315 - 326

Revisiting the conceptualization of "Turks" in Bulgaria

Mgr. Gabriela Fatková [*]

Abstract. *The information presented in this paper is based on repeated ethnographic fieldwork carried out in Bulgaria between 2008 and 2011. The aim of this study is to highlight the conceptual field of the 'minority' category and, in particular, of the construction of a 'problematic minority' in Bulgarian public discourse. First, the article focuses on the broad context of the concept of minority in Bulgaria illustrated by stereotypical statements of the Prime Minister Boyko Borissov. Next, the construction of a 'problematic minorities' category will be examined. We closely observe the stereotypes linked to the image of 'Turks', with particular attention to their presence in everyday speech.*

Key words: public discourse, stereotype, minority, populism, language

Introduction

The long coexistence of different populations in a particular territory does not necessarily lead to increased knowledge and understanding of the other nor to assimilation. As Rogers and Frantz (1962) showed by their research, the prejudice between two populations living in the same territory can grow through the time of coexistence. The categorization, hierarchization or stereotyping are the ordinary human strategies of cognition and understanding of the perceived disorder of reality. There is nothing anomalous about it, those processes are inevitable. On the other hand, social scientists point at the creative potentiality of categorization. According to the social constructivist perspective, we can state that the construction and application of categories in social interaction can be in fact socially effective and eventually create socially real categorical boundaries.

A usual way of conceptualization 'the others' is the so-called binary thinking, which is widely used in populist statements. The good and the evil are associated with particular groups of people or with particular situations and easy solutions proposed. In general, the simplicity of populist solutions corresponds to the simplicity of presented concepts. We can often register such binary concepts in Bulgarian public discourse about minorities.

Since 2001 new populist political parties have emerged in Bulgaria with increasingly nationalistic programs. A study of public discourse and the minority focused rhetoric could identify some important aspects of social processes motivated by this gradual nationalization of the public discourse, which has the capacity to (re)create minorities and 'problematic groups' in social reality. This article presents research of this kind, focusing on the case of Bulgarian Turks. Empirical evidence proves that the strategies of stereotyping known in central and western Europe with regards to immigrants can be found in Bulgaria as well. The country (re)constructs its 'inner enemies' – Turks and Roma – by specific practices employed within the public discourse.

The data presented come from ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Bulgaria. The author´s original research object was Bulgarian Karakachans, however, everyday communication with many Bulgarian was inevitable during the research stays. All references to 'the others' were recorded and, after some time, the

* Gabriela Fatková is a PhD candidate at the Department of Anthropology and Historical Science of the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen. Her research concentrates on the recent migration flows of the former nomadic shepherd groups in the Balkans. Her focus ranges to the minority policy of Bulgaria as well. Email: gfatkova@gmail.com

eminent significance of the 'Turk' stereotype revealed. Here, particular attention was paid to the meanings coded in everyday verbal communication, meanings which are used and reproduced by the users in unreflected way.

Minorities in Bulgaria

Studies focused on the situation of minorities in Bulgaria often mention only the Turkish and Roma minorities. Other authors write about the co-existence of majority with 'problematic' and 'non problematic' minorities[1]. The 'problematic' category is represented by Turks, Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks) and Roma (Gypsies), the 'non problematic' category includes less numerous populations like Jews, Armenians, Vlachs, Karakachans or Gagauz. Frequenty referring to census data, these writings concentrate on the numerical dimensions of 'problematic minorities'. Members of the 'non problematic' minorities are not counted at all, or their number is not the topic of debates.

Censuses in Bulgaria have used the categories of nationality (conceptualized as ethnic self-ascription), mother tongue and, since 1992, also religion. As a result of assimilation processes (or, more accurately, the processes of assimilation construction), Bulgarian censuses tend to limit the number of nationality and mother-tongue categories. For example, there were twelve nationality options in 1985 of which only five were left in 2011 (Bulgarian, Turkish, Roma, Other and Not stated).

One of the reasons why 'problematic' minorities raise such an exclusive attention of statisticians and authorities is that 'non problematic' minorities , living mainly in urban areas, share the lifestyle and demographic patterns with the majority. 'Problematic' minorities, on the other hand, form, to a large extent, segregated closed neighborhoods situated especially in rural areas or in removed mountain regions. They have also much higher birth rate than the majority (Konstantinov & Simić 2010).

