

**IACCM 10th Annual Conference and 3rd CEMS CCM / IACCM Doctoral
Workshop, University of Ruse, Bulgaria – 2011
CULTURAL ASPECTS OF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION:
Cometences and Capabilities**

**BULGARIAN ETHNIC MODEL – NATIONAL VERSION OF THE DIALOG OF
CIVILIZATIONS**

Vladimir Chukov

The end of the Cold war and the fall of Berlin wall may be considered as a result and factor for building up a new international relations' system. The old international ideological antagonism "Capitalist West-Socialist East" has been replaced by world public opinion's striving for setting up a new social harmony and economic harmony. A formula for the ex-ideological camps convergence had to be found just for arguing the new world reality and the world leadership redistribution. Meanwhile, quite often the new strategists invented ideological patterns seeking their own identification and confirmation as new international elite. The strongly theorized matter had been constructed on two levels:

1. Officially and methodologically, all social theories are oriented to the world consensus motivation. In order to be more convincing they are realized by easy comprehensible logical means.

2. Instinctively and basically, the post- Cold War theories reproduce the established intellectual status quo of the world separation regardless of the classification criteria. The civilization values classification becomes most relevant thanks to the wide scope of practical steps. Instinctively the mankind is still bearing a sense of the mistrust and aggressiveness rather than loyalty and tolerance.¹ Human beings are still divided into developed and underdeveloped, poor and rich, Christians and Muslims, Northern and Southern, West and East Europe, etc...It is an intellectual heritage from the Cold War confrontation. May be the inertia of the past is still stronger than the efforts for a consensus future.

The above mentioned specificity shapes the dialog of the civilizations as a global social theory aiming at a mutual understanding and common prosperity. Huntington's theory implements a huge impact on the matter because he conceived the idea of the main strands of the coexistence between human groups that he qualified as civilizations. Huntington's very important contribution is the conclusion that new leading subjects of the international relations' system had been appeared.

Basically, the civilization community is gathered on religious criteria and after the end of the Cold War stroke as leading subject within international relations' system. Thus, it appeared some of the main civilizations such as Western, Islamic, Christian Orthodox, Christian Catholic, African, etc...²Religious identity faces the diversity of coherent filters in the civilization building process. The religion plays the role of common dominator. It is no accident that the dogmatic system of all monotheistic religions contents the notion of God's unity. God is one for all practitioners. It is to be represented by different prophets who used their people's language. No religion claims violence. However, there are unscrupulous clerics or some translators who falsify the Holly Books. Basically, they cut across the main

¹ See Thomas Hobbes' interpretation of natural law, social contract and State-building process, Goyard, V-Fabre, S., *Le droit et la philosophie de Thomas Hobbes*, Paris, 1975; Lawrence, K., *Thomas Hobbes and Political Theory*, University Press of Kansas, 1990.

² Huntington, S., *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remarking of World Order*, translation in Bulgarian R. Radeva, Obcessian, 1999, p. 52.

**IACCM 10th Annual Conference and 3rd CEMS CCM / IACCM Doctoral
Workshop, University of Ruse, Bulgaria – 2011
CULTURAL ASPECTS OF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION:
Cometences and Capabilities**

principles of their own religion, they contradict the psychological model of the dogmatic system they practice and unconsciously quit their religious identity and civilization community. As sectarians they declare war on the majority of the mankind. Nevertheless, I share the concept that civilization subject matches appropriate civil status or well or less profiled civil society group, no religious community.

Thus, ethnologically the word “civilization” leads to two-fold meanings:

1. A psychologically shaped group, which easily (but not permanently) may be identified by its religion. The Statehood and the foreign policy are the most relevant evidences for its institutional existence.

