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**BULGARIA POLITICAL PARTY
DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE
ASSESSMENT & PROGRAM DESIGN**

Prepared for:

**U.S. Agency For International Development/Bulgaria
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A

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Acronyms	iii
Executive Summary	iv
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
A. Purpose	1
B. Background	1
C. Methodology and Research Perspective	2
D. Organization of the Report	4
Chapter 2: Constraints to Enhanced Party Electoral Competitiveness.....	5
A. The Setting	5
B. Cultural and Social Attitudes towards Political Parties.....	5
C. Legal Framework of Parties, Voting Systems and Elections.....	7
D. Impact of Local Elections on Party Behavior	8
E. Party Election Campaign Capacity	9
Chapter 3: Challenges to Formation of Effective Party Structures.....	12
A. Overall Organizational Status of Parties.....	12
B. Internal Organizational Development.....	13
C. Institutionalization of Party Structure.....	15
D. Prospects for Party Reform	15
E. The Needs of Women in Politics.....	16
F. Youth Needs	18
Chapter 4: Potential for Effective Party Governance	21
A. Outreach Capacity	21
B. Links to Advocacy Groups and the Media.....	27
C. Coalition-Building Experience.....	29
D. Role of the Opposition.....	29
Chapter 5: An Overview of Donor Experience in Assisting Party Development	31
A. U.S. Experience in Direct Support of Party Development	31
B. Other Donor Experience in Direct Support of the Political Party Process	34
C. USAID Experience in Indirect Support of Party System Development.....	35
D. Future Plans and Potential Donor Cooperation.....	38

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Program Design Recommendations 40

 A. Conclusions 40

 B. Program Design Recommendations 42

ANNEXES

1. Scope of Work 1-1

2. Persons Interviewed 2-1

3. Interview Schedules 3-1

4. Documents and Resources Consulted 4-1

ACRONYMS

BAFECR	Bulgarian Association of Fair Elections and Civil Rights
BSP	Bulgarian Socialist Party
BSY	Bulgarian Socialist Youth
CEGA	Creating Effective Grassroots Alternatives
CSD	Center for the Study of Democracy
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
CSP	Center for Social Practices
DemNet	Democracy Network Program
EA	Eurointegration Association
FLGR	Foundation for Local Government Reform
ICNL	International Center for Non-for-Profit Law
IRI	International Republic Institute
ISC	Institute for Sustainable Communities
LGI	Local Government Initiative
MP	Member of Parliament
MRF	Movement for Rights and Freedoms
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NED	National Endowment for Democracy
NGO	Non-Government Organizations
NMSII	National Movement Simeon the Second
OSF	Open Society Foundation
PBF	Partners Bulgaria Foundation
PBW	Party of Bulgarian Women
SUNY	State University of New York
UDF	Union of Democratic Forces
WFD	Westminster Foundation for Democracy
YUDF	Youth UDF

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Carried out during March 16-April 6, 2002, this assessment focuses on selected aspects of political party development in Bulgaria and on a set of design recommendations. The context for the assessment is the plight of Bulgarian parties that face a considerable uphill struggle in convincing a largely demoralized and cynical public of their ability to represent their interests. In a society where parties are generally mistrusted and politicians are widely believed to be corrupt, the parties are challenged with building confidence among the public at large. The success of the NMSII in the 2001 parliamentary elections is a reflection of popular protest against the existing parties, and a desire to have political organizations that are more trustworthy and more responsive to popular demands.

Findings suggest that many political leaders and analysts see the need to improve the framework in which elections are held. The area most in need of reform is widely believed to be that of party and campaign financing. A second major issue concerns the parties' tendency to ignore public opinion, except at election time. Once the election is over, the parties, once more, turn inwards, all but ignoring the concerns and problems of their constituencies.

In formal terms, most Bulgarian parties appear to have mastered the basics of electoral communication. Platforms are written and disseminated, via the internet and printed leaflets, and overall strategies are agreed upon among the leadership. But at the micro-level, campaign communications appear to break down. Many parties attribute their difficulty in communicating their message to distortions by the media.

In strategic terms, most parties are relatively centralized. Major policy decisions are taken by the central leadership and fed down to the grass-roots, and there does not appear to be a well-developed grassroots party responsiveness. Related is the absence of strong membership recruitment practices among the parties. Additionally, there are few explicit fund-raising strategies and practices among the parties, and it is increasingly clear that transparency in party expenditure would go some way toward rebuilding confidence in parties.