The atmosphere of insecurity and distrust affects the relationships between the majority and minorities (particularly the 'problematic' ones) in the public discourse. Repeated attempts to demonstrate insignificance or even non-existence of minorities can be registered (Konstantinov & Simić 2010, 23). Konstantinov and Simić tried to explain where Bulgarian citizens find the sources of security and safety. They argue that majority and minorities feel secure within the context of kin or kin-like alliances (e. g. god-parenthood). This strategy does not work properly in urban environment, which is why urban dwellers had to adapt by using a modified institution of kin-like ties – connections (връзки) as a tool for fulfilling their needs. Using Marc Granovetter´s terminology, we can say that, contrary to minorities living in the countryside and depending of strong ties, the urban majority employs weak ties (Granovetter 1983).

The political constellation of the majority and minority representatives in Bulgaria is often referred to, in academic writing, as 'Bulgarian ethnic model'. This term was coined by the President´s advisor for ethnic issues Mihail Ivanov in 1992. This is not to tell that the integration of minorities in the Bulgarian political sphere is an entirely Bulgarian solution, it rather stands for a specific Bulgarian way of implementing European standards (Mitev 2005, 77). Ivanov considers this model unique and well functioning, appropriate for application in other countries. During 1990s, the political party representing ethnic Turks (Movement for Rights and Freedoms) played the role of the third stabilizing party in this model. After the fall of the communist regime in Bulgaria, three main political parties emerged: the ex-communist Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP – *Българска социалистическа партия*), anti-communist right-wing Union of Democratic Forces (SDS – *Съюз на демократичеките сили*) and the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (DPS – *Движение за права и свободи*). The last one played an important role in the strategies of coalition. In the period between 2000 and 2010, the surprising emergence of new populist parties led to the displacement of DPS from the third party status.

Minorities in Bulgarian constitution

Bulgaria´s constitution adopted in 1947 used the term 'national minority'. Some rights were accorded to minorities in those first years of communist regime, for example the right to education in mother tongue (other than Bulgarian) in schools with more than ten minority students. The constitution adopted in 1971 does not include the term 'national minority' anymore. It was replaced by the term 'non-Bulgarian'. This was accompanied by many restrictions during the process of assimilation and bulgarization, which culminated in the period 1984 – 1989. The number of places permitting the use of 'non-bulgarian' languages was sharply limited, Muslim

---

[1] A similar recognition of minorities in Bulgaria can be found in Mitev who uses these labels: 'privileged' and 'un-privileged' minorities (Mitev 2005, 91).

religious practices were forbidden and, finally, a massive campaign forcing a change of Muslim names to Bulgarian took place[2]. In 1989 about 300,000 persons left the country and moved to Turkey because of the name-changing campaign in a period of two months (Konstantinov & Simić 2010, 31). Some authors estimate the number arising to 350,000[3] (Ishiyama & Breuning 1998, 3).

The present constitution adopted in 1991 does not use the concept of 'national minority'. Differences among Bulgarian citizens are seen only with regards to mother tongue. Georgi Karasimeonov explains the absence of this concept in the constitution as an effort to build an image of Bulgaria being a one-nation state (Karasimeonov 1999, 1–4). The concept of 'national minorities' would affect this image and the danger of misunderstanding would rise because this concept is not accurately defined according to the international law (Petkova 2002, 51). On the other hand, the concept of 'ethnic minority' is used in the constitution. The nation of Bulgarian citizens is composed of different 'ethnic minorities', all of them have the right to pursue their own identity. Manifestation of ethnic identity depends on the situation, especially in the context of vertical inequality between individual minorities. This is the reason why some of them identify with ethnic groups only in certain rather than all situations (Myuhtar 2003, 4).[4] In addition, inequality exists in other relations than that of 'problematic' and 'non problematic' minorities as well. It can be identified within the framework of the 'problematic' minority itself: in some situations it is more profitable to be perceived as Turk than as Roma.

The 1991 constitution guarantees individual human rights, equality and protection from discrimination. It guarantees 'ethnic minorities' the opportunity to preserve their culture, religion and language. Elementary education is held in Bulgarian but minorities can use and be taught in their mother tongue. Regardless of the constitution, the educational system still reproduces ethnic stereotypes and children of Bulgarian Turks (as well as other minorities) are excluded from higher levels of education. According to the data from 2001 census, one third of Bulgarian Turks have only elementary education or have not completed elementary education and 6 % are illiterate (Mitev 2005, 81–84). Since 1994, education in mother tongue has been included among voluntary courses in the curricula for the first to the eight years of instruction. Mother tongue classes used to be held in four hours per week. Under the influence of the large-scale migration to western Europe characteristic for the last years, the interest in studying mother languages declines with English being increasingly preferred instead (Mitev 2005, 84).

