

5-2017

# Soccer Hooligans, Ethnic Nationalism and Political Economy in Bulgaria

Georgi Ganev Georgiev  
*St. Cloud State University*

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**Soccer Hooliganism, Ethnic Nationalism and Political Economy in Bulgaria**

by

Georgi Ganev Georgiev

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Science

in Social Responsibility

May, 2017

Thesis Committee:

Dr. Ajaykumar Panicker, Chairperson

Dr. Stephen Phillion

Dr. Edward Greaves

## **Abstract**

The aim of this work is to explain the social phenomenon of soccer hooliganism based on the assumption that this phenomenon relays on two prominent factors: ethnic nationalism and political economic reality. I intent to investigate how do soccer hooligans relate in terms of discourse and ethnic nationalism. Additionally, I will explore the connection amongst soccer hooligans, ethnic nationalism and the political economic reality.

This work will begin with description of the historical background, followed by illustration of the current state of the social phenomenon of soccer hooliganism in Bulgaria. Furthermore, it will explain the structural transformation of the political economy of Bulgaria following the transition to liberal democracy. Additionally, it will investigate the changes in economic system and the nature of state by mapping out the transformation process.

The study uses Internet Archival Research method to collect data. The collected data consists of soccer hooligan discourse comments, opinions, and interviews extracted by some of the largest Bulgarian soccer hooligan online platforms. The data will be analyzed by using Critical Discourse Analysis methodological approach. The theoretical chapter identifies the concept of nationalism and how it was employed by various scholars. Additionally, it examines Marx's concept of lumpen proletariat as these two concepts are central to my critical analysis of soccer hooligan discourse.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

On April 20, 2012 one of the most popular soccer teams in Bulgaria, Levski Sofia was playing an away game against one of its biggest provincial rivals Litex Lovech. More than three thousand away fans had filled the away section at the small mountain town stadium. Minutes before the kick off, what has become tradition in soccer, fan choreography was displayed. In between the flares and fireworks, visiting fans exhibited a birthday message banners. April 20<sup>th</sup> is Adolf Hitler's birthday and Levski Sofia's most radical supporters were not to miss an opportunity to demonstrate their political ideology. Large banners "Happy Birthday" and "He was right" were accompanied by seven feet Swastika flag and a Nazi Eagle flag. Meanwhile, on the opposite side, home fans in very analogous manner, displayed a banner stating: "Happy birthday! Let's clean Bulgaria in a day". In the past decade, such messages have become a normality in the country. A few years ago these banners would go unnoticed in the public realm in Bulgaria, however European Football governing body- UEFA, engaged in campaign to crack down racist and hooligan behavior by requiring local federations to pursuit larger fines, point deductions and even disqualification from professional domestic leagues.

Cases as the one described above provoked international outrage. Nonetheless the local federation fined, financially struggling Bulgarian clubs with only modest fees. Shortly, following the incident in Lovech, Levski Sofia fans appeared once more in the international media trending stories with their racist behavior. As Metodi Shumanov (2014) reports for the "Guardian", Levski's game against the current champion of Bulgaria was again marked with bigotry. Fans, from Levski's, most radical hooligan groups displayed a banner "Say Yes to Racism", mocking UEFA and FIFA's anti-racist campaign "Say No to Racism". Despite, the repeated offense, Bulgarian Football Federation punished the club with the lowest possible fine in the rulebook, \$ 30, 000.

Bulgarian football authorities have long been criticized by international soccer institutions about the growing violent and racist behavior and for not engaging in full-scale anti-violence and anti-racist campaign. Local media with rare exceptions have not mobilized to change the current environment. Although since 2004, under international pressure, an anti-hooligans law has been passed, its actual enforcement has been questionable.

The social phenomenon of soccer hooliganism has its roots in Western Europe in the 1960's but it was imported to Bulgaria after the transformation to capitalism in the fall of 1989. A couple of decades' later soccer hooliganism is identified as one of the most popular subcultures amongst youths in Bulgaria (Bedrov, 2014). Since democratic process requires votes, political parties and new elite oligarch class have recognized the importance of soccer and its mass fan-base. In the present market-oriented nature of sport, historically traditional soccer clubs from Eastern Europe and specifically Bulgaria, can be maintained by a financially strong individual. In the case of Bulgaria, oligarchs in charge of soccer clubs are directed, in many cases, by the political forces the club owner is connected to. Sponsoring popular club guarantees political and social capital. Clubs as massive as CSKA Sofia and Levski Sofia, who represent around 70 % of the soccer fan-base as a whole are tremendous political capital. The most passionate and organized fans or "ultras" growing influence allows them a capability to mobilize substantial number of electoral mass affiliated with the soccer club. The most violent of them, labeled by the media as "hooligans" which term is now embraced by all, have the capabilities and organization to influence political processes.

Soccer hooliganism is an avenue for organization of lumpen proletariat along the lines of ethnic nationalist ideologies and in the process, becomes an important structural element in contemporary capitalist social relations in Bulgaria. In this work, I will examine how political

forces and elite class deploy soccer supporters to help organize lumpen proletariat along the lines of ethnic nationalism ideologies in the ongoing hegemonic process of legitimization of capitalist social relations in Bulgaria.



## **Chapter 2: Historical Description of Soccer Hooliganism in Bulgaria**

During the first half of the 1990s large sectors of Bulgaria's youth from mostly working social classes, disillusioned with political uncertainty under the new system, began practicing a new form of socio-political insubordination ("The Ultra Movement and the Political Influences", n.d). The decline of the semi-socialist system caused a mistrust in forms of authority which became more evident in the first decade of economic crisis under capitalism. This tendency created a generation of youth, growing inequality and insecurity. Since soccer was one of the most popular social outlet it naturally became an instrument for expressing social agitation. Previously, during the Communist era such crowd gathering were tightly controlled by different youth organizations and trade unions (Homan, 1977, p. 245). Soccer institutions meant to represent ideological goals in competitions against the Western European teams and soccer masses were essential part of it (Edelman, 1993, p.82-83). Clubs across Bulgaria were named after national heroes, communist leaders, and were affiliated with different state departments (Missilori, 2002). During the changes in the period of 1989-1990, soccer crowds participated actively in political movements against the Communist regime. However, the market reforms in the early 1990's, followed by mass privatization, soaring unemployment and hyperinflation resulted in a discontent amongst the population. It became noticeable that political forces had lost control of mobilizing youth and public opinion (Triani, 1994).

Decades of crises in political, economic and social spectrums resulted in youth's alienation from the mainstream, subsequently leading them into creating their own avenue to express hostility and discontent not only to their soccer rivals, but to the reality of social unease. As a result, in the mid 1990's, soccer supporters began organizing and acting in groups using techniques resembling political extra-parliamentary groups. Out of these crowds filled with juvenile excitement and

agitation, later emerged the hardcore soccer hooligans, whose rebellious behavior quickly gain popularity and notoriety (Armstrong & Testa, 2008, p.3). This kind of behavior appealed explicitly amongst the youth whose lack of mobilization in post-Socialist years found its replacement on the soccer stands

The excessive hostility against police and rival fans made them different from traditional soccer fans. Organizational methods and behavior were imitated from their counterparts in Western Europe. Groups from England and Italy in the 1960', 70's and 80's laid the groundwork of what is now a hooligan sub-culture. Armstrong and Testa (2008, p.3) indicate that in Western Europe and Latin America these groups emerged amid the political-industrial conflict in the 60's and 70's, however in Bulgaria it wasn't until the shift to the capitalist system. Hooliganism first appear in England but it went on its own cultural development as different country added their own local patterns of behavior and ritualism (Giulianotti, Bonney & Hepworth, p.143). Bulgaria soccer support underwent few transformations before evolution into hooligan subculture.

Soccer hooliganism emerged first in England. English hooligan "firms" were the initiators of this social phenomenon and the earliest influence on their Bulgarian counterparts. Number of academics have developed theories of soccer hooliganism. Many academics agree on the shift from spontaneous violence of soccer fans to organize fan violence is a phenomenon that occurred and intensify during the period of economic crisis in the capitalist countries of Europe in the late 1960's and 70's. Some academic such is Spaaij (2006, p.6), insists that globalization processes can't be blamed for homogenizing hooligan cultures as in different hooligan sub-cultures can be observed some local patterns and symbolism. Nevertheless, socially organized fan groups emerged at the stands in Italy after the political-industrial conflict that emerged out of the growing capitalist inequalities in Italy (Testa, 2008, p.4). Bulgarian soccer support has been built under influence of

Italian hooligan culture. Despite that English hooligan culture laid the grounds for the movement, Bulgarian and Italian hooligan culture have much more similar tendencies. Arguably, the most significant of them is the emergence of hooligan sub-culture corresponds with the cause of its emergence: Capitalism. Bulgarian hooligan movement appeared in a time of growing inequality and economic disparities. Undoubtedly, there are some traits of behaviors typical for the local culture but foreign influence (especially from Italy), in terms of organizing and developing political ideologies has been imported from Western Europe.

As political and social processes in post-Socialist Bulgaria evolved, Western hegemonic discourse began almost immediately impacting local culture. Being able to observe the structures and actions of Western soccer hooligans' collective activities and masculine behavior, local youth's appeal to the belonging, loyalty and violence was instant. Previous gathering of passionate and disorderly youths who agitated rival fans in and around the stadiums matured to hardcore soccer supporter groups. These groups differed by their unusual behaviors and more elaborate manifestations of pre-ordered aggressiveness to rival fans (Testa, 2009, p.55). By the end of the 1990's this process began to occur in Bulgaria as some supporters distinguish themselves from the traditional fans by behavior, organization, clothing and location in the stadium.

Chants, banners, choreographies and ideologies mimicked their Western counterparts. In the 1990's the influence of the Left in hooligan subcultures in Europe has been decreasing while number of far-right wing hooligan groups has been growing significantly (Testa, 2008, p.4). Bulgarian hooligan movement emerged during a period when far-right wing ideologies were entering into the soccer stadiums across Europe at much higher number than ever, and given the negative image of Communist regime during these years, naturally local hooligan gangs fell into the sphere of far-right wing ideology. This transformation was made clear in the late 1990's where

stylistic divisions on the stadiums were based around far-right ideology. Evolution was witnessed as well in clothing style, behavior and symbolism and clearly distinguished hooligans from other fans.

In the early 1990's hooligans adopted a clothing style typical of the neo-Nazi sub-culture at that times. Dr. Martens boots, black bomber jacket and camouflage pants or jeans. These style were associated with skin heads subculture and as hooliganism adopted right wing ideology, this became their style of choice. Later it changed to more sophisticated and "smart" look (Leeson, Smith, & Show, 2012, p.36). In these early years of the 1990's, group names and banners were predominately in English language which suggests for Western influence. Since the 2000's Bulgarian language names and banners have replaced English one's which was an indication of taking a more ethnic and nationalistic approach to their ideology. Media began to call these organized groups "ultras", as it was accepted in Italy, although there is a considerable difference between being "ultras" and "hooligan". Ultras and Hooligans both are militant fans and are located at the same ends of the stadium, however while 'ultras' passionately support its favorite team, hooligans search for violence against rival hooligan groups, political enemies or police.

In early 2000's the ideological part of hooligan subculture became much more visible in the public realm. Nazi swastikas, Waffen SS and different Bulgarian or associated with Bulgarian nationalism, flags began to appear on the designated soccer ends of the stadiums. Hooligan groups were becoming a subculture manifested at all the big soccer clubs in the country. Despite the appearance of organized national fan clubs with big large membership, hooligan gangs were known to be the unofficial leaders on the stands.

As soccer support evolved in the 2000's and once unorganized groups and spontaneous chant were replaced by greater level of co-ordination in choreography and chants, hooligan gangs

became much more violent, organized and daring. Tactics of these groups in confronting rival fans, police or to display political messages were much more planned and instrumental. Soccer hooligan influence grew so much that their capabilities to disrupt games and bring fines to the club allowed them to be a factor in management decision about the club. Their increasing influence on the most popular game, transformed them into powerful and vocal force challenging the mainstream society.