Organizationally, the characteristic that most distinguishes Bulgarian parties from parties in west-central Europe, is the fact that they are organized largely on the basis of patronage, rather than on policy, and that their programmatic distinctiveness is weak. Their general willingness to form coalitions is also a feature that, though beneficial in some respects, limits the extent to which parties can develop coherent, autonomous internal institutions. There is, undoubtedly, a need for Bulgarian political parties to reform their internal structures, both to improve information flows and to enhance input from the grass-roots.

Communication with the public is yet another one of the main areas where Bulgarian parties have shown weakness and have expressed an interest in having assistance. The UDF and the BSP both interpret their failure in the 2001 election, in terms of weaknesses in their respective communications strategies--And the NMSII has recently become acutely aware of its own lack of success in this domain, as its support in the polls has plummeted. Many party leaders blame the media for their inability to get their message across to the public. They also blame corruption of the media and of research organizations, such as polling agencies. But though tensions between the media and the parties are undoubtedly a factor, many persons interviewed also

admitted that their own communications strategies were inadequate. Observers say that politicians lack the skills to get their message across to the media in clear and comprehensive fashion.

Concerning Bulgaria's coalition-building experience, the national party system is unusual in its cohesiveness. Whereas most of the post-communist states have experienced high levels of party fragmentation and party system instability, the underlying opposition in Bulgaria, between the 'red' Socialists and the 'blue' UDF (together with the orthogonally positioned MRF), generated a relatively stable partisan structure, until 2001. The unexpected success of the NMSII disrupted this pattern of alignment, but it is unclear that the basic pattern will not reassert itself. The opposition, on the other hand, has over the past twelve years, been highly polarized. This has limited the extent to which opposition forces have acted "constructively."

External assistance to political party development by the U. S. has been provided through the USAID-supported International Republican Institute (IRI), the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). Not all of this support has been implemented along partisan lines, some of it having been aimed more broadly at fair elections and reform of the party system generally. IRI aimed at supporting the emergence of a center-right coalition in the mid-1990s. Through most of 2001, it undertook monthly polls, right up to the Parliamentary elections, as well as focus group research, especially with women voters, youth, and voters outside of Sofia.

The NDI has been supporting fair elections and civil society in Bulgaria since 1990. Its role in the country has been somewhat different from IRI, in that it has supported a broader spectrum of political activity, rather than focusing on the development of one or two parties' capacity to organize. The NDI in the mid-1990s focused on reversing the monopoly of central parties in selecting local candidates, by stressing grassroots power. In more recent work, during 1998-99, the NDI consulted MPs from BSP, UDF, MRF, and Euroleft parties and their local staffers, in how to manage citizen concerns, daily staff schedules, and public outreach generally.

Alongside assistance from the U. S., the British, Germans, and Netherlands have ongoing programs that support Bulgarian political party development. Other governments, such as Sweden and Greece, have supported short-term efforts, but do not have a presence in Bulgaria. Here, we will review the above Government programs, though with the proviso that several of the foreign parties are not physically present in Bulgaria.

The British Government provides direct support to political parties through the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD). WFD funds party to party work for the major United Kingdom parties, namely the Conservatives, who are affiliated with the UDF, Labour, formerly linked with the Euroleft, and the Liberal Democrats, tied to the Liberal Democratic Union. The German Government supports four political party foundations, the Hanns Seidel Stiftung, an arm of the German Christian Social Union, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, an arm of the Social Democratic Party, Konrad Adenauer (center-right affiliation, partnered with UDF) and Friedrich Naumann (liberal affiliation, partnered with MRF). German party foundations seem much more direct in supporting specific counterpart parties than the U. S., and somewhat more than the British. Netherlands partisan-based cooperation with European parties is similar to the Germans.

USAID indirect support on the party system includes work with civil society organizations that initiate citizen demand for more transparent and accountable elected officials and political parties. These include implementing partners, think tanks and advocacy organizations. A sample of assisted activities includes training of national legislators in parliamentary democracy, support for more accountable, transparent local government, enhancing the advocacy role among NGOs, anti-corruption assistance, and ethnic integration of the Roma people.

Donors and some of the international foundations supporting partisan party development in Bulgaria have been stalled in their planning, precisely because the political party system is in flux. Partly at stake is whether the NMS can make a convincing case with the public, the Government, and with the other parties on its eligibility and legitimacy in establishing its party status. If a scenario of a viable NMS party comes to pass, then support from its most natural US counterpart, the IRI, could be considered as a clear option. Generally, because of the partisan work of international political party foundations, there seems to be little programmatic cooperation among the parties. However, party foundations with common political agendas do coordinate, and there are even a few instances of cross-national cooperation.