However, creation and operation of political parties based on race, religion or ethnic origin is not explicitly permitted in constitution (Ishiyama & Breuning 1998, 4; Кънев 1998, 103). From the very emergence of DPS, BSP sought to declare the party as illegal. Up to the time of this writing, DPS has been perceived by many authors as the party of Turks who formulated their program in a sufficiently wide way (Maeva 2005). The constitution forbids secession or segmentation of the unified Bulgarian territory into autonomous units. Bulgarian political discourse clearly prefers rights of individuals over the concept of collective rights. These discourse settings are reflected by Turks and DPS leaders, which is why the mission and program of DPS were transformed from the protection of the rights and concerns of Bulgarian Turks to the protection of rights and concerns of all ethnic, religious and cultural minorities in Bulgaria (Ishiyama & Breuning 1998, 4).

Representation of Bulgarian minorities in parliament

The only party in Bulgaria with program-based minority rights protection strategy is the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (DPS – *Движение за права и свободи*). DPS is a centrist and liberal political party which adheres to, among other things, 'the mission to defend the rights of all Bulgarians against any manifestation of national chauvinism, revenge, Islamic fundamentalism and religious fanaticism'[5]. But this party used to have – in the time of its foundation in 1990 – another program based on completely different principles. Originally, it represented the interests of the Turkish ethnic minority in Bulgaria. Later it broadened its goals and platform to

---

2   The main goal of the name-changing campaign was the homogenization of population. A paradox appeared. The names used for this change were not Bulgarian by origin nor traditional for Christian Bulgarians. As a result, the changed names continued to work as markers for the difference of 'the others' againts the majority, as the former Arabic names did (Elchinova 2001).

3   This mass exodus of Turks from Bulgaria is sometimes ironically described like 'the big excursion' in the media as aproximately the half of the migrants returned the same year after the revolution.

4   Mitev presents an example: the citizens who usually call themselves Roma prefer – in case of imprisonment - the label Turk because Roma identity brings heavier prejudice in this context (Mitev 2005, 87).

5   www.dps.bg.

embrace all the issues concerning civil rights in Bulgaria aiming to contribute to the unity of the Bulgarian people[6]. At this moment, there is a visible ideological or rather rhetorical drift from representing group rights to representing individual rights. Ernest Gellner (2005) would explain this in terms of a transition from romantic-organicist bias to the universalist-individualist bias. While the former program defended group rights and interests, the latter adopted individualistic liberal rhetoric.

Indeed, this drift is often ignored in the public discourse. Majority of papers dealing with Bulgarian Turks describe DPS as a Turkish or as a *de facto* ethnic party (Maeva 2005; Petkova 2002; Pilbrow 2010; Желязкова 1998; Макариев 1998). One of the reasons is that DPS is not consistent in terminology. On one hand, they state they represent all Bulgarians (meaning the Bulgarian nation formed by many 'ethnic minorities'), on the other, they label the focused group they seek to defend as 'Bulgarian people', 'religious and cultural communities in Bulgaria' or 'minorities in Bulgaria'. On one hand, DPS adopted constructive political rhetoric and left the exclusively ethnic scope (Mitev 2005, 79), on the other hand, there are almost no representatives of other minorities in DPS.

When we consider the reasons of the stable existence of this party in Bulgarian political scene, we may say it was the separation of the radical wing of the party in 1992. The newly established party was called the Turkish Democratic Party (TDP – *Турска демократическа партия*) and they introduced themselves with a program aiming at the self-assessment and differentiation of the Turkish ethnic minority from majority. DPS kept their distance from these political activities and, to confirm their discord with this attitude, they confirmed their non-ethnic character. In comparison to the separatist TDP, DPS was viewed – in the eyes of their voters – as a party promoting rational and democratic values (Ishiyama & Breuning 1998, 12).

We can say that in the 1990s, the political scene in Bulgaria was represented by a balanced system formed by three parties. They constituted three quarters of the parliament and functioned without much controversy between particular elections. The leftist Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) obtained from 22 to 47 per cents of votes, right-wing Union of Democratic Forces (SDS) from 24 to 52 per cents of votes. The third party, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (DPS) obtained from 5 to 7 per cents of votes and represents an important actor for coalition.

In 1990, the leader of DPS rejected cooperation with BSP because of ideological reasons, but the attitude towards the right-wing SDS was not positive either (Ishiyama & Breuning 1998, 5–7). Untill 1992, the fragile informal coalition between DPS and SDS was performed. In 1992, DPS surprisingly formed coalition with BSP. In the 1994 elections BSP gained the majority of votes. In an early election in 1997 the SDS coalition formed by SDS, the hitherto marginal Peoples Union and Bulgarian Social Democratic party gained majority of votes.