The two most popular teams in the country CSKA Sofia and Levski Sofia and their large fan bases became the stage where hooligan movement took its first steps. Historically, soccer rivalries consist of local or regional antagonism. In the case of Bulgaria, political sway had always been on the bottom of the rivalry and open hate. CSKA Sofia was founded by a decree of the Communist Party and was assigned to Ministry of Defense 1948 while Levski Sofia was founded in 1914 but it was assigned by the Communist Party to the State Security Department. This actuality has shaped Levski Sofia fans view of themselves as victim of a forced alliance to the Communist apparatus in contrary to their self-proclaimed bourgeoisie origin (Hristov, 2015). These accusations have led to fierce rivalry where the political significance become much greater than the sport competition itself.

### **Chapter 3: Description of the Current State of Soccer Hooliganism**

In “The Protest Games: Hooligans and Politics”, the author defines three main types of soccer supporters in Bulgaria. He was driven to this conclusion after conduction of extensive interviews with law enforcement officers and leaders of organized fan groups. The first type of soccer fans, wear their favorite team colors, chant their team songs and are part of pre-game choreography with flares and other types of pyrotechnics. Second type are called ‘casuals’, who are influenced by English hooligan firms. They are willing to engage in fights with rival hooligan groups but do not seek premediated violence towards law enforcement. ‘Casuals’ have a specific dress-code and can be easily recognized. The third type is what the police calls the ‘hardcore’ hooligans or the ‘troublemakers them ‘troublemakers’. Their intention is to cause violence and disruption, their enemies are police authority, rival group and minorities (Vulkov. 2013). Most notorious groups in Bulgaria, support the two largest teams from the capital, Levski Sofia and CSKA Sofia. Another two significant groups come from the second biggest Bulgarian city, Plovdiv.

#### **3.1 Organization and Recruitment**

The recruitment process is constant and appear in places such as stadiums, schools or neighborhoods. To join a soccer hooligan gang, one need to provide references from a known member who must guarantee his reliability in fights, willingness to travel to away games and attend other forms of protest. This complex process prevents unknown people’s infiltration into these groups. Rival hooligan groups do communicate with each other via social media and closed online forums, where they arrange fights or in some cases a protest in a mutual cause. Hooligan groups have strict militaristic hierarchy where years of service and merit can earn a promotion.

### **3.2 Hierarchy of the Hardcore Hooligans**

As hooligan sub-culture gain significant popularity, young recruits are asked to complete daily tasks ordered by leaders of the groups and must prove themselves in fights, before becoming fully fledged members. Considerable number of them live in the urban in low income neighborhoods of Sofia, where unemployment is high and standard of living is low. Although there are cases of middle class recruits to join due to the sense a belonging and power they experience. However, large portion of hooligans come from troubled or divorced families which also reflect on their success in school. Family issues have led to troubled relations with authority figures at home, school and society. These abnormal family relation lead one to recognizable hooligan group as their family and its leader as legitimate figures of authority. (Vulkov, 2013).

Next phase of the hooligan group hierarchy is the rank of “soldier”. These people have been through the steps of young recruits and are now in their twenties. By the time of their promotions, they have already acquire criminal records – assault, battery and in some cases - drugs, robberies. The third phase are the one over thirty years of age. These are people with mounting criminal record. They are the mid-management level of the soccer hooligan gang and receive orders from the leader (s) and their task is to assure the order will be followed down the ladder. The leaders of the football gangs are known to police and are in contact with management of the club. Biggest hooligan firms reach up to one hundred and fifty permanent members, who would travel to away games, participate in fight or at other activities like protests, rallies, and marches.

### **3.3 Social Class**

According to different sociological studies majority of the soccer hooligans have a working-class background. Trivizas study on soccer hooligan arrests in England during the “Hey-day” of hooliganism there around 80 % of the arrests for hooligan offenses are from young male

working class (as cited in Leeson, Smith and Shaw, p.36). Unlike the case of England, Del Lago and De Biasi argues that the most militant Italian ultras are from diverse social background. Armstrong and Testa indicate that Italian ‘ultras’ and ‘hooligan members comes from diverse social class (Armstrong & Testa, 2008, p.3). In the case of Bulgaria, ‘ultras’ similarly come from diverse social classes, nevertheless the hardcore hooligan members tend to come from mostly from working-class families and neighborhoods (Vulkov, 2013).

### **3.4 Financing**

In terms of financing these groups are self-finance themselves by selling their own insignia, articles and shirts. Another endeavor is ownership of bars or coffee shops where clientele is mostly other members of the group or fans of the soccer club. These establishments are also used as a place for meetings. Another form of profit from business is creation of boxing clubs where hooligans train to participate in hooligan fights between gangs or police as well as in legitimate boxing competitions. Some (not all) of the members are allegedly part of the organized crime network of Bulgaria and are involved in drug trafficking, racketeering and extortion (Milkova, 2016). In 2011 during a drug operation by the Drug Enforcement Unit led to the arrests in one of the fan-clubs that belongs to Sofia’s most feared soccer fan-groups after a substantial amount of drugs were found. Few months later one the leaders and other members of the same group were arrested in another drug operation by the same unit. Additionally, one of the members was arrested in connection with ATM credit card scheme. Allegation of their links to underworld bosses have been circulating in the public realm on a regular basis. The leader of another of Sofia’s hooligan groups served three years term in prison for drug trafficking along with another central figure in the group who served five year (The Blue Brigades, 2016).



Other means of gaining funds are establishment of their own security companies. The security guards are usually members of the hooligan and they bear the responsibility to keep order in the stand where their rule is the law. The leaders of most violent soccer fan groups negotiated a contract with the club management to maintain order in the stands for an annual fee of \$ 50, 000. Since European Soccer Federation – UEFA started the campaign “Say no to Racism” a pressure has been put on Bulgarian Federation to crack down on racism and violence. Due to the great influence held by hooligan groups, club management accept the terms of hooligan affiliated security companies. These processes are observed in most popular clubs in the country where of leaders of hardcore fan-groups power reaches the not only the crowd but functioning of the club itself.

### **3.5 Dress-code**

Hooligans have characteristic dress code. Hooligans wear specific brands clothing such as Stone Island, Lacoste, Fred Perry, CP Company, Adidas Stan Smith, Armani and Lonsdale (Leeson, Smith & Show, p.36). These “smart looks” originated in England with the purpose to evade police attention by deflecting from its working-class origin looks. By not wearing club colors hooligans can easily infiltrate rival groups as well as easily escape into a crowded street in case of a police chase. Hoodie with a zipper is also essential to a hooligan look. Being able to cover the whole face is a way to escape the growing surveillance by police forces.

### **3.6 Ideology**

Hooligan activities are not limited to the boundaries of the stadium and to engagement with rival groups. Ideologically, Bulgarian hooligan groups are nationalistic, anti-communist and some openly neo-Nazi. Today, in every political party there is a person who is responsible for the communication with soccer hooligans. Soccer hooligans do not appear on events for social change

(environmental issue, labor strikes), however if event has nationalistic taste (anti-Islam, anti-LGBTQ, anti-Roma) they will be on the front lines. Despite their well-documented support of nationalistic and racist ideology must not be understood that they will necessary support only nationalist parties (“The New Arena of Bulgarian Ultras”, 2014). One of the largest Sofia hooligan groups is known for their anti-communist feelings and close connection to the neoliberal conservative party. They are regularly deployed to opposition protests to cause violence in an attempt to discredit their demands. One the other hand, they actively mobilize support the neoliberal regime by displaying anti-communist banners and messages which can is discourse widely used by conservatives, nationalist and even social-democrats. At the 2009 protests against the conservative ruling party GERB, CSKA Sofia’s most powerful hooligans group was amongst the protesters while their rivals received an “order” to stand still as their owner is closely affiliated with the conservative party (Vulkov, 2013). This must not be a surprise as historically in post-Communist Bulgaria, political figures from on the right have been appointed as board members or arranged sponsorship. The owner of the other soccer powerhouse CSKA have been allegedly closely tied to the Bulgarian Socialist Party, although their hardcore hooligan gangs have been associated with the nationalist far-right parties.

Almost every protest, marches or rally organized by nationalistic parties in Bulgaria is attended by groups of soccer hooligans. One of the most publicized public activity, where rival hooligans groups forget their differences and join together is the so called “Lukov March”. The march celebrates the life of very controversial figure in Bulgaria World War 2 period, General Hristo Lukov. He was the leader of the far-right party Bulgarian National Legions, staunch supporter of the Third Reich and implementation of anti-Semitic policies in the country. He was assassinated by RMS (youth communist group) in 1943. In the recent years he has being given

status of a 'fallen hero' in the eyes of the nationalists. The event is defined by a memorial torch-light procession organized by the Bulgarian National Union but amongst the participants were nationalistic organization such as National Resistance, Blood and Honor and Combat 18 (Todorov, 2013, p.3). This event is always attended by many soccer hooligans groups. Banners displaying General Hristo Lukov's portrait can be seen regularly on the stands at Levski Sofia's games.

In 2011, ethnic tensions erupted in response to the killing of a man by a minibus whose driver is linked to a notorious Roma crime boss and as the protesters were gathering around the alleged crime boss properties, soccer hooligans arrived in the small town near Plovdiv. Their mobilization and visible desire for violence was accepted with approval from local population and with no reaction from the police force. As tensions escalated protesters began shouting racist slogans like "Gypsies into soap" and "Turks under the knife", followed by consequently burning down crime boss properties (Todorov, 2013, p.7).

By 2014, soccer hooligans, were yet once more, on the front line of series of protest against the law suit for ownership of properties who were considered historic-cultural monument by Grand Mufti Muslim Religious Authority in Bulgaria. Soccer hooligans organized a protest in front of the court in the second biggest city in Bulgaria, Plovdiv. Hooligans from Sofia, Plovdiv and Stara Zagora arrived at the place demanding court to overturn its decision. The leader of the organize soccer fans declared that despite their differences and rivalries, they are here to support Bulgaria's property and to demand ban on minority rights party DPS. The protest turned violent and ended with mass arrests and burned local mosque.

#### **Chapter 4: Structural Transformation of Political Economy and Society in Bulgaria**

Prior to the transition to market-orientated economy, Bulgarian semi-socialist state had already integrated to some extent into the global capitalist economy. Number of market reforms had been implemented in the 1960s. The most significant was the creation of managerial class or 'nomenklatura' that oversaw state enterprises. Nomenklatura was created in the early 1960's following an example from Moscow where in the later 1950's Leonid Brezhnev significantly expanded appointment authority to all sectors of the economy and social life. This category of people were appointed by the Politburo of the Bulgarian Communist Party on key executive positions within the government, industry, finance, trade, media, services, sport, agriculture and education. Nomenklatura de facto became an elite class of public powers (Elias, 1965).

In the 1970's Bulgarian Gross Domestic Product was obtained mainly from state industry and to lesser extent by agriculture. As agriculture declined Communist party allowed for greater decentralization and price incentives in attempt to re-ignite agriculture and tame the migration to urban area where work in the industry and services was available (Boyd, 1990 as cited by Medarov, 2013). These liberalization reforms did not disturbed state ownership, and production remained predominantly owned by the state or several types of cooperatives. Despite that the planned economy remained based on the production of use value in the late 1970's and early 1980's nomenklatura showed the first notes of desire for efficiency and the logic of capital (Medarov, 2015, p. 18). The first generation of nomenklatura class in the late 1960's remained ideologically homogenous, however some circles in the second generation of the nomenklatura class began parting away from ideological homogeneity to a noticeable ambition of acting independently. This led to fragmentation and open rivalry within and between different sectors in the state apparatus. In the 1980's appeared the third generation nomenklatura, consisting mainly

of sons and daughters of the first and second nomenklatura generation. This generation was educated in the West and brought different value system to the country. Influenced by their experience in the West, where they have developed different value system (Gruev, 2005). Young communist who orbited around them and were also influenced by the global changes of the late 1970's and early 1980's, created the third generation of nomenklatura. Although the second generation maintained its power and was able to block the young generation to some extent, the economic crisis in the late 1980's allowed the third generation to prevail and execute a peaceful coup d'état by removing some old party functionaries from power. During these times of economic crisis and power vacuums emerged an alternative hierarchy connected with the third generation who were establishing new structures that were competing with the state and influence state decisions. Precisely this combination between the third generation nomenklatura and new alternative hierarchy led to new post-Communist elite class (Raichev & Stoichev, 2004).