Three design recommendations are proposed: First a program design for National Party Communications Capacity Building; second, Enhancing Regional and Local Party Accountability; and third, Party Youth Political Leadership Development.

The objective of the National Party Communications Capacity Building program design is to establish enhanced internal communications capability within the main Bulgarian political parties, in order to improve accountable political representation and governance. Its intended result is the establishment of self-sustaining mechanisms within the main political parties for gathering information and for disseminating party messages.

For the Enhancing Regional and Local Party Accountability program design, the objective is to aid Bulgarian political parties to broaden channels of information to the media, leading to a better informed public, which ultimately must hold political leaders accountable for their conduct in and out of office. The intended result is local and regional political party organizations, better able to communicate with their constituents and the public generally, and with a capacity to engage the media and advocacy groups in conveying a measurably greater volume of reliable political information to voters.

The objective of the Party Youth Political Leadership Development program design is the creation of a new generation of political leaders to spearhead the development of more effective and representative party structures and to improve relationships within the parties, with constituents, with the media, and the public. Its intended result is a body of young, informed political party leaders with experience to lead their parties, with a capability to operate with transparency and accountability to the voting public, and to take more and more responsibility for party leadership.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to assess selected aspects of political party development in Bulgaria and, on the basis of the assessment, design a set of interventions. A team of three consultants carried out fieldwork for the assessment, during March 16 to April 6, 2002. The assessment's major premise is that many Bulgarian political parties are lacking the resources and experience necessary to achieve the aims of democratic parties, and that targeted assistance might help them better to fulfil these aims.

This assessment endeavours to identify both the strengths and the weaknesses of each of the seven main parties active in Bulgarian politics. Our research was designed to identify those areas in which assistance in the area of political party development might be most beneficial. The Scope of Work guiding the assessment is reproduced in Annex 1.

PARTIES INCLUDED IN BULGARIA POLITICAL PARTY DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT

1. National Movement of Simeon the Second	5. Gergjovden
2. Union of Democratic Forces	6. Euroleft
3. Bulgarian Socialist Party Coalition	7. Bulgarian Business Block
4. Movement for Rights and Freedoms	8. Free Democrats

Our assessment has four components. First, it addresses the constraints under which political parties in Bulgaria operate, including legal institutional frameworks, electoral pressures, and the politics of negotiation in a parliamentary system. Second, it examines the role of cultural and social attitudes toward multi-party politics in general, as reflected in strategies and styles of political communication, modes of popular participation in parties, the engagement of parties with other civil society organizations, and relations among parties. Third, it assesses the consequences of qualitative and quantitative differences in experience and organizational resources across parties. Fourth, it investigates parties' previous experiences with external assistance. A set of three program design interventions derive from the assessment.

B. BACKGROUND

Since the 1989 collapse of communism in Bulgaria, political parties have been faced with a variety of challenges, including popular mobilization, internal conflict-management, and organizational capacity building. A range of factors has affected the varying success of Bulgaria's parties in meeting these challenges. Some of these are legal and institutional constraints, the experience of party leaders and activists, and cultural norms and values of party activists and ordinary citizens alike. An overriding factor is the objective difficulty faced by parties in power of meeting the demands of the population, at a time of economic hardship and political change.

Not unimportant is the simultaneous need to fulfill the criteria established by external actors, such as the European Union, the Council of Europe, and international lending agencies. Additionally, is the June 2001 arrival on the scene of a dark horse candidate for Prime Minister, the Former King Simeon. His National Movement unexpectedly captured fully 50% of the seats in Parliament, implying a possible protest vote against a decade or more of what many Bulgarians feel is opportunistic political party rule.

Bulgarian parties face a considerable uphill struggle in convincing a largely demoralized and cynical public of their ability to represent popular interests. In a society where parties are generally mistrusted and politicians are widely believed to be corrupt, the parties are challenged with building confidence among the public at large. This challenge has several aspects, from political communication with the electorate to the internal regulation of financial activities.

A USAID/Bulgaria democracy and governance assessment of June 2001, pointed to several constraints to the development of political parties. One is the poor quality of communications between the parties and their constituents. Another is the weak capacity of parties' responsiveness to the population and their weak ability to respond to the population's demands. An absence of transparency in both their members and the public, in party fundraising and spending on election campaigns and party operations, is yet another constraint. Finally, the internal structure of most parties was found to be largely undemocratic, including centralized decision-making, lack of leadership accountability to the rank-and-file, and little or no empowerment of local party branches.