Fig. 1: The most frequent visual presentation of DSP in public space

---

6   See the official statements on www.dps.bg.

The year 2001 can be considered as a turning point - the situation changed rapidly. The whole period between 2000 – 2010 was marked by a significant success of populist parties in Bulgarian elections (Cholova & De Waele 2011). Fast before elections in 2001, the populist National Movement Simeon the Second (NDSV – *Национално движение Симеон II.*) emerged. It formed around the charismatic figure of the former king Simeon Borisov, who had left for exile in 1946. This party formed coalition with DPS and shifted the two traditional big parties aside to the opposition. The 2005 election brought the victory of a leftist coalition represented by BSP and other hitherto marginal small leftist parties. Second place was occupied by the National Movement Simeon the Second followed by DPS. In 2005, another turning point took place. A radical nationalist populist party ATAKA succeed in elections with 8 per cent of votes. In 2009 ATAKA entered the parliament again, this time with 1 per cent stronger support (Cholova & De Waele 2011).

Figure 2: The most frequent visual presentation of ATAKA

The 2009 election was easily won by the new established party Citizens for a European Development of Bulgaria (GERB – *Граждани за европейско развитие на България*), created by another charismatic figure Boyko Borissov. Right after the first election this party, without any political past, gained almost 40 per cent of parliamentary seats. The government was formed again by a new party with distinct populist features while other parties remained in opposition.

Boyko Borissov was originally a fireman, a bodyguard and the major of Sofia. His rhetoric strongly manifests the opposition between 'we' – the ordinary people and 'them' – the corrupted politicians. Former major, he often expressed his position being on the side of agents, actively solving the problems of ordinary people, in opposition to the world of politics where only words and unrealizable promises are proclaimed. GERB attracted strong support because of this illusion of 'closeness to ordinary people' (Cholova & De Waele 2011) combined with the longtime dissatisfaction of voters with previous governments. Borissov formulates powerful illusion of his party against everybody else making voters believe they do not have other option than the GERB: 'We don´t want the communists (that means the BSP), we don´t want Turks (that means DPS) and we don´t want ATAKA'[7].

Borissov´s official statements concerning minority problems were based on the same binary logic we introduced at the beginning of this paper. Minorities, causing difficulties together with pensioners, are presented as 'the bad human material' in contrast to 'the good human material'[8], represented by Bulgarians in active age, voters of GERB or at least of right-wing parties. In his statements on the 'good' and 'bad human material', he tripled the actual number of Roma in Bulgaria (in comparison to census results) and almost denied any existence of 'good human material' in Bulgaria. Indeed, Borissov uses several stereotypes in his statements: in his 'Turk-stereotype', Bulgarian Turks are corrupted and they are loyal to Turkey instead of Bulgaria, The 'Roma-stereotype' portrays them as criminals, nomadic tribe which can not be re-educated. And, in the so-called 'pensioner-stereotype', pensioners are naive and simple-minded, with nostalgic feelings toward the past the communist era, which is why they vote BSP.

Table 1: The development of electoral results of newly emerged populist parties in comparison to three traditional big parties in Bulgaria

Year	1991		1994		1997		2001		2005		2009	
	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats
Ataka									8,1	21	9,4	21
BSP – Bulgarian socialist party	33,1	106	43,5	125	22	58	17,1	48	31*	82	17,7	40
DPS – Movement for rights and freedoms	7,6	24	5,4	15	7,6	19	7,5	21	12,8	34	14,5	38
GERB – Citizens for an European development of Bulgaria											39,7	116
NDSV – National movement Simeon the second							42,7	120	19,9	53	3	-
SDS – Union of democratic forces	34,4	110	24,2	69	52,3	137	18,2	51	7,7	20	6,8	15

- The coalition included BSP, Party of Bulgarian Social Democrats, Political Movement ‚Social Democrats‘,Bulgarian Agrarian People´S Union Alexander Stamboliyski, Civil Union ‚Roma‘, Movement for Social Humanism, the Green Party of Bulgaria and the Communist Party of Bulgaria

---

7   http://www.ndt1.com/article.php/20090205212634848

8   See http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/bulgaria/4531391/Mayor-of-Sofia-brands-Roma-Turks-and-retirees-bad-human-material.html, full version in Bulgarian http://www.ndt1.com/article.php/20090205212634848

Closer look: Turks in Bulgaria

The total number of Muslims (based on religious affiliation) in Bulgaria is 966,978 of the total number of 7,928,901 citizens (2001 census data). This Muslim population includes Bulgarian Turks, Pomaks and Muslim Roma. Turks, represented by 746,664 individuals, is the biggest ethnic constituent, according to ethnic affiliation, of the Muslim community in Bulgaria. 762,516 persons indicated Turkish as their mother tongue. But the exact number of Turks in Bulgaria can only be speculated upon, because part of the population define themselves variably as Pomaks, Roma or Turks, according to situation, and the category 'Pomak' is absent in the census forms (Myuhtar 2003, 4). The census results show only the number of Bulgarian citizens who were willing to join the category 'Turkish' in the matter of ethnic group belonging.