#### **4.1 Towards Privatization**

Following the coup, the third generation nomenklatura embarked on transition to liberal-democracy by imposing Washington Consensus style of policies, backed by the World Bank and Western experts of democracy. The new leaders of Bulgarian Communist Party, now renamed to Bulgarian Socialist Party, managed to counter the opposition coming from the older generation's communists by appointing them to central positions within the party (Guilhot, 2005). In the early 1990's Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) was challenged by the new liberal anti-communist party Union of Democratic forces (UDF). They both agreed on implementing market reforms, they differentiated in the pace of the reforms. UDF was insisting on simultaneously radical reforms in all sectors of the economy while BSP was trying to impose gradual reforms. Between

1993 and 2004, there was total of 5,186 privatization deals. The greatest amount of deals were in the industrial sector: 1,625; trade, 1170; agriculture and forests, 618; tourism, 522; construction, 522; transport, 520; energy, 384; healthcare, 55; defense, 47; and 193 others. Between 1993 and 2004, a total of 5,186 privatization deals were finalized. Out of the total 5, 186 deals 2,882 were of whole enterprises and 2,304 of only parts. Total sum of negotiated payments, paid debts, assume debts and pledged investments is over \$ 9.8 billion. According to the head of the Agency for Post-Privatization Control, the state was wronged with \$1.2 billion dollars as a result of privatization deals in the period between 1994 and 2004. (“National Statistical Institute. Privatization in Bulgaria”, 2004, as cited by Medarov, 2015, p.20). This sum includes unpaid investments, interests on unpaid investments and non-performance in fulfilling employment requirements.

There were two types of privatizations in Bulgaria: mass and direct. Mass privatization was conducted by distributing privatization bonds to citizens granting them to participate in the privatization. Although it seemed like an equal opportunity to be part of the process, most bonds went to a small number of private investment companies who managed to buy bonds from unaware with the privatization process citizens, at a very low price. Between 1993 and 1998, around 3 million bondholders acquired 9 million shares, in the meantime only 81 privatization fund companies acquired around 60 million shares (Medarov, 2015, p.20).

The other type of privatization was direct privatization. In direct privatization, the state has the leading role in setting the conditions, timelines and requirements for privatization deals. All individuals and companies (including foreign individuals and foreign companies) were allowed to participate, if they meet the requirements and conditions set by the established in 1992 State Agency for Privatization (Hristova, 2013). The Agency was responsible for setting

deadline for submitting offers and to decide who will be awarded a contract. It also encouraged individuals and private investment companies by allowing them to pay only 10 % of the total price as down payment, while the other 90 % were to be paid in the next 10 years. Furthermore, it was given an option that allowed 70 % of the 90 % own to the state, to be paid by obligation and compensatory bonds. These conditions led to notorious practices where private company or individual takes bank loan to pay 10 % down payment and simply stop making further payments to its loan and pocket the money. Banks then take over the enterprise and embark on either attempt to sell the enterprise or strip it down to scrap and sell it along the land in an attempt to salvage their loan losses.). If the enterprise has great potential, people close to the political parties establish or participate in private investments companies. The goal was, the businessmen affiliated with the political party to become major shareholder of private investment company, which will mean major shareholder in the enterprises that belong to the company (“The Scheme Called Privatization”, 2015).

#### **4.2 Land and Agricultural Reform**

In the early 1990s the first to be affected by “the reform” was the agricultural sector, with massive liquidation of the capital of state-run cooperative farms and land redistribution to the heirs of the “original” pre-socialist owners. In the beginning of 1991 The National Agricultural Land Restitution Council. The goal of the Council was established to rebate agricultural lands to the pre-collectivization owners which proved to be a very slow process. The process of restituting agricultural lands began with dismantling the collective farms called ‘Trudovo Kooperativno Zemedelsko Stopanstvo’ or TKZS, mass liquidation of any livestock, selling farm equipment for scrap and abandoning of large buildings (Medarov, 2013, p.173). Former owners received the right of owning private property but could have the title which

essentially made their newly private property, unsellable. Credit were not available to the new (former) owners and thus large majority of them could not afford to buy the proper farmer equipment and tools in order to be productive. Prior to the collectivization process, land was owned by a vast number of peasants, but collectivization and industrialization of urban areas pushed many peasants to the cities. As a result, not many former owners had interest in the land restitution program. Furthermore, land restitution promised to give back land to the original owners and not to farmers and agricultural workers (whose parents did not own land) causing them to leave to urban areas. As Georgi Medarov (2013) points out, most affected of this process were the Roma since under Communism many of them worked the land but afterwards were forced to move away (p.174). This radical fragmentation of land, along with the liquidation of capital, and disappearing of the means of production generated a sustained rural economic decline. All these factors essentially led to decimation of the agricultural sector in the country. As a consequence, production in the agricultural sector plummeted by more than 38 % in only a year (Levinson, 2014). This first step of dispossession by radical and mass privatization of public assets opened an avenue for privatizations in other sectors of the economy in the post-1989 transition to free market economy. After more than a decade of deindustrialization of the agriculture this trend has been overturned by new industrialization led by private investors who sell corn, grain and rapeseed largely for export which ironically leaves regions with the richest land and high economic prosperity to a set record for country's highest unemployment (Medarov, 2013, p.174-176).

#### **4.3 Bank Privatization and Installment of Currency Board**

Soon after the privatization of the agricultural sector, a mass privatization of the banking sector followed. In the period between 1981 and 1987 eight commercial banks were created to



serve the interest of different sectors of the economy. Prior to early 1981 there were only three banks: The Bulgarian National Bank, Foreign Trade Bank: responsible for dealings with foreign trade; National Savings Bank (acted as a savings bank for the general population). In mid-1980's, the state created eight more banks connected to commercial activities to provide credit for different sectors of Bulgarian economy. From 1990 on however, the scale of privatization of State banks increased tremendously. Only in 1990 alone 59 new private commercial banks were established (Medarov & Tsoneva, 2015, p.17).

In 1990, a civic organization called Union of Economically Active Citizen established the first private, commercial bank with the staunch support from the first democratically elected president. Legislative measures were passed to abandon state monopoly over banking. Consequentially, emerged, First Private Bank, the first private bank in Bulgaria. Mediapool investigation asserts that First Private Bank secured capital from private shareholders and large state enterprises. Soon after, with the help of credit from general population savings from Nation Savings Bank, numerous commercial banks appeared. In some cases, credits were obtained by leveraging of state securities presented as capital (Mihov, 1999). By mid-1990 half of the money loaned, equal to 50 % of the GDP were declared “uncollectible” (“How were the Banks Founded”, 2010). Rapid privatization of public assets and money resulted in notorious “credit millionaires” who never returned loans and were never held accountable for them. Furthermore, banking privatization was filled with corruption scandals followed by severe financial crisis and hyperinflation that ended with financial meltdown in 1996.

As an attempt to stem further meltdown Bulgarian Socialist Party led government in alliance with IMF introduced currency board by pegging Bulgarian Lev to Deutsche Mark. The mandate of the currency board to restore competitiveness by internal devaluation which

consequently meant installing welfare cuts and dissection of labor cost. The currency board offered stable exchange-rate and exchange of free capital mobility in expense of internal adjustment such as low wages, flexible workforce and high unemployment. By introducing the board, Bulgaria forfeited its ability to promote its own policies for exports. The currency board led to the loss of independence of country's own affairs. The currency board required reduction of autonomy of the state to control over national currency exchange-rate, leaving a creation of competitive export sector impossible under a state of constant internal devaluation where money has purchasing power defined by markets and independent of local government (Medarov & Tsoneva, 2014, p.19-20).

#### **4.4 Privatization of the Industrial Sector**

Privatization of the industry began in 1997 after the neo-conservative government took power with the goal to expedite privatization. As a result, in 1997 alone were finalized over 32% of all privatization deals. Some of the most significant privatization deals were the metallurgical giant Kremikovtzi, the mining company Kaolin, Bulgarian national air-carrier Balkan, national telecom services and national electric services.

The faith of Kremikovtzi is a prime example for the process of privatization of big Bulgarian industries. Kremikovtzi, employed more than 30,000 workers during the semi-socialist era and around 15,000 after the changes of 1989. Despite decrease in the workforce, its supplies were ½ of what departed from the largest Bulgarian Black Sea port of Burgas. Kremekovtzi was responsible for 1/3 of Bulgarian State Railways freight train movement. Nevertheless, with the loss of international markets and with the help partial privatization schemes it began to compile significant losses. Kaolin, another high-profile plant, was privatized in 2000 by one of the most influential media owners in the country, who sold it in 2013 to the German firm Quarzwerke.

In 1999, 71% of Kremikovtzi was sold for the symbolic price of \$1 to a private investor with condition to pay of the outstanding debts and invest \$300 million. Furthermore, state annulled the 200 million Bulgarian leva debt and provided Kremikovtzi with large subsidies. Despite the generous terms, the investor inject only \$50 million, which led to accumulation to even greater debt. Additionally, workers condition worsens and in 2004, three people died on the job as a result of it. Workers suffered tremendously by delayed paychecks for months, discontinued paying social security and welfare payments to its labor force (“No Investments Made at Kremikovtzi Steel Plant Yet”, 2004). In 2005, Kremikovtzi was resold to Global Steel Holdings Limited, a corporation owned by Pramod Mittal, who is the brother of the Indian steel magnate Lakshmi Mittal. The Indian businessman promised to invest millions in the local soccer powerhouse CSKA Sofia which was popular move to foster business relations and support in the country to acquire the metallurgical company Kremikovtzi. Evidently, no investment in neither institutions materialized. Workers in Kremikovtzi plant continued their struggle with delayed wages and dangerous work conditions. Similarly, to the previously owner, Mital exited quickly leaving the metallurgical giant in induced coma condition (Jankova, 2008).

Another notorious case of industrial privatization was Balkan air carrier. The national carrier during the socialist era was purchased in 1999 by the Israeli industrialist Gad Zeevi for the price of only \$150,000 with the condition to invest minimum of \$100 million. Three years later not only any of the conditions were fulfilled but Zeevi bankrupt the air-carrier, fired all employees, sold worldwide, aircrafts, air slots and properties for hundreds of millions of dollars (Bojanov, 2012). Following the bankruptcy, Bulgarian government began court procedures against Zeevi, who counter-appeal in Paris Arbitrage who order Bulgaria to pay \$10 million to

Zeeve. Bulgaria appealed to U.S. Federal Court and consequently won the appeal in 2012 (“Bulgaria won the court case against Gad Zeevi”, 2012).

Privatization continued in the new millennium with deals for the national telecom, electric services and natural resources. The national telecom deal was awarded to “Viva Ventures Holding”, a subsidiary of the US private equity fund Advent International. The contract required to pay 280 million Bulgarian leva for a period of 20 years. Shortly after became general sponsor of the soccer powerhouse CSKA Sofia. Currently, the company is the general sponsor of another Bulgarian soccer powerhouse club, Levski Sofia. (Bulgaria's Telecom BTC Sale: The Long-Drawn-Out Deal, 2004).

Soon after privatization of telecommunications was followed by the privatization of the electric plants. Czech company CEZ acquitted the largest of three packages, paying 281 million Euro for the western distributors, comprising the company that serves Sofia and its metro area with almost 2 million customers. EVN paid 271 million Euro for the second largest package – the southwestern region including Plovdiv and its metro area (600,000) and Stara Zagora (150,000). The region serves around 1.5 million customers. E ON received the third package for access to \$1.14 million customers in the northeastern regions of Bulgaria in exchange of €104.7 million (LaBelle & Jankauskas, 2009). Less than a decade later the high electric bills were stated as the prime reason for mass protest, marches and riots against electric monopolies, which ended with fall of the government (Medarov and Tsoneva, 2014, p.20).

More radical market reforms were introduced to public institutions. Following a large teacher strike in 2007, the neoliberal Bulgarian Socialist Party vigorously began promoting competition between public schools. In 2014 neoconservative - orientated right wing government approved competition between public and private schools by allowing the former to compete for

public money (“Private School Able to Receive State Subsidies”, 2016). Recently more reforms have been attempted in cutting 10% of the administration state work force in the name of cost-efficiency, budget and tech development. In the new millennium, concessions have become a tool for privatizing common areas. (“The Struggle for the Commons in the Balkans”, 2015).