1. USAID/SOFIA STRATEGY AS A CONTEXT FOR THE ASSESSMENT

This assessment falls under USAID/Bulgaria's draft Democracy and Governance strategy for years 2002-2007. The overarching strategic objective (SO2) is: *Key Democratic Systems Work Effectively, Accountably, and Responsively*. Feeding that strategy from further down the chain of causality is an intermediate result (IR2.4), namely, *More Effective Parliamentary Practices*. And, finally, the assessment is most closely tied to the sub-IR (2.4.3) *Political Parties Increasingly Represent Citizens' & Public Interests in the Legislative Process*. Future support based on recommendations made in this report will necessarily contribute directly to the last outcome.

C. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE

1. METHODOLOGY

The team included a comparative political scientist specialized in Eastern and Central Europe, a senior media specialist also experienced in the Region, and a development generalist, with a background in democracy and governance in transition societies, as well as USAID's program cycle.

The methodology for the assessment includes in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and site observations. In-depth interviews were used with members of parliament, political parties, media representatives, donor officials, and program implementers.

Key-informant interviews were carried out with leaders of major institutions or organizations that influenced the development of a political culture of an elective, representational democracy. These included the heads of the respective parties, senior MPs, leaders in the executive branch, owners or editors of major newspapers, heads of television and radio stations, civil society leaders, and donor institution officials.

Site observation, while not central to our research, included some effort to discern patterns of work and specific practices, associated with the implementation of political party agendas and mandates. For non-party-affiliated institutions, organizations, and groupings, the team attempted to identify, in addition to social capital resources, material resources used to promote more open and transparent democratic processes.

TYPES & NUMBER OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED AND METHODOLOGY EMPLOYED IN THE ASSESSMENT

Type And # Of Persons Interviewed

METHOD	MP	Party Member	Party Rank & File	Newspaper Editor	TV/ Radio Editor	Media Related	NGO/ CSO Member	Int'L Party Support Rep.	Donor Rep.
In-depth Interview	7	14	—	5	4	6	10	6	6
Key Informant Interview	6	20	—	2	3	1	3	1	7
Focus Group Discussion	--	--	9	--	--	--	--	--	--

Our research was focused largely in Sofia, the capital city, since that is where many of the people and institutions that were the major players in the political party life of Bulgaria were located. The team felt that it was necessary, however, to reduce the capital city bias, by broadening the geographic and demographic scale of the research. It therefore interviewed a limited sampling of local media leaders and grassroots party leadership and rank-and-file party members in a few mid-sized cities and in one smaller city. Our visits included Plovdiv, Starra Zagora, Blagoevrad, Mezdra, and Haskovo.

2. RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE

Our perspective that frames the methodology and ensuing research is based on a certain understanding that political parties in a parliamentary democracy have several major developmental tasks. First, parties need to develop the following internally-directed capabilities:

- Coherent policy programs and strategies for implementing those programs, while in government;

- effective internal organizational structures that enable the party to mediate internal differences in a way that is both democratic and efficient; and
- a fund-raising and fund-management capacity.

Consequently, parties need to focus on developing the following membership outreach practices:

- Recruitment mechanisms to attract party activists and prospective candidates; and
- effective channels of accountability, representation, and communication with the grass-roots.

Finally, they have to pay attention to broader, external constituencies, including:

- Channels of communication with other elements of political and civil society, including government agencies, other parties, the media, think-tanks, lobbies, and other NGOs; and
- a reliable capacity for political communication with the wider public.

The above tasks formed the basis for our selection of persons, to interview, and for topics covered in our interview schedules. (See Annex 3 for copies of interview schedules.)

D. ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

Following this chapter, the second chapter reviews constraints to enhanced party electoral competitiveness. Specifically, it will consider cultural and social attitudes towards political parties and the legal framework of parties, voting systems and elections. It will then examine the legal rights and responsibilities of the parties, the impact of local elections on party behavior, and party election campaign capacity.

Chapter 3 deals with the challenges to the formation of an effective, namely broad-based, viable, internally-democratic, party structure. It reviews party internal organizational development, the effectiveness of party structures, and the prospects for party reform.

The fourth chapter considers the potential for effective party governance, including its outreach capacity and links to advocacy groups and to the media. This chapter also reviews parties' experience in coalition building and the role of the opposition in governing.