2. A social process which coincides with the human efforts for eternal improvement and wishes for social welfare.

During the war in Kosovo Bulgarian ex-President Peter Stoyanov focused on the identical expression: “civilization choice” bearing in mind only the political component of the process in question.³ It was related to the Bulgarian society assessment of NATO air-strikes against Yugoslave army. It is to Bulgarian political elite to provide evidence of civilization values change or the shift of the so-called political culture of the Bulgarian people. It encompasses simultaneously the traditional psychological adjustment of the nation, which is summarized by the emblematic term of “religious belonging” and common sense strongly related to the human efforts for social prosperity. The problem of the coherence of the civilization community is quite important regarding the fact that it may be perceived through the following dichotomy dependence: the influence and the exact dimensions of the foreign pressure and the instinctive reaction-response of the group resulting of the religious identity.

The wars in ex-Yugoslavia and the behaviors of the so-called holders of the “Orthodox civilization” suggested that Orthodox religion might be characterized as “missing” religion or “withdrawing religion”.⁴ We may sustain this hypothesis bearing in mind the presence and the dynamism of the State as a leading foreign policy agent in the international relations’ system. The ethnic group as such took away from the civilization group the competencies of State identity and State representativeness.

During the last two decades Bulgarian Ethnic Model (BEM) got a footing in the society and imposed itself as a special political theory within the Bulgarian political agenda. It was innovated by Bulgarian society and its political practice aiming to find out the appropriate long-term answer concerning the implementation of one of the most important aspects of the internal national consents. BEM may be considered as political alternative or a multitude of political principles and characteristics that predominantly include hypothetical structural components. It aims to overcome the intellectual Communist inheritance, the internal confessional differentiation and the presumptive ethnic confrontation. On the other side, BEM became quite relevant and important intellectual product of Bulgarian post-Communist political thought. Indeed, it may be qualified as an impressive ramification of Bulgarian contemporary elitism.

³ Bulgarian President Peter Stoyanov’s Official Statement about NATO strikes in Kosovo, 17.04.1999.

⁴ Chukov, VI., Foreign Policy and Ideas, Patadigma, 1999, p. 317.

**IACCM 10th Annual Conference and 3rd CEMS CCM / IACCM Doctoral
Workshop, University of Ruse, Bulgaria – 2011
CULTURAL ASPECTS OF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION:
Cometences and Capabilities**

According to the latest ethnologic research, more than 50 different ethnic groups coexist in the country.⁵ Therefore, the ongoing competition for the power between the representatives of this ethnic amalgam has to extract democratic rules admissible for everybody. BEM may be characterized as crisis theory. Its impact is significant during the period of State weakness and social insecurity such as it has to be perceived the period of political and economic posttotalitarian transition.⁶ In Bulgaria, the overall internal crisis was pushed forward by the so called "revival process" consequences, which remain the gravest disgrace of the Bulgarian totalitarian State in the field of its multiethnic policy. At the same time, at the end of the first decade of the political changes in the country political leader of the Bulgarian Turks Ahmed Dogan publicly launched its concept of BEM. It triggered symptomatic political trends and demonstrated sincere efforts to reach a proposed ethnic harmony with convenient practical consequences. BEM remains a theoretical attempt to establish a sustainable framework of the Bulgarian internal ethnic concert.

Firstly, at this moment, it plays a very important role for the mobilization of agents enabling to build a specific Balkan matrix of State of social welfare. Despite this, the internal mechanisms of BEM implementation left many of the ethnic problems unsolved.

Secondly, BEM gradually crept into permanently renewed national ideal framework. On the eve of the new century, Bulgarian public opinion identified full membership in the European Union and NATO, popularized by the media like "the immanent Euroatlantic orientation", as part of the post-Communist national interests transformed in respective foreign policy goals.