#### **4.5 Working-Class Crisis**

In pursuit market economy reform and approval from Washington and EU, the deindustrialization in Bulgaria was supposed to eradicate inefficient industries, restore competitiveness and efficiency by changing hands to private owners. The outcomes of the structural adjustments in Bulgaria had the most negative effect on the working-class. During the semi-socialist era the Central Council of Trade Union (CCTU) was the national union with branches in all regions. In the post-Socialist period the CCTU declared separation from the Bulgarian Socialist Party in an attempt to divert focus from its affiliation with the Communist Party (Renamed to Bulgarian Socialist Party) and gain autonomous status under the new regime (Stoilov). In 1990 was founded a new trade union called Podkrepa. During the round table negotiations both unions were invited but it became clear that had no ability to mobilized and strike. Both major parties Bulgarian Socialist Party and Union of Democratic Forces agreed upon market reforms and trade unions were simply co-opted into the democratization process. After the aftermath of the banking crisis and hyperinflation both unions supported ‘shock therapy measures’, knowing that these structural adjustments will decimate the working-class (Tafel & Boniface, 2003).

The deindustrialization in Bulgaria led to major restructuring of the working force. The loss of international markets as 84% of foreign trade in 1989 was the Soviet Union is fundamental for the loss employment in the industry. Nonetheless, the politically motivated

privatization and the conditions of structural adjustment loans by international financial institution, eradicated the working-class (Vassilev, 2003, p. 102-3). Effects of the reforms have led to social crisis. Mounting income inequality, poverty, crime and unemployment have led to public distrust in all institutions (Vassilev, 2011). The outcome of radical liberalization and imposed severe fiscal responsibility have transformed the nation to its core. Statistic shows that prior to 1989 only 2% of Bulgarians were considered poor, while in 1993, one-third of Bulgarians were classified as such. In 2001 unemployment amongst the youth as well the general population was soaring to previously unseen number (Medarov & Tsoneva & 2014, p. 19).

Austerity measures were introduced in Western and Central Europe only after the Great Recession, however in Bulgaria they began in 1997 by the government elected on the mandate of shock therapy measures. Deindustrialization, mass privatization and austerity led to sharp economic decline and high unemployment. Strangely these number did not cause loud outcry which can be linked to the political rhetoric of the right win conservative government who labeled the measures as “necessary evil” (Medarov, 2015, p.8). These attempts to attract positive business conditions for Foreign Direct Investment failed to materialize, despite the introducing of 10 % flat income and corporate tax (Mitchell, 2008).

The recovery from the economy have been experiencing growth in the last decade. There was a revival of the mining industry due to increase of prices of metal. Profitable extraction of cyanide, tungsten and gold in the southern regions of the country led to new investments into an industry that during the semi-socialist era employed thousands. Mining companies have been given concession from the government at extremely low rate (Kanev, 2014). Despite the highly economic profitability of the company-investors, employment rates do not come close to the rates before 1989. Wages are as low as € 400 given the dangerous conditions and loss of social

benefits because of privatization. Investors allegedly regularly ignore health and safety standards and industrial incidents such as the tragic death of 4 minors in a coal mine in Oranovo in 2015, are prone to happen (Subev 2015). Ironic is the fact that regions with high economic investments and profits are amongst the poorest in the country. Another area of economic development is hi-tech and IT industry. Despite the favorable conditions introduced by the government policies, wages are quite low for European Union standards while profits experienced by companies are significant. Consequently, although economic growth in some sectors is obvious, it is not constructed in favor of the working class but rather towards the capitalist, investors and their top managers (Nikolova, 2014).

## Chapter 5: Transition to Capitalist State

There were two events in the late 1980's that catalyze the coup of 1989. In March 1988, a public protest against the government inability to react to the pollution coming from Romanian chemical plant across Danube River. Ruse was the largest Bulgarian coastal city on Danube and its air have been poisoned by the chemical plant across the border. A civic protest, organized by newly formed environmentalist group Ekoglasnost, and dissidents, attracted more than 5000 people. It was supported by athletes, music stars and even some politicians. This event became the first act of defiance during the rule of the Bulgarian Communist Party (Bell, 1997)

Inspired by Ekoglasnost protest, Turkish minority activists launched a protest, against the force accumulation of Turkish and Roma minorities. In 1984, Bulgarian Communist Party implemented a policy of forceful change of names from Turkish to Slavic. The Party suggested changing names will re-vitalize lost Bulgarian ethnic identity of the Turkish minorities in Bulgaria. In fact, the Revival campaign was used a diversion to take focus of economic decline by instrumenting a nationalist legitimacy campaign to re-enforce the Communist Party and its leadership (Genov, 2010, p.36). The Revival Campaign banned usage of Turkish language along Muslim religious practices. Because of this policy, in the late 1980's number of terrorist attacks were launched by Turkish terrorist groups on the territory of Bulgaria. The Ekoglasnost protest in 1988, however galvanized Turkish activists and they launched their own protest. In May 1989, protests across North-East Bulgaria was suppressed by authorities and resulted 300 activists were arrested and expelled from Bulgaria. Furthermore, President Todor Zhivkov ordered the expulsion of more than 200, 000 Bulgarian-Turks to Turkey. These actions led to international sanctions and convinced Bulgarian Communist Party elites that Zhivkov removal will be essential for implementing the planned transition to liberal-democracy (Crampton, 1997).



### **5.1 Coup D'état**

The day that East Germany opened its borders and thousands crossed the Berlin Wall, at the Politburo meeting, the young generation of the Bulgarian Communist Party in coordination with Gorbachev, announced the expelling of Todor Zhivkov and his allies from the party (Rossi, 2012). To assure peaceful transition the new Communist elite and pro-Western opposition dissidents arrange series of meeting to develop transition plan. The new president, Petar Mladenov, resigned from the Communist Party. He condemned the Turkish expulsion and encourage minorities who left to come back and practice their religion and language. Furthermore, anti-communist opposition and communist party agreed on dissolving the Secret Police. Simultaneously, Central Council of Trade Unions announced its independence from the now renamed, Bulgarian Communist Party. Additionally, new a union called Podkrepa emerged as well as new student organization intended to replace the Communist Youth League.

### **5.2 New Constitution**

In the first week of 1990, the new anti-communist, Bulgarian Socialist Party and the re-founded, conservative party, Bulgarian Agrarian National Union hold series of roundtable meetings where new political institutions were decided. It was decided to call elections for a new national assembly in 18 months; election will be hold in two days with two different electoral rules and an agreement by both trade unions and all social movement to refrain cease calling strikes in this transitional period (Stoilov, p.39).

### **5.3 Civil Society**

One of the most significant factors in the quest for transition was the environmental movement Ekoglasnost. Despite that Ekoglasnost represent itself as an environmental movement and found its debut in the public realm at the pollution protests in 1988, the intentions were

strictly political. One of the main organizers, the dissident Professor Zhelev who later became president, achieved a state recognition. Ekoglasnost became the first civil society organization and was even invited in the decisions making-process at the roundtable meetings. Nevertheless, after the first election, its importance decreased considerably. The decline was followed by internal division which produced three small social movements and two political parties with little significance (Giatzidis, 2002, p.46)

## **Chapter 6: New Party System. The Emergence of the New Parties**

The structuring of the political parties and the coming of the pluralist party system are some of the most key features of the democratic change after the collapse of totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe. Raichev and Stoichev (2004) describe post-1989 political changes as consensus between Left and Right. After the reforming wing of Bulgarian Communist Party orchestrated the fall of regime on November 10, 1989, it declared itself to be reorganized in a social model plausible to enter plural party system. The following year the party changed its name into Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP). This caused internal upheaval and creation of three wings within the party: radical, moderate and conservative. Nevertheless, BSP managed to stay united and become leading force in democratization process (Stoilov, 2003, p.41).

Their opposition was composed from number of movements in parties. Some of them were new and some of them were resurrected for the pre-World War 2 era. Number of them were a mixture of dissidents and ex-communists. The largest of these groups were “Publicity and Reorganization Support Club - 1988”, the ecological formation “Ekoglasnost”, established in 1987 and Independent Professional Unity “Podkrepa”. On the other hand, some of the parties that had existed before Communist Coup D'état in 1944, found their place in the political spectrum. After such a long absence from political life, parties such as Radical-Democratic Party, Bulgarian Agrarian People's Unity lacked the organizational structure and electoral support of pre-1944 (Stoilov, p. 41).

Stoilov (2003) asserts that in contrast to most to the countries of Central Europe, anti-communist rhetoric wasn't in the public domain to the extent as it was for example in the Czech Republic or Poland. This was in part because members of the Communist Party managerial elite were in the center of the push for democratization. The first round table was called by the now

renamed Bulgarian Socialist Party constructed a clear division of communists versus anti-communists. There were few major developments that came as an outcome: All small opposition parties and movements combine in a union of eleven organizations called Union of Democratic Forces; The Bulgarian Socialist Party sustained unity, despite internal ideological conflicts; Bulgarian Socialist Party permitted registration and inclusion into the new party system to Movement for Rights and Freedom- an ethnic party of Bulgarian Turks. The new union UDF emerged as the main opposition to the new Bulgaria Socialist Party. Despite these divisions there was consensus about the transition to liberal capitalism. As of the 45 years of Communist, BSP considered a fundamental piece of the nation history while UDF declared anomalistic deviation from national history and allegedly existing bourgeois democracy. UDF envisioned the transition liberal democracy to be achieved through radical shock therapy while BSP preferred gradual reform (Medarov, 2015, p.8).

### **6.1 From Gradual to Shock Therapy Reforms 1991-1997**

In the first months after the transition to liberal democracy Bulgarian Socialist Party and their opponents Union of Democratic Forces found a civil society without many ideological interest groups. The Church as institution and agent of influence was non-factor after its significant diminished as during the semi-socialist rule. Nationalist ideology was marginalized and it did not experience a revival after anti-Turkish policies of the 1980's. Western experts politely advised their Bulgarian associates against nationalism rhetoric during the transition period. This meant that to attract electoral vote parties had defined their ideological positions in a way that attracted votes from all strata of society but it doesn't differentiate with liberal democracy. The predominant opinion among experts is that in the beginning of the 1990's there was lack of clear differentiation between "the Left" and "the Right" in Bulgarian political space

on the political party identification level, as well as on electoral anticipations level (Todorov, 1995). One clear division was the rural vs urban division, results of which showed during the first free election as well as the election 1994. Anti-Communist moods were much more predominant in the urban areas while population from rural area, affected by the first privatization reform of the agriculture, preferred gradual reforms (Creed, 1997). The UDF concentrated their efforts on relentless anti-communism slogans, who are even now, 27 years after the fall of Communism, a trademark for the right conservative wing in Bulgaria. In the early 1990's, Bulgarian Socialist Party aimed for some sort of "Neoliberalism with a human face" promising to tame most radical reforms and especially the agricultural reform that affected so many of BSP supporters in the rural area. Despite the rural-urban divide, both major parties succeeded in infiltrating society and promote their ideological positions.

BSP success in the first free election was short lived but proved that unlike marginalization of ex-Communist parties in other ex-Soviet bloc countries, they were a force to be recon with. First election also proved how important is structural and organizational cohesiveness and clear political program, that UDF lacked at that moment (Stoilov, p. 44). Soon after BSP, first elected government collapsed and UDF took the power in the 1991 to begin with first radical market reform – the land redistribution and agricultural reform. The destruction of collective farms led mass liquidation of state assets Land redistribution also faced too many uncertainties and contradiction. Owners received back their land but didn't received the rights to sell it. People who worked on collective farms all their lives, remained landless as their grandparents didn't own led during the pre-Communist era. In many cases, such events forced people to relocate from local to urban areas in search of a work. Meanwhile, landowners who have been living in urban area had no desire to move back and work the land. These who migrate

to urban area for job had no desire to go back to the rural area and work in the agricultural sector. Those who wanted to work the land weren't permitted obtain credit and thus couldn't afford the necessary machinery (Giatzidis, 2002).