In contrast to the majority, Turks inhabit mainly rural regions in Bulgaria. In rural regions, we can find 28 % of all Bulgarians and 68 % of all Bulgarian Turks. The rural – urban distribution is very similar in the case of Pomaks, who inhabit less developed and remote areas in the Rhodope Mountains. Turks, on the contrary, inhabit mainly the regions of Northeastern and Southeastern Bulgaria.

Figure 3: Bulgarian Turks from Perushtica, Tobacco production in the 1930s

The majority of Bulgarian Turks profess Sunni Islam, only small groups (the so called Kyzylbash) belong to the Shia denomination. Islam in Bulgaria is actively professed by Turks, Pomaks and some Roma groups which is caused by the fact that, in contrast to other forms of Islam, it has strongly syncretic character (Желязкова 1998, 372). They define themselves as 'European Muslims'. In ordinary speech or in official statements of DPS, they clearly separate themselves from all fanatic forms of Islam (Желязкова 1998, 376).

After the fall of the communist regime, the prohibition of religious ceremonies was annulled. Newly constructed and reconstructed mosques and protestant churches emerged and several religious educational institutions established. Apart from the higher Islam religious institute in Sofia, religious schools in Ruse, Shumen and Momcilgrad were founded. These mosques often house also Sunday schools (Кънев 1998, 109).

In 1991, voluntary course of Turkish language was introduced in elementary schools for pupils from the third to the eighth grade. In 1994, the government accepted – due to the activities of DPS – a new regulation enabling voluntary courses of mother tongue for all minorities to be held four hours per week throughout all

levels of elementary education. However, it is still difficult to saturate the demand for educated teachers (Кънев 1998, 104–105) and appropriate foreign-language schoolbooks and other teaching tools (Mitev 2005), caused by the migratory waves leading to a drain of educated strata of Bulgarian Turks.

Cultural and educational organizations, theater, dancing and musical groups were allowed to emerge freely after the fall of the communist regime. After November 10, 1989 cultural organizations of Turks, Armenians, Roma, Jews, Karakachans and Vlachs were registered. In 1992, the Macedonian organization TMO-Ilinden emerged but its registration was cancelled for formal reasons postponing the official founding to 1998. Such organizations usually focus on cultural activities, mother tongue education and some of them publish their own periodicals (Кънев 1998, 101–102).

The Turkish minority in Bulgaria use different types of media – such as the press, radio, television. Media presentation, however, is threatened by the emigration of educated people. There is a lack of professional journalists in Bulgaria, who would prepare the programs and rubrics focused on Turkish minority issues. There is an accompanying lack of financial means for any stable maintenance of such programs. The donors are usually composed of non-profit organizations concentrating on minority issues (Valentovitch 2001, 8–9). After the fall of the communist regime, the Turkish minority started to publish their own periodicals. The spectrum of Turkish newspapers and magazines is quite large, ranging from magazines about culture and literature – 'Кайнак', magazines for children – 'Чър-чър', 'Филиз', 'Балон', to mainly bilingual periodicals – 'Юмит', 'Заман', 'Мюслюманлар', 'Права и свободи', 'ъшък Светлина'. 'Гювен Доверие' (Valentovitch 2001, 15).

Since 2000, Bulgarian television has included bilingual broadcast of news. Radio Bulgaria has a daily broadcast in Turkish for one hour. This broadcast is, next to the NGO support, covered partly from the national budget (Valentovitch 2001, 16). The radical populist and nationalist party ATAKA, which entered the Bulgarian parliament in 2005, has been protesting against the television broadcast in Turkish. The party initiates protests to stop broadcasts in all non-Bulgarian languages. There is an obvious paradox. On one hand, ATAKA seeks to prohibit everyday one-hour broadcast in Turkish, on the other hand, they control and run their own TV channel – TV SKAT with strongly patriotic and populist contents.

Turks and Pomaks used to work in tobacco farming industry or in collective farms (Konstantinov & Simić 2010, 26). After the fall of the communist regime, Bulgaria lost its major export market for tobacco – the Soviet Union and the majority of tobacco production was closed as a result. This had an important impact on the standard of living of Turks and Pomaks (Maeva 2005, 122; Mitev 2005, 84–85). Unemployment rates are high in the regions with high percentage of Turkish population. According to an investigation in these regions, the unemployment rate among Turks is higher than is the rate among Bulgarians in the same region (Кънев 1998, 107–108). There were two kinds of response to these worsened conditions: self-subsistence with social benefits and migration (Petkov 2006, 117–118). Sociological research in Bulgaria shows that the poverty in this country is strongly ethnicized. One of the reasons is perhaps that minority populations are territorially unevenly distributed.