In 1998 political leader of Bulgarian Turks and the Movement of Rights and Freedoms Ahmed Dogan started to shape the theoretical formula the interBulgarian civilization dialog. He pretended to launch within Bulgarian civil society and political elite political and social matrix that he called Bulgarian ethnic model (BEM). In 2001 this theoretical construct had been strongly contested by several Gypsy's NGOs. Dogan claimed that BEM is one of the rational and civilization options to be offered to Bulgarian society unlike the bloody Yugoslave interfaith and interethnic model. I would like to summarize the following specific features as they had been formulated by Bulgarian Turks' leader:

1. The Dialog of civilizations is a real and quite distinctive process within Bulgarian social and political space as its agents had been specified. It is easy to identify them insofar it concerns religious shaped bloc. Those agents are quite relevant and sufficient operational for initiating and maintaining active intercivilization contacts. Meanwhile, it is difficult whenever it concerns in-group or co-subjects' dialog within a specific civilization bloc. Thus, the ethnos as policy building agent remains the real holder and the originator of the in-group civilization bloc. The ethnic group plays the role of the most active social factor distinguished by the following features: an autonomous and self-changing reflex system, an independent evaluation

⁵ The concerned information is collected upon unofficial ethnographic statistical researches of Bulgarian NGO Center for Historical and Political Studies, 1999

⁶ The crisis in neighbor Macedonia in March 2001 and the legislative elections in June 2001 seriously challenged the BEM background. The statements of Bulgarian Turk and Gypsy leaders became more radical claiming more effective involvement of the big minorities in the power.

**IACCM 10th Annual Conference and 3rd CEMS CCM / IACCM Doctoral
Workshop, University of Ruse, Bulgaria – 2011
CULTURAL ASPECTS OF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION:
Cometences and Capabilities**

system of given historical case, independent concept of Statehood traditions and a specific notion of national unity.

Bearing in mind the above mentioned circumstances the difference between the two ethnic groups – Bulgarians and Serbs, who are representatives of Balkan Orthodox bloc and respectively their minority communities – Turks and Albanians, are quite relevant. The so-called “ethnic” or “nationalist vote” varies in both countries in very large scale. In Bulgaria sociologists suggest about 20-30% of ethnic Bulgarians express to so-called ethnic vote unlike Serbia where nationalist motivated voters are to be evaluated about 60-70%. Similar image and report are to be outlined among the minority political parties. 50-60% of Bulgarian Turks support vote for its ethnical political party MRF while Albanians in Serbia vote 100% for their nationalist political organizations. These figures prove the existence of two controversial models issued from the same civilization bloc, Bulgarian Ethnic Model and Serbian Ethnic Cleaning.

When we talk about the ethnic group as real subject of the dialog of civilizations in Bulgaria I focus on the special role of the Turks as the main minority community. Other Muslim groups remain dispersed among Bulgarian majority. Meanwhile, Bulgarian Gypsies endeavored for their own political organization. In 1999 they set up “Free Bulgaria” and few years later “Euroroma” for claiming to be independent players in BEM. As a matter in fact, the self-sense of inferiority prevailed within Gypsy’s and Pomak’s (Bulgarian Pomaks) behaviour and these communities remained satellite social and political agents toward the most influential group – Bulgarians and Turks. Basically, Pomak’s and Gypsy’s vote had been oriented toward the ruling political party – Union of Democratic Forces, Bulgarian Socialist Party, the royalist movement from side or the MRF from another side.

2. The dialog of civilizations and its Bulgarian version is to be perceived as ideological problem. We have to tackle to problem on both sides: foreign and domestic policy. Ahmed Dogan declared at the 6th National Conference of MRF that BEM and its civilization dimensions represent the triumph of the world liberalism. He is right from formal point of view. The world public opinion does not identify all partisan of the dialog of civilizations as ideological liberals. This is because the Islamic world or community has no clear, well-shaped political and ideological spectrum as it is in European society. Thus, the dialog of civilizations is rather permanent process of methodological comparison than a clash between the main political and ideological families – Liberalism, Conservatism and Socialism.