Chapter 5 is an overview of donor experience in assisting political parties. It reviews the role of the U.S. Government in the support of party development and the electoral process, as well as other donor experience in support of the parties. Potential donor cooperation is also explored.

The final chapter, Chapter 6, presents conclusions and three programmatic recommendations. Recommendations are elaborated as design frameworks for potential use by USAID/Bulgaria in program planning and implementation.

CHAPTER 2

CONSTRAINTS TO ENHANCED PARTY ELECTORAL COMPETITIVENESS

A. THE SETTING

Bulgarian electoral politics between 1990 and 2001 were dominated by two opposing forces: The ex-communist Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) on the left, and the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) on the right. The Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF)--a centrist party supported largely by ethnic Turks--was the third significant actor in the party system. By 2001, an apparently stable pattern of electoral support had been established in Bulgaria. Each of the four previous legislative polls had been won alternatively by one of the two main parties: The BSP in 1990, the UDF in 1991, The BSP in 1994, and the UDF again in 1997. The elections of June 2001 shattered this pattern, bringing to power a movement formed in support of former King Simeon of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. This unexpected turn of events generated a crisis among the existing parties, which has caused them to rethink both their internal structures and their basic *raison d'être*. Restoring electoral competitiveness is very much the goal of large sections of Bulgaria's party leadership at this juncture.

B. CULTURAL AND SOCIAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS POLITICAL PARTIES

Bulgarian political parties do not function in a separate world, divorced from public opinion and the media. Political parties in democratic societies are one actor on the stage of the social drama where they speak to and react to public opinion--the voters and the media--which is a transmitter of information between the parties and the voters.

Since the collapse of the Bulgarian communist system in 1989, Bulgarian political parties have gone through tumultuous times as they try, not always very successfully, to take on the obligations of a democratic society. Bulgarian governments and elected bodies, from local levels to the national, have been no less challenged, as they attempt to make the transition from a one-party state to a multi-party political system.

The present day Bulgarian political-media-public opinion culture, evolving over the past 12 years and marked now by guarantees of free speech, press and popular assembly, has benefited many of Bulgaria's eight million plus people. But the flaws and failures of the political system are apparent to all.

1. ATTITUDINAL IMPACT ON PARTY SYSTEM REFORM

Attitudes toward parties involve levels of trust and perceptions of representative potential. In the contemporary Bulgarian context, it is also necessary to interpret the electoral support given to the National Movement Simeon the Second (NMSII) in the 2001 parliamentary elections.

There is evidence that Bulgarian citizens, in general, have low levels of trust in political parties. Parties are widely believed to be corrupt and unwilling to represent the interests of the public.

Frequent allegations in the media of ruling parties plundering the national coffers has bred a situation in which many members of the public have come to the conclusion that politicians are unreliable and self-serving, regardless of their political affiliation. The 2001 election, in which a political organization formed three months prior to election day was able to win 42.74 percent of the vote and half the seats in the national assembly, was widely interpreted as an indicator of failure of Bulgarian political parties in the public eye.

The NMSII was formed as a coalition by two small and previously obscure political organizations (the Movement for National Revival *Oborishte* and the Party of Bulgarian Women), at the behest of former King Simeon, who returned to Bulgaria and entered politics in April 2001. The fact that a man, with no previous political experience, could rise to power within such a short time, led many in the country to view the electoral results as a clear sign that the people had rejected political parties altogether. It is not evident, however, that the success of the NMSII ought to be interpreted as a rejection of multipartism itself; it is rather a reflection of popular protest against the existing parties, and a desire to have political organizations that are more trustworthy and more responsive to popular demands.

Bulgaria's political parties are still secretive and, as almost anyone one talks with in Bulgaria will say, they are seen as being chiefly interested in not only gaining power, but in using political authority for personal gain. Public opinion surveys routinely show that the Bulgarian public does not trust political parties to serve public interests, whether to deal with national issues, such as high unemployment, or with mundane local problems like street repair, trash collection or pension payments. As a respondent to a National Democratic Institute survey replied, "When a member of parliament moves to Sofia, he forgets about us."

Data assembled by Alpha Research, a Sofia-based public opinion survey organization, show that on a scale of 1 to 10--the latter representing the greatest trust--the two main political parties, the Union of Democratic Forces and the Bulgarian Socialist Party, are rated at 2.7. The Bulgarian government gets the same score. The parliament is rated even lower, at 2.4. For comparison purposes, it is telling to know that surveyed Bulgarians have almost complete trust in families--a 9.6 rating--and then relatives, 7.9.

