initiatives that benefit social scientists. Great expectations are tied to the 6th Framework program of the EU, which will expand funding in the social sciences.

Increasingly, political science, as a product of democracy, is becoming a major scientific resource for consolidating democracy.

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