The closing of large factories and the destabilization of labour-market affected minorities much more than the majority. Turks usually live in the countryside and form concentrated settlements. In this case, a closure of one factory could move the living standard of whole families below the poverty line. Those families usually do not have social networks for cases of emergency extending beyond their villages or close regions. The closest social ties available in case of losing job are to be found in Turkey. That is why a significant wave of Bulgarian Turks (in years 1994 – 1997 cca 200.000 people, which is more than the emigration wave in 1950s spurred by the collectivization process) have left the country for Turkey after the fall of the communist regime (Petkova 2002, 54). Paradoxically, despite hard repressions and the large assimilation campaigns, Bulgarian Turks recall the years before 1989 in a positive way and with a certain nostalgia (Mitev 2005: 91).

The last migration wave of Bulgarian Turks to Turkey and to Western Europe can be described as collective. This migration is based on kin relations (Petkova 2002, 27–28). The aim of this migration is seasonal work, often without working permission, rather than a permanent stay (Maeva 2005, 123). The motivation is exclusively economic (Elchinova 2001, 72). In this point, this migration differs from the migration in 1980s which was motivated politically. Apart from the most frequent pattern – male migration – we can also observe female migration. Sometimes women from remote regions work abroad for several months of the year in household services. In both cases (male and female work migration), the earnings are saved and taken home and often used for coverage of daily needs of all relatives, sometimes for buying property. To have one's own has a high significance linked with many symbolic connotations for Bulgarian Turks (Petkova 2002, 54).

In general, the Turkish government generously invests in immigrants from Bulgaria. Accommodation,

food and assistance in job searching have been offered to refugees. Bulgarian Turks enjoy more care from the side of the government than Turkey's own minorities (Petkova 2002, 57). Research shows, that immigrants from Bulgaria are not equally accepted in Turkish social environment. For example, they do not share certain strict Muslim social norms, which is why the more conservative neighbors perceive them as people without any norms (Petkova 2002, 53–54). They also brought different patterns for gendered social behavior from Bulgaria. As a result, majority of new marriages is contracted inside the immigrant community (Petkova 2002, 54). The attitude that 'we are more Bulgarians, than Turks' is widespread among immigrants, especially among the older generation, which has quite serious problem with their adaptation to the Turkish social environment (Elchinova 2001, 72).

The attitude of majority: Stereotype of the Turk

Interestingly, although the majority shares the orientation to strong ties as a source of safety and security, this orientation, when identified among minorities, as well as other features of their lifestyle, is perceived to be dangerous. The minority lifestyle differs in demographic patterns, characterized by higher birth rates and in spatial distribution, their settlements being mostly segregated (Konstantinov & Simić 2010). Analysis of educational discourse shows that the majority tends to ground their identity on the acceptance of European or European-like attributes and on rejecting everything non-European. What is or what is not European is mainly negotiated and framed in terms of religion and language. 'Turks' here represent the opposite to a romanticized picture of Europeans (Pilbrow 2010). Maria Todorova (1997) applies Said´s (1978) concept of orientalism to the perception of the Balkans from the side of Western countries. The Balkans is perceived like something different, uncivilized and savage. Bulgaria's public discourse transforms this concept of 'otherness' to Turks and Pomaks.[9]

Figure 4: Turkish soldiers, 1870s

---

9   For more about the perception of Muslims in Bulgaria see (Elchinova 2001).

The popular stereotype of a 'Turk' in Bulgaria is a 'Turk' – the subjugator, always yearning for power over Bulgarians and their exploitation. 'Turks' in such a stereotype hate freedom and endorse despotism and domination, a 'Turk' cannot be a good citizen because his loyalty is always connected with Turkey. Despite of the low educational level of Turkish populations in Bulgaria and high emigration rates of Turkish intelligentsia from Bulgaria, Bulgarian 'Turks' are still perceived as smart or even foxy people which makes them dangerous.[10] Among other characteristics attributed to 'Turks' are laziness, apathy, slowliness, fanaticism, superstitiousness, jealousness[11], cruelty and bloodthirstiness.

Nevertheless, we can find a positive stereotype of a 'Turk' as well. In this stereotype a 'Turk' is an honest, lifetime friend, a good businessman who keeps his word. This stereotype concerns only 'Turks' living in Turkey, the stereotype of a Bulgarian 'Turk' is always negative. But in general, anything connected with Turkey tends to have negative connotations, sometimes seen as the worst from all evils. If in Bulgaria someone does not want to do something, he can simply say: 'Even though the Turk overrules us, I won´t do this. (*Да направя това, дори и Турско да стане*)'. When something does not run properly, it is said: 'It is like the Turk sat on it (*все едно турчин е седнал върху това*)'.