The popular cynical attitude toward Bulgarian parties that has emerged in the last 12 years is widely seen as the reason Bulgarian voters turned to their former king, Simeon II, and to his National Movement, in last year's parliamentary elections. In a stunning victory, as noted earlier, the King and his Movement won half the seats in the 240 member National Assembly.

Public cynicism is characterized by an informed journalist we interviewed, who noted that, "The confidence of most voters in parties and in key institutions, like the Parliament, is critically low. This explains the support for King Simeon. People were so disillusioned with existing political parties that they voted for him. The other parties--the UDF and BSP--had taken voter support for granted." As another experienced political journalist said, "The nostalgia vote propelled the King to power, as if somehow King Simeon embodied a former political system imagined to radiate integrity and trust."

Recognition of popular discontent with parties has resulted in a strong impetus to reform. Many of the political parties have recently experienced changes of leadership (including the two main political organizations--the BSP and the UDF), and others have undergone fundamental

restructuring (e.g. the Euroleft). There is widespread evidence of a generational change among the political elite, as many younger politicians have recently found opportunities to rise in party hierarchies. Parties also appear to be increasingly aware of the need to establish stronger links with the public, and to improve their communication capabilities.

C. LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF PARTIES, VOTING SYSTEMS AND ELECTIONS

1. LEGAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARTIES

Political party activity in Bulgaria is governed by a variety of different laws. The most important of these are: The Constitution of Bulgaria, the Political Parties Act of 1990, the Election of Members of Parliament Act of 2001, the Local Elections Act of 1995, and the Political Parties Act of 2001. These acts, together, establish the framework for party competition to the unicameral parliament, as well as to the non-executive presidency and to local councils.

The legislation governing political parties is, by international standards, unexceptional, save for the ban on ethnic parties suggested by Article 3 of the 1990 act, and the stipulation in Article 5 that parties must conduct their activities in the Bulgarian language. In practice, these restrictions have not proved significantly detrimental to the political organization of ethnic minorities, due to liberal interpretations of the law by the Constitutional Court—but they could in theory be questioned on the grounds that they violate minority rights. In other respects, the legislation governing party formation provides for democratic political structures.

The function of parties is “to promote the shaping and expression of the political will of the people through elections or in any other way” (Article 1). Parties are required to elect leadership bodies and to elaborate formal statutes (Article 7). This framework is, in some respects, more developed than that of many established democracies. It must be noted, however, that the legislation on parties somewhat restricts the types of support which foreign donors can offer to parties. Donors need to be mindful of article 17 (2) of the Political Parties Act, which states that “political parties may not receive aid, donations and testaments from foreign states and organizations.”

2. EFFECTIVENESS OF THE VOTING SYSTEM

Parliamentary elections have, since 1991, taken place according to a closed list system of proportional representation. The law on parliamentary elections that had governed parliamentary contests between 1991 and 1997 was lacking in internal coherence, and was much in need of reform. In 2001, a new law was passed to remedy some of the inconsistencies in the previous legislation. The OSCE report on the 2001 elections notes that this law “provides a detailed and clear set of requirements,” and that it had “raised confidence in the integrity of the electoral process.” Most of the problems noted in the law relate to relatively minor technical issues. The law is also criticized by the OSCE for allowing parties to change their candidate lists during the course of the campaign.

The Bulgarian president (which is to a large extent a ceremonial position), is elected by absolute majority, in two rounds, if necessary. The law governing the presidential elections has been historically less contentious than the parliamentary electoral law. It was amended, prior to the

election of 2001, to clarify campaign finance regulation, and this change is generally recognized as having been beneficial to the transparency of the electoral process.

Local councils are elected, via an electoral system similar to that governing parliamentary elections, and mayors are directly elected, according to a system that resembles that for presidential elections. Many of the criticisms made of the respective national-level electoral systems are also applicable to their local counterparts.

3. ADEQUACY OF ELECTION LAW

Elections in Bulgaria are generally recognized as being free and fair. This is the view of international monitoring organizations, as well as the main political actors in the country. Of the 50-some politicians and party members interviewed during our assessment, none believed that elections failed to live up to international standards of probity. There was also no serious concern about the quality of elections voiced by any non-party member interviewed (including members of the Central Electoral Commission and the non-governmental Bulgarian Association of Fair Elections and Civil Rights).