The political parties speed up the process of the dialog of civilizations as far as it is a political case. The evidences in Bulgarian case are quite obvious. The local political agents are not only constructors, but also the theorists of BEM’s principles. They focused on the equality and balance between the partners in the dialog. Ahmed Dogan declared that “the real criterion of the dialog of civilizations and the democracy is the moral. It concerns the relationship between the majority and the different minorities. The ethnonational State has to respect the principal of the equality of all citizens including the collective rights and freedoms of the minorities”.⁷

During the periods 1991-1992 and 1997-2001 the ruling Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) provided the conservative pattern outlines for ethnic minorities’ involvement. Smaller political organizations like VMRO, Civil Party of Bulgaria,

⁷ Dogan, A., Political report at the 6th National Conference, 17-18.01.2000, p.6.

**IACCM 10th Annual Conference and 3rd CEMS CCM / IACCM Doctoral
Workshop, University of Ruse, Bulgaria – 2011
CULTURAL ASPECTS OF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION:
Cometences and Capabilities**

etc...with moderate impact on domestic public opinion, enriches the right wing visions. In mid - 2001 Bulgarian Conservative wing remains not quite fermented and structured from ideological point of view despite its international recognition. UDF and the Popular Union are electoral type political organizations. This circumstance bases the confined and selective flux of experts dealing with minorities' problems. As a whole, the Conservative political subjects may be characterized by lack of strongly theoretical purposes. The sole sources in this matter are ad hoc organized workshops, interviews and statements of the ruling UDF leaders provoked by incidental cases. The views in question are enriched by the similar mass media interventions of the leaders of other right wing political parties - CPB, VMRO, etc... The Conservative approach for minorities' involvement in the power includes the following items:

- A. Implementation of "non-quota" approach, which entails significant political and social offspring during the respective political model dominance. On February 2000, during the UDF workshop in Pamporovo Ivan Kostov, the UDF leader stated that the ethnic identity is not favor. The representatives of the local minorities are going to be involved in the State administration (including the high level) according to their capacity of Bulgarian citizens with requested professional skills, but not as Turks, Gypsies, Pomaks, etc...⁸
- B. Direct contact with the relevant minority representatives by means of getting round of the spontaneous shaped in-group elite of each community. Logically, the Bulgarian Conservatives founded artificial elites, which gradually transformed themselves in semi-dependant political subjects. Par example the National Movement for Rights and Freedoms (NMRF) was founded by MRF rebel Guner Tahir and was assisted by UDF. This minuscule political party survives only for decreasing the MRF electoral influence. G. Tahir, himself remains critical towards UDF Conservative approach towards Turkish community's involvement in the power.⁹
- C. It seems that this way of interacting with the minorities is not the best within Bulgarian political and social traditions. The Conservative method provokes constant misunderstandings with the appropriate political party or the minority cultural elite. The MRF isolation from the power suggests risk of social tension. The increased verbal tension between UDF and MRF culminated in the instinctive statement of Ivan Kostov that "MRF is malediction for Bulgaria".

It seems Bulgarian Socialist party (BSP) remained the most hesitant leading political agent in Bulgaria to clarify its stance toward the local version of the dialog of civilizations. In the outset of the transition period the difference between socialists and social democrats is evident. It seems that BSP as successor of the totalitarian Bulgarian Communist party and main political party in Bulgaria harbored some active nationalist remnants from the Communist period. Little by little BSP official stance

⁸ Trud, 17 February 2000

⁹ In an interview in "24 hours" newspaper published on 14 March 2001, Guner Tahir declared that UDF policy towards the minorities is totally wrong. Despite this media intervention G. Tahir once again signed a pre-electoral accord with UDF for mutual participation in the legislative election

**IACCM 10th Annual Conference and 3rd CEMS CCM / IACCM Doctoral
Workshop, University of Ruse, Bulgaria – 2011
CULTURAL ASPECTS OF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION:
Cometences and Capabilities**

shifted due to the ad hoc political considerations and as whole remained theoretically undermined. Bulgarian Communists who inspired and realized the so-called “revival process” during the period 1984-1989 later, in 1991, attempted to ban Movement for rights and freedoms. In 1995 former BSP leader and today’s Bulgarian president Georgui Parvanov compared municipal elections in Kardjali with Stalingrad battle. While in 2000 he called for adoption of European vision for State-nation building process removing the ethnic criteria. In 1999 he sent a letter of solidarity to Slobodan Miloshevich, responsible for the ethnic cleaning in Kosovo. In 2011 Parvanov categorically condemned Bulgarian nationalist party Ataka’s attack against the prayer at Sofia mosque.