The events described above led the Bulgarian Socialist Party to a victory in the election of 1994. They formed a government in 1994, supported by rural populations (Creed 1997), on a mandate to tame the most radical liberal reforms in agriculture. Instead BSP's began series of antipodal attempts to invent their own style of neoliberalism, by preserving national price control but liberalizing foreign. This maneuver backfired spectacularly and resulted in severe banking crisis, hyperinflation and food shortages. UDF took full advantage of the crisis by mobilizing a mass anti-communist movement that eventually toppled the Socialist led government in the fall of 1997 (Medarov & Tsoneva, 2014, p.18).

## **6.2 UDF's Shock Therapy Mandate**

The opposition of the United Democratic Forces, intact with their already known rhetoric accused the "unreformed communists" for the severe crisis. UDF ran the 1997 election on the mandate to seek "shock therapy" measure based on claims that such measures were the only way out of the crisis. Since "shock therapy" is highly unpopular measure, UDF convinced most of the electoral vote that this is a "temporary and necessary evil" and a choice between "abnormal Asian-communist" and "Euro-Atlantic" normality. "Shock therapy" policies contain few major key points: sudden liberalization of price, trade and currency control; deregulation, cut in government spending and large scale privatization. 'Shock therapy' policies installed a permanent state of devaluation. International institutions such as IMF and World Bank encouraged internal adjustments to restore competitiveness and allow free capital mobility. These internal adjustments came at the expense of working-class. What followed was decline of

wages and layoff, because internal “adjustment” through a decline in wages, an increase in unemployment (when necessary), “flexibility” of the workforce. By the end of the UDF mandate in 2001, unemployment reached 19.5 % and amongst the youth 38.3 % (Medarov, 2015, p. 9; Medarov & Tsoneva, 2014, p. 19).

### **6.3 The King’s government - Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotcha 2001-2005**

The most significant event of 2001 was the return of the son of the last King of Bulgaria. Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotcha. He came as a head of a new party called “National Movement Simeon II” or NSM. Simeon II won the 2001 and formed a government filled with technocrats and Western - educated economists and in coalition with the Bulgarian Socialist Party. After years of severe crisis, he was welcomed as a messiah. His government continued with privatization efforts despite not the same pace as the previous UDF led government. The most significant privatization deals were Bulgarian Telecommunication Company the Bulgarian Electric Companies. According to a critique by a newspaper linked to UDF, even though Simeon’s government capitalized on privatizing the Bulgarian Telecommunication Companies and Electric plants, during their mandate only 6% of the state assets compare to the 45% during UDF’s previous government (Bojkov, 2005). During Simeon’s government, social issues of income inequality, unemployment, poverty and crime improved minimally. According to The National Statistical Institute during NMS government wages increased with 22% in 2005 compare to 2001. When consider the inflation, National Statistical Institute considers the increase no more the 5.5% which they declare is symbolic. During his tenure income and corporate tax remained relatively high when compare to the rest of European Union countries, which led his opponents to blame him for unfavorable investor conditions (“Analysis of NMS’s Four Years Tenure”, 2005).

#### **6.4 Reformed Socialist Party 2005-2009**

Following the mass protests Bulgarian Socialist Party underwent full reconstruction and after 1997 came to advocate entirely on the neoliberal platform, pro-EU and pro-NATO foreign policy (Spirova, 2008). Marinov (2008) point out that in mid-2000's, the Prime Minister of the Socialist led government deserved a praise from the World Bank for introducing the lowest flat income tax (10%) in the European Union. Furthermore, he added the lowest corporate tax in European Union in an attempt to attract Foreign Direct Investments or FDI's.

In 2007 under the dictation of the World Bank, Minister Oresharski engaged in reforms in education. These reforms led to closure of 436 schools and close to 100 kindergartens and threat to cut wages even lower as they were. Teachers blamed the Prime Minister for lack of respect for the teachers with the lowest wages in Europe. Not long after more than 100, 000 teachers walked off their jobs for 40 days in the biggest teacher strike in the history and demanded higher wages. Bulgarian Socialist Party showed their firm neoliberal stance and declared that European fund and Western Experts are watching and they cannot afford not to show weakness by increasing teacher wages and tough and satisfying protesters (Pateev, 2007).

Another remarkable occurrence of neoliberal stance by BSP led government was signing the permission of five US military bases on Bulgarian territory for a period of 10 years, free of rent. This decision disenchanted many of its left and outraged the nationalist support who claimed that Bulgaria just gave \$2 billion that could be earned if U.S was paying for the military bases. Such actions by BSP allegedly turned many of its own supporters towards the nationalist party Ataka (Todorov, 2007). Despite the clear turn towards neoliberal policies, championed by European Union, BSP was continuously attacked with anti-communist rhetoric.



## 6.5 The Rise of the New Right GERB and Nationalist Party Ataka 2005-Present

Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB) is a central-right party established in 2006. GERB is headed by the ex-Prime Minister, Boyko Borisov. He served twice as Prime Minister: 2009-2013 and 2014-2017. Borisov was also a mayor of Sofia and a former member of National Movement Simeon II from which he resigned to become a founder member of GERB. GERB is ideologically conservative and pro-European Union. The party, won the European Parliament election in Bulgaria in 2009. Later the same year, GERB won the 2009 parliamentary elections on a mandate of fighting corruption and preserving family as the cornerstone of society. It formed a government in coalition with the far-right nationalist party Ataka. During GERB's reigns political cronyism outrage many. Implemented austerity policies, ordered by the bosses in Brussels, affected deeply, the already battered Bulgarian living standards. Borisov was further discredited by revelations of large-scale illegal wiretapping of political opponents by his interior minister, and when, on the day of the general election, hundreds of thousands of illegal ballots were found at a property belonging to a prominent GERB supporter, suggesting a clear effort to influence the course of a tight electoral contest (O'Brennan, 2013). Jana Tsoneva (2014), argues that in times of crisis GERB continues the well-known rhetoric of anti-communism. She, however, argues that GERB's anti-communist rhetoric is different from the 1990's discourse. Borisov tends to use anti-Turkish and secret communist plot conspiracies rhetoric, when someone is meddling with his pro-austerity policies. GERB's time in government was infamously known for high electric bills, courtesy of the companies who privatize the national electric grid in 2004. Electric bill were around 85 % of Bulgarian household expenditure, protests quickly escalated. Head of GERB Boyko Borisov engaged in relentless neoliberal discourse of protest. Ironically, since Boyko Borisov, who

himself came to power on populist mandate, quickly adopted neoliberal anti-protest lingo by usage of terms such as populism to describe protests against his government. When it collapsed under pressure of the protests, GERB blamed populist pressure (Medarov & Tsoneva, 2015, p.21).

Ataka was founded in 2005 by Volen Siderov, an ex-journalist from neoconservative newspaper Standard and ex-talk show TV host. The party is considered ultra-nationalist, anti-Muslim, anti-Roma and anti-Turkish. Ataka opposes membership in NATO but have declared, intact with others far-right European parties, support for Pan-European, White, Christian paradigm (Marinos, 2008). Ataka's leader Volen Siderov have openly expressed support for re-nationalization of most important privatized industry, although he declares Bulgarian business owners are ought to be encourage since foreign owners pay such wages as they colonizers (Siderov, 2011). Siderov has also suggested his support for increase of minimum wage and welfare spending, by diverting European Union money given for refugees ("Siderov, 2013). Academics argue about Ataka contrasting economic doctrine. Ghodsee argues that Ataka has radical left agenda considering their economic demands (Ghodsee, 2008). Others see Ataka's as demands as mixture of social justice based on ethnicity, while not really criticizing the current system which looks more like demands for "social capitalism" (Muddle, 2007). Marinos (2008) argues that Ataka takes advantage of the social anger, cumulated due to neoliberal policies. However, instead of strongly promoting the argument that neoliberalism as an economic doctrine enriches minority in expense of majority (as sometimes is argued in their media), their arguments become limited only to the cultural understanding of neoliberalism as globalist project focused on multiculturalism.

## 6.6 Oligarchs and Soccer

Oligarch class machinations and schemes are executed clandestinely through cooperation of the state, nevertheless their names are well-known in the public realm. Soccer has been the most popular outlet for oligarchs to invade public consciousness and win approval from the very same people who suffer the most as, a result of rapacious capitalism. During the semi-socialist era, professional sports were restricted and private club of pre-1944 were reassigned to different state departments. For example, Levski Sofia was assigned to the Ministry of National Security. CSKA Sofia was founded by a decree from the Communist Party as part of Army. Lokomotiv Sofia became part of the State Railways etc. Since soccer players were not allowed to be professional, they were assigned as workers in their team department. Since the early 1990's, international soccer became part of the neoliberal wave sweeping the world. TV rights, wages and transfer fee skyrocketed, leaving clubs with more than a century traditions to drop into the unknown if not willing to embrace the new system. Greatest clubs of the West and their worldwide popularity, endorsed market-soccer since the global consumer is required to pay to watch Western European leagues. Thirds world countries generously accept large companies to produce soccer shirts subsequently sold all over the world at minimal labor expense (Erol, 2015).

Oligarchs have gained enormous political and economic control in the country. Bulgaria and the rest of Eastern Europe saw a great change when athletic clubs transformed from amateur form of entertainment to an avenue for oligarchs to ensure political capital (McDonalds, 2014) Unlike Western European soccer clubs, Eastern European soccer was to large extend, close to the world behind the Easter Bloc. Although, they had participated in European competitions during the Cold War with some success, Bulgarian soccer was amateur and could not compare with Western soccer in terms of professionalism and infrastructure. In the turbulence times of the

1990's Bulgarian politicians understood that largest mobilization of votes rests in the most popular sport in the country. As privatization and mass primitive accumulation unfolded, newly established oligarch elite entered soccer. Unlike their Western counter-parts, Bulgarian clubs couldn't take advantage of the global capital restructuring that was taking place within the popular clubs in the West. The neoliberal revolution in soccer in Europe began in the 1980's. Oligarchs who own clubs in the West are doing so to produce conducive image and popularity. Eastern European oligarchs entered soccer in the late 1990's. While buying clubs in Western Europe is seen more as means to establish a successful financial base abroad, in Eastern Europe, including Bulgaria, oligarchs' ownership of club relates to political gain and reinforcing power (Riordan, 2007; McDonalds, 2014). Politicians and oligarchs network has taken charge on some of the most popular teams in the country. By doing so, not only securing large electoral votes but takes focus away from the social cost of market-reforms paid by Bulgarian citizens.

### **6.7 Cultural Institutions**

Washington consensus policies drastically transformed all institution in the country. As it was mentioned earlier, dominant feature became private property and logic of the market. On theory, capitalist ideology promises opportunity, freedom, lack of censorship which are all engine for artistic and intellectual developments. Since 1948, all cultural and sport institutions became state-owned. Party monopoly over culture was established to reproduce the established ideology. All activities were planted on identification of class approach and class values (Triphonova, 2004). A Law of the Cinematography and the Film industry was passed, which guaranteed a state monopoly over the distribution of movies. In 1947, a Law of the Book printing was promulgated; under its provisions all private book printing and publishing houses were nationalized. The Decree of the Theatres (1949) legitimized only the state-subsidized theatres

with a constant group of actors. The State established artistic unions for each individual art and guaranteed money for production. Art in Bulgaria flourished, cinemas, concert halls and theaters were regularly sold out, even in the most distant towns of the country. Nevertheless, due to censorship artists were restrained to engage in productions out of line from the party-line (Stoilov, p.87).

Post-Communist Bulgaria experienced contemporary trends in the cultural community. Despite decimation of stable financial support from the state, art has been liberated from censorship and control, especially with respect to publishing, theatre, production and distribution of movies, radio and TV programs and so on. Western cultural trends influenced cultural life into a new direction. Import of show-business, music, movies, fashion emerged and dismantled branches of art that were popular prior to 1989. Movie production stalled, as mainly U.S movies available on videotapes and DVD's. Music industry also engaged in duplicating Western entertaining which led to traditional music festivals to be discontinued. The average person was now available to access the cultural achievements of European and world culture. Sports world opened to the average Bulgarian and he could watch his favorite game and observe fan behavior world-wide. Music television also introduced music videos, new styles of music and fashion, which during the socialist era was smuggled.