Many political leaders and analysts, nevertheless, see the need to improve the framework in which elections are held. The area most in need of reform is widely believed to be that of party and campaign financing. When comments are made about failure to adequately implement the electoral law, this is the area most commonly mentioned. Though moves have been made recently to improve legislation in this domain (the party law of 2001 and changes to the presidential electoral law the same year), there is a widespread perception that more could be done to increase the transparency of the financing process, by introducing more stringent requirements for disclosure of party income and expenditure. International experience demonstrates that mandating transparency is generally more effective than attempts to place formal caps on spending, and were improvements to be made to electoral legislation, this is an area in which changes would be welcomed by many of those involved in the electoral process.

Most party representatives and members appear content with the basic structures of the electoral system, both at the national and local level. Though there is a move within the BSP and without some smaller parties for the reintroduction of majoritarian seats in parliamentary elections (most likely alongside proportional lists), this is not echoed among BSP MPs, who appear to believe that list proportional representation is most appropriate for Bulgarians at the current time. And while some members of the NMSII also favor majoritarian voting or preferential list voting, there is no clear sense that this is a priority for most Movement members, and, even those most supportive of such a change, were skeptical of its chances of success. There is, thus, little indication that a radical change in the parliamentary or local electoral system is a real possibility at present.

D. IMPACT OF LOCAL ELECTIONS ON PARTY BEHAVIOR

Party activity appears to be driven primarily by national rather than electoral incentives, though it seems that personalities are more important than policies at the local level. Parties were generally not forthcoming about internal personality struggles, though this problem appears to have afflicted the UDF more than the BSP.

1. LOCAL VERSUS PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS ON PARTY BEHAVIOR

There seems to be a consensus that Bulgarian political parties, despite rejection at the polls, ignore public opinion except at election time. Once the election is over, the parties once more turn inwards, all but ignoring the concerns and problems of their constituencies. A news director of Balkan Television, the most watched television station in Bulgaria, notes that, "Our politicians are not very educated in how to deal with public opinion or the media. It's a legacy of the communist era."

The consequence, of course, is that local elections and popular attitudes play a minor role in how Bulgaria's political parties conduct themselves, particularly in regularly conveying their programs and policies to the public at large. It is puzzling behavior, many Bulgarian observers agree, because self-interest would seem to dictate that politicians maintain persistent contact, through the media and other channels, with the people who elected them, and who would be called upon to do so again in the future.

The problem may be simple lack of experience. A survey of Bulgarian members of parliament by the State University of New York (SUNY) showed that politicians, and by extension political parties, regard dealing successfully with the media as a number two priority. More broadly, politicians are concerned about constituency and media relations, as well as public opinion and feedback.

E. PARTY ELECTION CAMPAIGN CAPACITY

1. CONSTRAINTS TO PARTY CAMPAIGN COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE ELECTORATE

Bulgarian media hardly ignore political parties, governments and local city councils and the National Assembly during election campaigns, or at other times. Bulgarian editors and journalists, without exception, agree that the print press, radio and television should seek out political parties, probing for information and news. In a remarkable transformation over the last dozen years from a communist party-controlled press, the Bulgarian media now offer a range of opinions. Bulgarian journalists believe that they have a professional duty to present all points of view.

Rather, journalists say, the political parties are the "reluctant bride" in the relationship between parties and press. Some Bulgarian political activists are beginning to realize that it is not to their advantage to strike a distant, aloof posture in dealings with the media. A UDF official in the city of Starra Zagora admits, "The UDF here has not paid as much attention to relations with the media as it should, we haven't been active enough. But now we've decided to do more, to hold press briefings and keep in touch with the press."

How widely this view is shared among Bulgarian political parties at all levels is unclear. The answer will be revealed, of course, as parties analyze their performance and the reaction of voters, who, after all, receive the bulk of information about the Bulgarian political process through the media. If the parties finally perceive that their image and standing before voters

improve--the more parties manage to influence, indeed manipulate the press, the more Bulgarian politicians will see it to their advantage to work closely with the media.

2. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES

In formal terms, most Bulgarian parties appear to have mastered the basics of electoral communication. Platforms are written and disseminated, via the Internet and printed leaflets, and overall strategies are agreed upon among the leadership. But at the micro-level, campaign communications appear to break down. Many parties attribute their difficulty in communicating their message to distortions by the media. But as has also been pointed out by numerous political analysts, party platforms differ little in their overall thrust. Such lack of differentiation — while not the fault of any one party generates confusion among the people and heightens the importance of overall image and personality. This problem is largely a result of the consensus among the main political actors in Bulgaria on the desirability of joining international structures such as NATO and the European Union.