3. The character, the history and the ideological specificity of the local nationalism is the third factor influencing the national version of the dialog of civilizations. Ahmed Dodan declared that the structure of the nationalist ideology is the most important component of the stability of BEM.¹⁰ It must be added also the nature of local populist speech as leading operational mean for the political goals’ realization. Bulgarians are among the emotional southern nations that are strongly vulnerable to populist propaganda. It is noteworthy that in Bulgaria stoke three types of populist expression. The first is elitist and typical of the party of former monarch Simeon II. The second can be called “populism for the masses” and it is appropriate for the now ruling party GERB of the Prime Minister Boyko Borisov. The third can be classified as aggressive, racist and remains specific for the far nationalist political part Ataka, leded by Volen Siderov.

Similar is the situation in Greece, Italy, partly in France. Politicians like Boyko Borisov, Nicolas Sarkozy or Silvio Berlusconi could hardly become leaders in Nord European countries.

According to Ahmed Dogan’s theory nationalist feelings in the Balkans are projected in the past of each people. The nationalism is playing the role of a redeeming mechanism for the accumulated historical reflexes.¹¹ We can also add that nationalism of the small nations depends proportionally on the feelings of inferiority, which is demonstrated by the satellite behaviour towards the big powers.

The nationalist behaviour has a long history and may be interpreted by the specific understanding of each of the following components: Statehood, national interests, national and State sublimity, national consensus, etc...the history of the national State remains the most important factor for nationalism building process and its ideological features as leading political doctrine.

There are three kinds of nationalist theory and appropriate behaviours, whose classification depends on whether they produce stimulating or destructive relations with the dialog of civilizations.

1. Missionary nationalism is typical for the ethnosocieties that rely on imperial consciousness of the nation. As a whole, such kind of nations feels satisfied by the place and the importance of their State in the New World Order. In Europe we may classify the leading nations as France, Great Britain, etc... In the Balkans we may

¹⁰ Dogan, A., Untitled Paper.....p.8.

¹¹ Ibid.....p.9.

**IACCM 10th Annual Conference and 3rd CEMS CCM / IACCM Doctoral
Workshop, University of Ruse, Bulgaria – 2011
CULTURAL ASPECTS OF CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION:
Cometences and Capabilities**

perceive Greece (Bizantium) and Turkey (Ottoman Empire before Erdogan's coming on power in 2002);

2. Aggressive and destructive nationalism is appropriate for nations, which built Empire relied on political domination of one ethnic or religious group on the others. The ex-Empires had been humiliated by the realities of the New World Order. In the Balkans Serbs are typical holders of such kind of nationalism. They established Yugoslave Empire by copying the structure and the ideology of former USSR.

3. Nationalism of participation or supporting type is appropriate for the majority of world State-nations. We may also call neutral from the point of view of maintaining a logical and balanced system of international relations. Bulgarians set up ethnic nation, not civilian one, reproduce exactly such kind of nationalism. Bulgaria had never been an Empire and Bulgarian legislature never acquired colonial-power characteristics.

So, we may summarize the following BEM characteristics as internal civilization dialog in Bulgaria and as they perceived by Ahmed Dogan:

1. Civil society is unified in its diversity;
2. Society pluralism is an imperative precondition for mutual enrichment of all social components;
3. The imposition of a monolithic ethnic nation will lead to violence and State destruction.

Author

Prof. DSc. Vladimir Chukov
University of Ruse/ Varna Free University
e-mail: vlachu1@gmail.com