Despite all that, the constant economic crisis, income inequality led to deterioration of cultural consumption on one hand and supply on the other. If, there is quality it will be at a higher tickets price thus for a selected few that can afford. Since the state no longer secures financial support many theaters, libraries and museums simply close due to lack of funding. The low quality of cultural consumption (Including Internet) can be seen in school, at the stadium, on the street, in interpersonal communication. This cultural and social decay is without doubt

product of the nature of capitalism who installed a permanent state of corruption and nepotism in institutions and indifference and hopelessness amongst the population.

## Chapter 7: Theoretical Framework

When studying the phenomenon of soccer hooliganism in Bulgaria, one must examine its function within the capitalist reality. The transformation process to liberal democracy led to fundamental changes within the state. The previous system of planned economy and state run enterprises and institutions gave way to the logic of capital and markets (Medarov & Tsoneva, 2014, p.18). The post-socialist primitive accumulation of state assets came at a high social and economic cost. It eradicated the working-class and created deep class divisions where capitalist and political establishment class subdued working-class to living in permanent uncertainty (Arabska, 2015, p.7). Soccer remained one of the last institutions where public was able to find an outlet for expressing discontent and agitation. As all institutions in the country, soccer was too transformed to fit the logic of capital and market. Ruling classes have recognized the influence of the game of soccer on the population and the importance the immense power, organized soccer hooligan groups hold over fans. In the new profit-based system soccer club survival depended on capitalist investments. (McDonalds, 2014). Political establishment and new oligarch profit-orientated class sought to maintain their positions within society of growing social and economic inequalities. Soccer provided the desired avenue for investment in gaining social capital by financially supporting such soccer institutions. Furthermore, soccer hooligan group's popularity and power amongst soccer fans, attracted the attention of political forces and oligarch class. On the other hand, soccer hooligan leaders have come to realize the political economic reality and have masked their profit-orientated goals by publicly promoting nationalist ideology. Nationalist ideology has gain tremendous popularity due to country's decimated under the capitalist system and a lack of 'Left' alternative. This leads the public to reflect on nationalism as the only

alternative, despite that nationalists' critique of capitalism is mostly in ethnic and cultural lines (Marinos, 2008).

I will examine soccer hooligan groups by applying Karl Marx concept of lumpen proletariat, in order to explain how they relate to soccer hooliganism and contemporary capitalist relations. Furthermore, I aim to examine important scholarly work on the concept of nationalism as soccer hooligans operate along the line of this ideology. Marx, defines lumpen proletariat as a 'dangerous' class of property-less and unemployed social outcasts whose conditions of life makes them a bribed tool of reactionary intrigue ("Manifesto of the Communist Party", 2000). Marx, description of the lumpen proletariat class was influenced by the 1848 proletariat revolution where poor Paris youths were paid by the bourgeois government to face the proletariat revolution ("In The Class Struggle in France 1848-1850", 2010). In later work, Marx expands his definition by implying that lumpen proletariat isn't formed solely by social outcasts but by people who have been removed from the production process, thus bourgeois and proletariats may be relegated to lumpen proletariat status ("In the Eighteenth Brumaire", 1999). Marx used the concept of degeneration to argue that long absence from the production process eradicates class consciousness, thus recently relegated lumpen proletariat becomes vulnerable to agents of corruption (Hayes, 1988, p.446).

The relationship between nationalism and capitalism goes back to the constructing of nation-states in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. During that period, international struggles and conflict had nationalistic characteristics. Early definitions of nationalism were closely related to nation-states. Nationalism became more popular subject of analysis in the period between the First and Second World Wars when it was understood through the framework of history on nations (Gellner, 1983, p.23). Marx never makes a separate category for false consciousness, he argues that lack of self-



reflection and sufficient information is what leads one going against its own interest. In terms of nationalism, he indicates nationalism should be encourage if it is against oppressor but not if it is used by the ruling class to divert focus from social realities (Luxemburg, 1976). He opposes mobilization of poor and working class in support of nation-state that is run by the elite class who uses proletariat, simply used as tool for maintaining their control (Luxemburg, 2008).

Carlton Hayes considered nationalism as political doctrine created within the context of the Industrial Revolution, popularity of national consciousness and expansionist propagandist agents (Hayes, 1926). Leon Trotsky argues that wars in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were carried in the name of sovereignty, preservation and expansion of state. These wars and their expansionist character gave capitalism a tremendous advancement and extended its life (as cited by Pehlivanoglu, 2014). Another influential theorist of nationalism was Hans Kohn who developed his theory by differentiating Western and Eastern Europe. Unlike Marx, Austrian born Otto Bauer saw nationalist's uprisings based on ethnic identity as an ideological threat to social-democratic harmonized society (Bauer, 2000, p.167-169).

In the post-World War 2 period more academic began to explore the links between nationalism and capitalism. Hans Kohn argued that in Western Europe's nationalism was embraced by community because it promise democracy and liberalization to its citizens. Eastern European nationalism was formed within multi-linguistic empire and its drive is more ethnically oriented (Kohn, 1961). Benedict Anderson analyzes nationalism as a product of people's homogenous and coherent "imagined community". This community is expressed in social arenas by symbolic or historic practices (1983, p.77-78). Nevertheless, in more Marxist approach he points out that the new imagined community was constructed as a result, of 'print capitalism'. He

theorizes that capitalists in pursuit of profit through the new printing technology discovered other, more lucrative markets within the new imagined community (1991, p.36).

Kedourie, argues that nationalism is doctrine invented to legitimize a fraction of the population to relish government privileges and validate its power in the state. He argues that nationalism is based on Immanuel Kant's idea that the individual was free only when moved by its own conception of the good and with no regard to consequences. This popular theory influence the creation the nation-states during early capitalism and the sense of self-determination justified action not only by individual but by a nation-state (as cited in Schwartz, 2014).

Ernest Gellner considered nationalism as an inevitable product of modern societies. He argues industrialization during early capitalism provided prerequisite for advancement of nationalism. Gellner (1983) theorized that nationalism was an outcome of the new capitalist mode of production industrial burst in ethically separated world (p.19-22). Terry Eagleton similarly views nationalism as an instrument employed by the state to invoke national identity periodically, in order, to privilege the interest of the nation-state above individuals (Eagleton, 1990, p.23-24). Pedro Schwartz (2014) asserts that nationalism has secure its class background by evolving from capitalist relations of production and property to national markets. He argues that construction of national integrity and national markets has derived by the idea that nation represents capitalist class as the interests of whole society.

The concepts of lumpen proletariat and nationalism within the context of capitalist relations have strong ties to soccer hooliganism. Marx, definition of lumpen proletariat vulnerable to bribe (“Manifesto of the Communist Party”, 2010) correlate with the nature of Bulgarian soccer hooligans. As a consequence of the transformation of Bulgaria to a capitalist state and decimation of the working-class, many were relegated to the lumpen proletariat class that eventually organized

in the line of soccer hooliganism. Gellner's (1983) argument that nationalism is a product of the capitalist mode of production seems to fit the contemporary capitalist relations in Bulgaria (p.19). The rise of nationalism appeared after the structural transformation of the country in the post-socialist era, where new conditions of private property and class division created the social conditions for emergence of nationalism.

Market reforms in Bulgaria led to relentless anti-communist discourse. This discourse resulted in degeneration of terms such as, 'workers', 'class', 'equality'; eulogized during the semi-socialist state. As Bulgarian Socialist Party moved to the center-right, it left a vacuum that was filled by reactionary nationalists (Ost, 2005, p.2). Nationalists were able to seize these terms and portray themselves as their representative of the oppressed, while in the meantime their rhetoric is mobilized around ethnic and national identities rather than the failure of economic policies (Marinos, 2008). Capitalist class also deliberately uses nationalist rhetoric for taking focus away from economic issues which consequently remain. As Marx (2010) warns, the reactionary character of lumpen proletariat leads to their alliances with the ruling class. His argument is confirmed by soccer hooligans' diversion from ethnic nationalist ideology to co-optation in politico-economic realities of the profit-based system. The economic dependence of soccer from the capitalist mode of production has co-opted soccer hooligan groups as an important structural element in the contemporary capitalist relations.

## Chapter 8: Methodology

The aim of this study is to explain the social phenomenon of soccer hooliganism based on ethnic nationalism and political economic reality. It examines soccer hooligans discourse in to ethnic nationalism. More so, it reviews the link between soccer hooligans, ethnic nationalism and the political economic reality of contemporary capitalist relations. The method used for data collection is Internet Archival Research. This method allows me to collect data of various soccer hooligan forums, websites, and social media in the form of comments, opinions, and interviews extracted by some of the largest Bulgarian soccer hooligan online platforms. Qualitative research through Internet Archival data is accessible to number of different narratives and frameworks (Eysenbach, 2001).

Internet allows a passage to a minimally censored arena of expression, where people who normally will not participate in discussions on political, social or economic issues, feel free to express opinion and stance on various issues amongst diverse range of participants. The anonymity provides stage for sincere opinion which otherwise may not be expressed (Di Maggio, Hartigai, Neuman & Robinson, 2001, p.312). Additionally, it could introduce patterns and relationships, previously not considered which may change view and bring level of effectiveness (Fischer and Parmentier, 2010). Furthermore, provides a low-cost avenue for studying emerging soccer hooligan culture's and their participation in social and political processes. There are some limits of studying online commentaries and opinions. Some studies suggest that participation in forums includes limited number of technically savvy users. Often forums and comments under articles lack of moderation and quickly escalate to violent exchanges, lies, exaggerations and foul language (Benson, 1996).

Since I don't have the physical and financial opportunity to pursue field research, I feel Internet Archive Research method will be able to provide significant data to engage in critical discourse analysis. In the past decade usage of social media and transition of print media to the Internet contributed to collection of massive amount of data that makes Internet Research Archive an appropriate tool for conducting research. I will use critical discourse analysis to examine the soccer hooligan discourse.

Given the scope of the study, it was decided to focus on forum discussions from some of the largest Bulgarian soccer hooligan websites. Additionally, I've collected comments, and online newspaper titles concerning my research topic.

The online newspapers I've chosen, often discuss soccer hooligan's actions along social and political processes. By attempting a systematic critical analysis of small portion of online discourse, I anticipate, to decode the soccer hooligan belief system and find out if political economic reality uses their nationalist discourse to reignite its hegemony. The data comes from the following websites: Hooligans.bg; Fanface.bg; E-vestnik.bg; Facebook.com; Dnes.bg; Novini.bg; Sportal.bg; Economics.bg.

The methodological approach adopted here is that of Critical Discourse Analysis. This approach would allow me to critically analyze discourses by some of the most influential soccer hooligans' online avenues. It will also analyze articles and comments in some of the major online newspapers. The selected forums are major online platforms used by soccer hooligans to discuss different sport, social and political themes. I hope this method will help in the examination of how soccer hooligans relate in terms of discourse and ethnic nationalism as well what the connections amongst soccer hooligans, ethnic nationalism and political economic reality.

Critical Discourse Analysis as a discipline was launched by linguists such as, Fowler, Fairclough, Wodak and Van Dijk, who see language as a means of social construction. From the late 1970's they initiate different studies on socio-political and cultural ideologies that have become rooted in discourse. It has its background however it can be traced back to Marx's ideas on social theory and organization (Teo, 2000, p.11). In the beginning 20<sup>th</sup> century, Antonio Gramsci underlined the crucial importance of ideology in modern society to maintain and their social relations and structures where language becomes an instrument through which ideology is reproduced (Gramsci, 1971).

CDA aims to explore relationships between discursive practices, events and text. It investigates how practices, events and texts appear ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggle over power. Additionally, it explores how relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony (Fairclough, 1992). This branch of discourse analysis is concerned with analyzing written word to uncover sources of power, dominance, inequality and bias (Van Dijk, 1998)

Critical analysis diverges from simple descriptive analysis whose emphasis is largely on description. Instead, it is concerned with interpretation and explanation. Critical approach analysis looks at the importance of social forces and their role of shaping discourse (Teo, p.12). By examining relationship between power and discourse we find the major role discourse play in constructing social reality. Reproduction of certain discourses maintains hegemonic and discriminatory social relation in a reality that is ruled by discourse (Van Leeuwen, 1993, p.193).