The most interesting demonstration of this negative stereotyping is to be found in the everyday Bulgarian language. There are a lot of Turkish words and morphological elements in Bulgarian. Turcisms are used in special contexts and belong to the expressive lexis in recent Bulgarian. However, Turkish lexis and morphology tend to leave the contemporary Bulgarian language in the official codificated version but remain in the expressive lexis, where they function mainly for expressing irony or parody. In general, Bulgarian equivalents are regarded as better (higher) and the use of a Turkish word represents a low cultural background of the speaker.

Discussion

A study of unreflected expressions and cliches is only one way how to identify existing and reproducing stereotypes. An examination of elementary school curricula (Pilbrow 2010; Исов & Груев 2005), literature (Bibina 2000) or media contents (Mitev 2005) could draw the picture as well. This paper attempted to draw attention to a very deep level of stereotype – the stereotypical meanings exchanged in everyday communication in Bulgarian language. A comparison of those four channels of stereotype reproduction (everyday communication, literature, educational and media contents) would be useful. Such a comparison could show us in which situations and in which ways is this stereotype used. A diachronic approach is of particular need. If we are able to observe how stereotypes change in time, we can also speculate about the future development and, possibly, add to a diversion to future tolerance by influencing policies and measures.

Conclusion

Perceptions of minorities in Bulgaria are strongly influenced by conceptual dichotomizing between 'problematic' and 'non problematic' groups. This dichotomy evokes an attitude, especially towards the 'problematic' category. The issue of 'problematic' minorities is passionately discussed, the boundary between 'us' and 'them' is (re)constructed and the resulting differences are emphasized. By contrast, public debate on those minorities designated as 'non problematic' is almost absent. The category 'problematic' minority covers two populations – Roma (Gypsy) and Muslims. In this dichotomy, Muslims and particularly 'Turks' have better position, but they play a key role in the (re)construction of 'otherness'. One of the reasons could be the absence of a written Roma (Gypsy) history, which could be re-formulated and used for collective interests in the quest for self-definition and differentiation.

If we search for the archetypal 'other' of Bulgarians, we can simply answer that it is the Turks. However, these are not the Turks in Turkey but rather the Turks living in Bulgaria, who can also be called autochtonous Turkish speaking Muslims in Bulgaria (because they do not share common identity with Turks of Turkey). Bulgarian 'Turk' is a construct which agrees with a Eurocentric picture of 'oriental others'. At the same time, it is regarded as an opposition to a romanticized picture of 'europeanness'. The attributes of a 'Turk' in Bulgarian public discourse are despotism, disloyalty, foxiness, yearning for control over others, laziness, apathy, slowliness,

---

10 In the public discourse a theory – that the ATAKA is just employees of the DPS - is spread. The DPS paid them to behave in such xenophobic way to have a rival who will keep them to be a key topic of public debates.

11 The expression ‚Turkish jealousness (*турска ревност*)' is used.

fanatism, superstitiousness, jealousness, cruelty and bloodthirstiness. The generally negative attitude toward everything 'Turkish' is involved in proverbs, phrases, fairy tales or songs.

Even more interestingly, the negative attitude is involved in lexis and morphology. Bulgarian language include many Turkish words and morphological elements. However, we can observe that Turkish elements have been removed from the official high version of Bulgarian language. We can therefore identify Turkish words only in the popular version of Bulgarian.

We can also observe the way how is this popular concept shared by the population and transformed by policy makers. This article illustrated this on the case of stereotypes used by the Prime Minister of Bulgaria Boyko Borissov. Besides many other rhetorical binary concepts, Borissov differentiates between 'good human material' and 'bad human material'. This concept is based on several variables – ethnicity, age, left-right orientation in elections and type of subsistence (e. g. Roma are for him a 'nomadic tribe'). Borissov criticizes Bulgarian Turks for being loyal to Turkey. According to many studies focusing on the relationship of Bulgarian Turks with Turkey, and with regards to the problem of identity they express (Maeva 2004; Parla 2005; Parla 2006; Petkova 2002; Smith 2008), such an ideal disloyalty seems illogical. If the bond between Bulgarian and Turkish Turks is not experienced and acknowledged[12], Bulgarian Turks will hardly prefer the interests of Turkey over Bulgaria. If we rethink Borissov´s rhetoric strategies, we see that rhetorical linking of Bulgarian Turks with Turkey is an effective strategy for gaining voters. The strategy consists in pointing to a clearly and emotionally defined problem and in finding the enemy responsible for the problem.