By conducting critical analysis of ambiguous discourse, one can expose dominance and power relation of one group over another can be exposed. (Bishop & Jaworski, 2003). This method has the utility to direct me into understanding soccer hooligan ideology and belief system

by analyzing discourses in their websites and forums. Finding patterns in their discourse will allow me to grasp how current political economic system of profit manage soccer hooligan ideology based on ethnicity and identity.

## Chapter 9: Analysis

The aim of this chapter is to critically examine soccer hooligan discourse by analyzing commentaries, quotes, opinions and article extracted by their on-line platforms. The purpose of this study is find out how soccer hooligans relate in terms of discourse to ethnic nationalism. Additionally, I seek to understand the connection amongst soccer hooliganism, ethnic nationalism and political economic reality. The chapter contains analysis of 31 quotes, article titles and comments, where critical analysis of soccer hooligan discourse will expose the duality of nationalist ideology and its clash of political economic reality. Furthermore, it will analyze how political forces and elite class deploy soccer hooligans as an ideological tool to reinforce positions of power and the capitalist system.

Benedict Anderson argues that the nation is imagined as homogeneous and coherent in time and space. Imagined national community is achieved as re-telling history and elaborating on the past and collective future (p. 55-57). Ideologies are shared beliefs, values, and attitudes which construct the social world for people who populate it and subsequently reproduce it (Fairclough, 1995, p.71-73). Nationalism is an ideology that utilizes a sense of ‘our’ place in the world that we belong. This way nationalism as ideology is reproduced through a number of historical and social processes (Billig, 1995, p.7). This is evident by the comments below:

*“This may sound bold but the participants in the rebellion against the Roma must be proclaimed as heroes, as they were proclaimed by the local ethnic Bulgarians. It is not important, what labeled we have been put on, it is important our Bulgarian consciousness and nationwide support. Yesterday, eternal enemy’s soccer hooligan groups were united in Katunitza and Plovdiv. In this fight, we shouldn’t be enemies because we have one common enemy (Gypsies).*



*This is the enemy of Bulgaria.” A user called “Loved by few, Hated by Many and Respected by All” (Hooligan.bg)*

*“We can’t let Muslim prayers in the heart of our capital! 500 years they harassed us, hundred thousands died for independence and now we have stand and look at them pray in our faces. No way! They will judge our actions now but history will judge us later. Our grandfather did not shed blood so we let them take over again. (On organized protest against Muslim prayers by nationalist party supporters and their soccer hooligan affiliates.” (Fan-face)*

The duality of nationalist ideology as obvious in the examples above of contrast between two groups. Soccer hooligans tend to see themselves as representatives of the ‘real Bulgarians’. To them ‘the real Bulgarian’ imagined community is “white, ethnic Bulgarian and Christian Orthodox”. Personal pronouns ‘we’, ‘our’ and ‘them’ indicated a construction of exclusiveness, distinction and status of one group over another (Billig, p. 8). More so, use of ‘our enemy’ ‘we are the last hope’ and ‘eternal enemies united’ leads to impression of national and ethnic collectivization in which ‘eternal enemies’ are fighting for a higher cause that worth a union between historic rivals. These words signify the belief in ethnic nationalist ideology.

*“I live in a neighborhood with significant number of Roma people. My friends, who are also member of soccer hooligan groups feel like Bulgarian nation is under threat from minorities and corrupt politicians. That’s why I will defend our flag in and out of the stadium. People feel like we are protecting them (e-vestnik.bg)*

A glance of comments in their forums on the themes of social and political issues is echoed by warning of ongoing threat and apocalyptic projections for the future

*“Today many Bulgarians are “proud” Europeans and encourage their kids to study in the West but do not realize the destruction of our white Europe by hordes of refugees.” (Facebook page of the Leader of Bulgarian Football Fans Associations)*

*“If Khan Asparuh and Vasil Levski were alive today they will be ashamed of us, letting our national identity to be destroy by poisoning our kids with Western Multiculturalism and hordes of Muslims who in no time will reverse the demography of Bulgaria and Europe. Soon we will be minority and it will be too late anything to be done. (Dnes.bg)*

In ‘Imagining the Nation’ Benedict Anderson points out the importance of repeating historical tales to maintain the imagined community (p. 15). References to the founding father of the nation and the most popular revolutionary for independence from Ottoman rule demonstrate their image of a historic break from what the nation was once. Terminology such as ‘poison our kids’, ‘reverse demography’, and ‘threat’ signaled apocalyptic situation in which national and ethnic collective depict a “battle call’. Nouns such as, ‘hordes’, and ‘illegally’, indicated a pre-determine direction of the future. Furthermore, soccer hooligans see themselves as modern day military and national heroes such as Khan Asparuh and Vasil Levski who dedicated their lives in preserving ethnic identity. In the meantime terms such as ‘White Europe’ correspond with the recent nationalist rhetoric amongst far-right European parties of Pan-European White, Christian community which includes different ethnicities and types of Christianity. Further contradictions in soccer hooligan discourse is evident in the following example:

*“You work your entire life and at retirement age, the government tells you \$ 120 a month is on what you have to survive (if you lucky to have a job) for the rest of your life. Refugees cross illegally and the government gives them \$700 a month. Gypsies have 5-6 kids and government paid them benefits while Bulgarian mothers do not get any”*

*“It is mind-blowing, that government provide these parasites with benefits and when Bulgarian retirees are dying because they can’t pay their medical needs. European Union will rather give money to invaders and people who simply do not want to assimilate but rather steal and kill.*

*(Hooligans.bg)*

A glance at the glossaries such as ‘benefits’, ‘real Bulgarians’, ‘invaders’ and ‘illegally’, points to economic grievance. The blame of these grievances, however are formulated towards the refugees and minorities instead of the current economic system. EU and local government are not criticized for economic failures but for providing money for those who soccer hooligans consider not ‘Real Bulgarians’ and ‘invaders’. The ‘why them and not us’ rhetoric again enacts the duality of nationalist ideology by portraying ‘in-group/out-group’ imagery. The examples below provide a clear picture of soccer hooligan disillusionment with political processes. As their ideological scope is nationalism.

*“As the Communists became democrats and then millionaires, we shifted from oppressed by Communists to hostages of EU and U.S. whose priorities in Bulgaria, other than cheap labor, are refugees and minorities. Instead of complaining about Nationalist alliance with establishment parties’ better campaign for them so they have enough votes to form their own government” (Hooligans.bg)*

*Bulgaria will never recover until Communists are still in leading roles. Since 1989, there has been communist plot that has overtaken the country. Just look at the Bulgarian Socialist Party will be in power. All of them, their fathers and grandfathers were members of the Bulgarian Communist party. How can we be a normal European democracy!?(Fanface.bg)*

*Politics must be present at the stadium. Nowhere our ideology will be as visible. Today is fraud upon to be a patriot. Politicians left young people in despair while they are more concerned about minority rights and not to upset their masters in Brussels. Vote for 'United Patriots'. I rather vote for them than these so-called social-democrats, who are simply the same old Communists of before 1989, who now share "the red and blue "color sold us to the Soviet Union in 1944." (Hooligans.bg)*

The comments above describe the false consciousness of Bulgarian nationalists. They do graze on economic grievances of the current system ('*cheap labor*', '*masters in Brussels*') none the less their grievances are succumbed to ethnic nationalist rhetoric '*minority rights*'. Another popular discourse is the anti-communist discourse. Phrases such as, '*same old Communists*', '*sold us to the Soviet Union in 1944*', '*Communists are still in leading roles*', '*their fathers and grandfathers were members of the Bulgarian Communist party*', '*As the Communists became democrats and then millionaires*' have been used to take focus away by neoliberal parties (especially the conservative) to take focus away from economic failure of the capitalist system. This popular in the 1990's discourse of "anti-communist" versus "former communists" continues to be used widely by nationalist politician as well and is widely popular amongst soccer hooligans, whose far-right leaning ignite anti-communist rhetoric.

Conservative, neoliberal party and pro-EU party GERB have mastered the anti-communist discourse as it become evident by the quotes below.

*"I remember what was during the Communist. Had to have connection to get bananas for my daughter' Conservative Party leader (pan.bg)*

*“In my dossier in the Communist Secret Police was written: Enemy of the State!” GERB Party leader and two mandate ex-Prime Minister” (Segabg.com)*

*“GERB candidate Tsetska Tsacheva on Thursday “revealed” in front of the public that her grandfather had been executed by the Communist authorities in 1952” (novinite.com)*

The anti-communist discourse is appears the most in times of crisis or around elections. Anti-communist discourse guarantees approval from nationalist elements but also is used to discrediting Social-Democrats during election or when in opposition. Despite the fact that after 1997 the Bulgarian Socialist Party (ex-Communist Party) reformed itself and adopted the neoliberal platform and support for EU and NATO (Spirova, 2008). Next examples reveals the power of anti-communist discourse has on influencing soccer hooligan discourse:

*Some of you talk bad about the Prime Minister, but I don't see any damage done to you. It's a media manipulation. After the socialists mandates we were almost on the verge of bankrupt and he was the one dealing with the issue afterwards. He may not be smartest guy but it's better than the socialists” (Fanface.bg)*

*It's better with GERB than the anti-Bulgarian Communists and a nationalist party that entered opposition with Turks and Socialists. Better be garbage in Europe, working for \$ 400 a month than “left” turn to bolshevism, Asia and the middle ages. (Hooligans.bg comment)*

*I prefer GERB (Conservative party) and Nationalist government, a thousand times more, compare to the Bulgarian Socialist Party (social-democrats) and DPS (Turkish minority) coalition.”(Hooligans.bg)*

These quotes imply the hegemony of anti-communist discourse. Remarks such is *“ during socialists mandates we were almost on the verge of bankrupt’* illustrate the false consciousness

which Marx warned. Socialists mandates in the 1990's and 2000's were executed under the neoliberal platform, nonetheless terms such as neoliberalism is never discussed by conservatives and barely tapped by nationalists, who are busy to announce their grievances in the ethnic and cultural lines.

Politicians have also adopted racist discourse as it was a way to relate nationalist elements especially in time of crisis or before election. Outrages statement aren't part only of soccer hooligan habitat but often play a role the political landscape. Leaders of some of the major parties in Bulgaria have expressed discourses typical for the soccer hooligan belief system.

*“Gipsy’s crime is a danger for the state and danger for the state security. It is a genocide and people are afraid to leave their houses.” Leader of Nationalist Party (dnes.bg article title)*

*“The Roma people are bold, complacent subhuman beast demanding money without working, health care that don't need, child care for children who remind us of pigs and mothers that remind us of street dogs.” Speech in Bulgarian Government by the leader of the extreme-right National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria.” (Novini.bg)*

Using exaggerations is used for psychological effect is well-known populist style of apocalyptic, conspiratorial projection of the future (Hofstadter, 1964). It is used to galvanize public opinion. Usage of dehumanizing glossary terms is another trait of populism that have entered the political establishment in the last ten years. Using the word such as ‘materials’ to describe human beings indicates dehumanization of people. Soccer hooligans bigotry discourse corresponds with nationalist party leaders, nonetheless this discourse is not foreign to politicians from the ‘multicultural’ conservative party GERB. The quotes below indicate how establishment uses nationalist discourse to maintain control at the domestic political stage:

*“The Revival Process (forced assimilation of the Turkish minority) had the right aim but was implemented badly” ex-Prime Minister (GERB) (novinite.com)*

*“Gypsies, Turks and Retirees are bad human material for Bulgaria” Prime Minister of head of GERB during election campaign to immigrants in U.S. (dnes.bg)*

Another technique used by ruling conservative party is to co-opt soccer hooligan groups has been promise of financial help to their favorite clubs.

*“I want to help Levski Sofia with sponsors. Recently I offered Gazprom to become general sponsor as part of the gas pipe deal with Russia.” Prime Minister and Leader of conservative GERB (Economics.bg)*

*“One of my main priorities will be to help all soccer clubs in the country, as much as I can. Fans deserve to watch quality soccer and enjoy success in Europe.” Prime Minister and Leader of conservative GERB (dnes.bg)*

The Prime Minister and a leader of the pro-EU party GERB uses words such as ‘my priorities’, ‘fans deserve’, ‘quality soccer’ and ‘enjoy success in Europe’ to indicate his government willingness to help financially, soccer hooligan’s favorite soccer clubs. Additionally, words such as ‘quality’ and ‘success in Europe’ hints of his self-projection of a powerful leadership presence.

*“Only me and my government are is trying to help financially soccer in Bulgaria” (Sportal.bg)*

‘Only me and my government’ phrase illustrate his self-proclamation of a ‘savior’ to soccer clubs, who are essential for existence of soccer hooligan groups. As soccer clubs are in the dependent on the market and the logic of capital, large number of soccer hooligans and hooligan

groups face the political economic reality. Despite, their promotion of ethnic nationalist ideology, soccer hooligans recognize that it will be very difficult for the nationalist party to win with a margin that will allow to form its own government.

Probably the most effective approach for political establishment and ruling class to co-opt soccer hooligans is business venture opportunities. The leaders of the largest hooligans groups have recognized the politico-economic reality and the way this reality operates:

*“Hooligans group kicks out fellow hooligan group due to caricature and booing of the Prime Minister” (Capital.bg)*

*“National Fan Club is just a branch of the main hooligan gang. The leader is well-known criminal, who spent time in prison for participation in criminal network and drug dealing. His firm (under his wife’s name) has arrange to get \$50,000 to provide security on the stadium and control the rhetoric. It’s imperative to understand soccer club-politics relations when see the attitude of the member when the Prime Minister’s relationship with the Turkish party was rocky. The chants against them were non-stop. Once they put differences away, all stopped and those who continued were physically beaten. Now you tell me if there is a connection or not?”*  
(Capital.bg)

Soccer clubs are part of the capitalist structure and their survival is depended on the capitalist class. Bulgarian soccer quality is quite low compared to Western Europe which means investment in soccer clubs will most likely leading to losses. Nevertheless, political forces and oligarch class have recognized the importance of the game as well as the power that soccer hooligans hold over regular soccer fans and especially amongst youth. On the other hand, the leader of these hooligan groups have recognized their peculiar position. As a result, they have



made a choice to ignore their nationalist ideology (*'Prime Minister's relationship with the Turkish party was rocky. The chants against them were non-stop. Once they put differences away, all stopped and those who continued were physically beaten'*) and in exchange of deploying their lumpen proletariat, to manage class divisions and reinforce capitalist class positions (*'the leader is well-known criminal, who spent time in prison for participation in criminal network and drug dealing*) while enjoying the benefits of the profit-based system (*His firm (under his wife's name) has arrange to provide security on the stadium and control the rhetoric' in exchange of \$ 50,000 a year*).

### **9.1 Findings**

The foregone is a general approach to the soccer hooligan discourse aimed at providing a broad overview of the kind of discourse strategies soccer hooligans and political figures use to exploit nationalist ideology. Using pronouns such as, "we", "us" and "them" are used to create and reinforce negative light on ethnic minorities. In this section is more critical analysis on certain patterns in hooligan discourse. I found few major patterns in soccer hooligan and political discourses that explains the construction of hooligan belief system and its existence under capitalist political economic reality.

One the main patterns in their discourse are constant references to 'enemies'. Soccer hooligan's actions, practices and messages reflect an imagined community of ethnic Bulgarians. A glance of comments in their forums on the themes of social and political issues are echoed by warning of ongoing threat and apocalyptic projections for the future. As Benedict Anderson (1983) points out the nation is imagined as coherent and homogenous and is reproduced by retelling shared history (15). Soccer hooligans' discourse constantly refers to historical and heroic images. Their actions and practices adopt a self-assigned role of divine saviors of national identity from

intruders which also is influenced by historical heroic images which explains their references to national heroes and the founding fathers.

The bleak future plays a crucial role in manufacturing and maintaining their belief system. Pronouns like 'we' and 'do' outline one, more deserving group is challenged by a group that doesn't belong to the imagined community and is an obstacle to homogeneity and reason. This way their actions no matter how violent are moral since they are in the name of 'saving' the nation. The discourses of 'blame' or 'scapegoating' directed towards minorities, refugees, multiculturalism and Islamophobia as a reason for social and economic deterioration present them with validation of their suspicions fueled by ethnic nationalist ideology. The constant scapegoating gives an impression of conspiracy against their 'imagined community' which is used as a rallying cry for unification. 'Gypsies', 'Muslims' and 'Refugees' are identified as the 'enemy' while the current capitalist system is too naïve in their attempts to create multicultural and homogenous Europe.

Another pattern in the analysis of soccer hooligan discourse is the relationship between their ideological demands and the politico - economic reality. Important consideration in this analysis is the fact that soccer hooligan belief system is constructed in the conditions of capitalist mode of production in post-1989 Bulgaria. Marx argues, that in conditions of social surplus of production, one class emerges over another. Hegemony of the class of owners of the means of production advances class division, where one class holds power and benefit by exploiting others leads to conflict (e, 2000). Under capitalism the decimation of social welfare system and succumbing to commodification, alienates working class within the capitalist mode of production. This class division certainly led to fragmentation of society. This fragmentation inevitably produces social conditions for emergence of nationalism (Gellner, p. 19-20). These conditions are quite visible in soccer hooligan's discourse. Phrases such as "*EU gives the money to invaders*"

*“Refugees cross illegally and get \$700 a month while we retirees \$120”* suggests an economic stagnation under the current capitalist system. However, the blame isn't as much on government for implementing capitalist policies but rather on minorities and refugees who enjoy the money that do not belong to them, as if money is allocated to ethnic Bulgarians, income inequality and social unease will be erased.

Marx talks about the misrepresentation of dominant social relations in the consciousness of subordinate classes. He argues that ruling class constantly create distortions in the consciousness of the subordinate class in order to shape their social mechanism in a way that reinforce their power (Marx, 2000)). Gramsci (1971) also argued about the hegemony of ruling class to represent social reality in their own terms. As it is evident, soccer hooligan demands are formulated in such way that hooligans do not demand change of the current ideological system to nationalistic, but rather blame the capitalist state of giving, what should be 'naturally theirs' to 'outsiders'. Normally, a clash of belief systems leads certainly to conflicts and contradictions. However, there is a unique relationship between the state, capitalism and nationalism. The formation states based on nations is a result of capitalism where commodity production is unified in national market and national currency. This creates special connection between communities within a nation. Within a nation, generalization of commodity production capitalism has given the advantage of unity of community, production and exchange in a territory with national. Nationalism asserts that all classes have a mutual interest in the name of the nation. Shaping a nation in such way gives the owners of production an immense advantage over others. Capitalist class hold the capital and state power thus is able use typical phrases of "national integrity" and "national interest" to present their interests as the interests of the whole nation. (The role and character of the state under capitalism", 2006).

As it was mentioned above the phenomenon of soccer hooligan sub-cultures has become widely popular and powerful. Their ideological view points and belief system based on ethnicity and identity, however, relies on political economic factors of capitalist reality. Existing in the framework of the capitalist system, where there is class division and inequality, soccer hooliganism provides an avenue for organization of lumpen proletariat under the common denominator of ethnic nationalist ideology. Under the disguise of the most popular sport in the country soccer hooligan groups have developed into a powerful tool. Marx describes lumpen proletariat as a class on its own, although not clearly defined as the proletariat class (who own only their labor) but rather a disorganized group with no collective determination. He argues that lumpen proletariat is liable to betrayal due its poor life condition which makes them vulnerable to be bribed (Marx, 2000). Marx goes further to describe the lumpen proletariat during the Bonaparte takeover of early capitalist France. The inherited conditions of misery of the proletariat did not lead revolution but rather return by trying to recreate old heroic images and glory. He argues that thank to the lumpen proletariat support Bonaparte was able to relapse history (1999). Similarly, to Bonaparte's France proletariat class in Bulgaria did not develop as a result of the class division caused by the current system. Emergence of nationalist reactionary forces inevitably influence much of the working class in pursuit of revival of Bulgarian heroic identity as Bonaparte realized 250 years earlier in France. Unlike the early capitalist structure during Bonaparte, the modern capitalist structure is much more sophisticated than its early period. Capitalist class has been able to implement identity discourse at domestic level contrary to their multicultural one in Brussel. Nationalists on the other hand challenges to political processes remain in the lines of culture and ethnicity. Elite class was able to forge from the idiom of 'anti-communism' a synonym of 'Bulgarian' in a way that everything and everyone

who questions the system is marginalized as ‘communist’ and thus ‘anti-Bulgarian’. Naturally, soccer hooligan groups, who are ideologically nationalist and anti-communist do give a sort of approval. Anti-communist discourse has come to symbolize the ‘internal’ threat along with minorities, in the same manner as ‘refugees’ and ‘Islam’ symbolize external. Anti-communist discourse is dominant on the political stage as well. Not surprisingly many politicians compete to reveal how much they or their families were repressed during the regime. As many of the comments illustrate, political parties and soccer hooligans alike has managed to embrace the idiom as part of the ethnic nationalist ideology.

Lumpen proletariat does embrace nationalist ideology, but similarly falls in the same pattern or reality as the nationalist parties. In a system based on profit existing as an independent organism could be very challenging. Capitalist class has found a way to manage and use it as an advantage rather than antagonist. The capitalist system has been able to take advantage of the commodification of soccer and co-opt soccer hooligans without challenging their racist ideology. Ever since the end of the semi-socialist era, soccer in the country has become part of the neoliberal ideology. Former state soccer clubs are now owned by members of the oligarch elite. Soccer has become a tool for elite class and political forces in their battle for power capital (McDonalds, 2014). The existence of traditional clubs has been transformed into the hand of the capitalist elite. Aside of soccer hooligan ideology, the former’s arena of operation is the stadium and their presence in large part depends on the existence of the club. Political figures have understood the significance maintaining soccer clubs to win hooligan groups on their side. On the other hand, soccer hooligan leaders have come to realization that the way political economic reality operates is much more likely to maintain power and earn profit if they are co-opted into system. Soccer hooliganism provides an avenue for organizing lumpen proletariat in the lines of

ethnic nationalism but in a capitalist state the profit base system overshadows ideological goals. Under a risk to lose their favorite club hence their main social arena, hooligan groups become an ideological tool to take focus away from the capitalist system class divisions.

Survival of soccer clubs in neoliberal state is closely linked the capitalist class. In the case of Bulgaria, it is closely tied to political forces, as relationship between capitalist class and political forces are closely interrelated. Club management provides an avenue for business relation within the axis club-hooligan group, by hiring a security company owned by the leader of the hooligan group, to provide security on the stands. In exchange hooligans group control the messages and chants and whoever is voicing opinion against the government is kicked out or physically beaten. As the comment above indicated at time when conservative party was in coalition with the Turkish minority party, despite ideologically on the opposite strand, soccer hooligans played their role of a capitalist tool. In later, members of another hooligan group carried a violence at a peaceful protest of against the policies of the neoliberal Bulgarian Socialist Party government. In instant, they provoked violence by attacking police and by doing so the peaceful protest was compromise and further mobilization diminished. This is what precisely, Marx warns about lumpen proletariat. The possibility of betrayal by lumpen proletariat class due to their conditions of life makes them vulnerable to be a bribed tool (Marx, 2000). Instead soccer hooligan groups are becoming an element of the system that takes focus away from class division and used as tool to reinforce and legitimize capitalist social relations.

## Conclusion

Based on the critical discourse analysis, it becomes clear that soccer hooligan sub-culture provides an avenue for organization of lumpen proletariat behind the ideology of ethnic nationalism. Their discourse is influenced by ethnic nationalism which formulates few major patterns. The separation of 'us' versus 'them' is present in almost every comment. Reference to past achievements and heroic images also play a factor in validating their current actions and practice in the name of the future. Utilizing stereotypes and derogatory terms on minorities and refugees aims to legitimize an alleged threat and the reason for lack homogeneous community.

On the other hand, soccer hooligans relay on political economic factors of the current system realities. As comments indicate, soccer clubs are financially dependent from members of the oligarch elite and political forces to survive as private entities in a competitive and rich world of soccer. As Marx warns in 'The Manifesto of the Communist Party' (2010) lumpen proletariat, is vulnerability to bribes and betrayal. His argument is validated by soccer hooligans whose nationalist actions and practices are either use by the ruling class to take focus away from the economic failures or they ignore their ideological beliefs and re-direct their action and practices serving the profit-base capitalist system.

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