If we consider the roots of the 'Turks' stereotype, we clearly see how an *apriori* negative attitude toward this particular minority is shared across social contexts. This negative attitude manifests in politics as well, especially in the last ten years. New, quickly changing populist parties emerged and reached power, with the aim to overemphasize certain social problems and offer radical but easy solutions to them. In this situation, the negative stereotype of 'Turks' seems to be very popular because it has the power to attract emotions making it an ideal topic for the populist manipulation of public discourse.

---

12 See studies describing, that Bulgarian Turks are bearers of many (almost always negative) exonyms from the side of Turkish Turks (Maeva 2004)

References

Bibina, I. 2000. The image of the Turks in Bulgarian Literature and painting. V *The image of the Turk in Europe from the declaration of the Republic in 1923 to the 1990s*. Boğaziçi University, Istanbul.

Elchinova, M. 2001. Ethnic Discourse and Group Presentation in Modern Bulgarian Society. *Development and Society,* 30: 1, 51–78.

Gellner, E. 1998. *Language and solitude: Wittgenstein, Malinowski and teh Habsburg Dilemma*. Cambridge university press.

Granovetter, M. 1983. The strength of weak ties: A network theory revisited. *Sociological theory,* 1: 1, 201–233.

Cholova, B. & De Waele, J. M. 2011. Bulgaria: A Fertile Ground for Populism? *SLOVAK*, 25.

Ishiyama, J. T. & Breuning, M. 1998. The movement for rights and freedoms in Bulgaria. *Ethnopolitics in the New Europe.* Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Karasimeonov, G. 1999. The Constitutional Rights of Minorities in Bulgaria. *Beitrag der Konferenz des Rigas Network des Centre for European Constitutional Law in Athen/Griechenland.*

Konstantinov, Y. & Simić, A. 2010. Bulgaria: The Quest for Security. *Anthropology of East Europe Review,* 19: 2, 21–34.

Maeva, M. 2004. Език и етнокултурна идентичност на българските турци преселници в Република Турция. *Българска етнология* 2, 59.

——— 2005. Bulgarian Turks and the European Union. *EU Integration process from EAST to EAST:Civil society nad ethnic minorities in a changing world*, 119 - 126. Sibiu: Psihomedia Publ. house.

Mitev, P. E. 2005. Ethnic relations in Bulgaria: Legal norms and social practice. *Prospects of Multiculturality in Western Balkan States. Belgrade: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung*, 76–93.

Myuhtar, F. 2003. The Human Rights of Muslims in Bulgaria in Law and Politics since 1878. The Bulgarian Helsinki Committee. URL http://www.bghelsinki.org/index.php?module=resources&lg=en&id=0&cat_id=18#2003.

Parla, A. 2005. Locating the Homeland: Bulgarian-Turkish "Return" Migration in Transnational Perspective.

———. 2006. Longing, Belonging and Locations of Homeland among Turkish Immigrants from Bulgaria. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies,* 6: 4, 543–557.

Petkov, K. 2006. The late ethno-nationalisms in Bulgaria: their economic and social roots. *South East Europe Review for labour and social affairs,* 2, 109–127.

Petkova, L. 2002. The Ethnic Turks in Bulgaria: Social Integration and Impact on Bulgarian–Turkish Relations, 1947-2000. *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics,* 1: 4, 42–59.

Pilbrow, T. 2010. The Nation and its Margins: Negotiating a National Identity in Post-1989 Bulgaria. *Anthropology of East Europe Review,* 15: 2, 62–74.

Said, E. W. 1978. *Orientalism*. Pantheon books.

Smith, M. P. 2008. *Transnational ties: cities, migrations, and identities.* Transaction Publishers.

Todorova M. 1997. *Imagining the Balkans*. Oxford University Press.

Valentovitch, I. 2001. Impediments to the development of Turkish ethnic minority media in Bulgaria.

Желязкова, А. 1998. Турци. *Общности и идентичности в България*, ed. А. Кръстева, Петекстон: София, 371-397.

Исов, М. & Груев, М. 2005. *Най-различният съсед: образът на османците (турците) и Османската империя (Турция) в българските учебници по история през втората половина на XX век*. 7. Междунар. център за изследване на малцинствата и културните взаимодействия.

Кънев, К. 1998. Законодателство и политика към етническите и религиозните малцинства в България. *Общности и идентичности в България*, ed. А. Кръстева, Петекстон: София, 67- 117.

Макариев, П. 1998. Културна идентичност и малцинствени права в България. *Общности и идентичности в България*, ed. А. Кръстева, Петекстон: София, 48-66.