The tight constraints placed on policy-making by these goals restrict the area in which individual parties can maneuver politically. In one sense this consensus can perhaps be interpreted as indicating that all of Bulgaria's main political forces are in agreement with the broad aim of international integration. But the flip-side of this consensus is a lack of policy differentiation, which may be seen as detrimental to political competition. Parties mainly confine themselves to trying to demonstrate their competence and their ability to achieve the goals on which a national consensus has been reached but, as noted above, the populace remains skeptical of the integrity of the main political organizations.

3. CAMPAIGN PLANNING AND CANDIDATE RECRUITMENT

Electoral campaigns appear generally to be well planned and organized. Twelve years of experience in this domain have given Bulgarian party activists ample opportunity to experiment with different means of organizing campaigns, and they would seem to have well-developed skills in this sphere. Careful plans are made for campaign events and door-to-door activities, and media appearances are coordinated. Campaign recruitment is, in most parties, regulated by the internal party statutes and follows relatively democratic principles (though the means by which the NMSII lists were composed in 2001 remain obscure).

4. GRASSROOTS OUTREACH AND VOTER PARTICIPATION

Campaign activity in Bulgaria appears to be more strongly oriented toward face-to-face contact than is the case in most Western democracies. Most party leaders and activists shared the view that direct contact was the most effective means of winning votes. Leaflets and paid advertising, though used, were not generally deemed as successful as shaking hands and meeting people. The danger with an over-reliance on face-to-face methods is that personalities are given greater importance than policies and issues, than would be the case if written materials were relied on to a greater extent.

Levels of voter participation have fallen, in recent years, from a high of 90.79 percent in the 1990 National Assembly elections, to barely 41 percent in the first round of the presidential election of 2001. The dramatic decline in turnout between the parliamentary and the presidential

elections of 2001 (66 per cent to 41 per cent) was a cause for concern among the Bulgarian political elite, and much effort has subsequently gone toward trying to find ways to mobilize larger numbers of voters. This has led to increased attention to youth and women's groups within the main parties, and it may be one of the reasons why many of the parties have experienced leadership changes. There appears to be a particular concern with political apathy among the younger generation of voters.

CHAPTER 3

CHALLENGES TO FORMATION OF EFFECTIVE PARTY STRUCTURES

A. OVERALL ORGANIZATIONAL STATUS OF THE PARTIES

The organizational diversity of the Bulgarian party system represents a potential obstacle to the design of an effective aid program, in that different parties are in different stages of development, and hence have disparate needs. The following is a review of the stage of development of each of the major parties and of other, smaller parties that have seats in Parliament.

1. PARTY STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

The National Movement Simeon the Second is a highly heterogeneous organization bringing together disaffected members of the two main parties, as well as affiliates of a range of smaller political organizations. It is very difficult to get a sense of the identity of the Movement, as its members give such diverse replies to the same questions. They were unable to agree on even the most basic factual information concerning their structure, and they were at times highly critical of each other. Many local political party watchers see it as unlikely that the Movement will survive on the basis of its current membership. Furthermore, many analysts and politicians claim that the future of the current government and the political organization that dominates it will depend on the outcome of the NATO accession negotiations scheduled for autumn 2002.

The Bulgarian Socialist Party is still very much an ex-communist party, in regards to ideology, organization, and attitudes toward the West. The party appears to be well-structured, with good communication channels, and it is dominated by people with extensive experience in party politics. Many members, at all levels, are cautious about assistance from abroad, as illustrated by one person interviewed, who suggested that "all well-intentioned assistance would be welcome." There do appear to be elements within the party that are eager to modernize its structure. At the same time, there is little evidence of a push for such a move from below — i.e., from the aging Socialist electorate.

The Union of Democratic Forces seems to have undergone an internal crisis in the months since the 2001 parliamentary election. There is evidence that distinct party structures atrophied during the UDF's four years in government, between 1997 and 2001, and that communications within the party proper all but broke down during that time. Since June 2001 the UDF has been struggling to rebuild itself amid continued allegations of wrong-doing during its term in office, as well as the unexpected and humiliating defeat of its incumbent presidential candidate, Petur Stoyanov. There is a general sense in the party that the recent election of a new leadership cleared the way for a fresh start. UDF leaders appear cautiously optimistic about the future, especially in light of the recent decline in popular support for the NMSII, with which they share a common right-wing ideology.

The Movement for Rights and Freedoms gives the impression of being confident and up-beat. They are in the government, their membership is on the rise, and they appear to be well-organized. They are eager to emphasize that they are not a party of ethnic Turks alone (they claim that 8,000 of their 50,000 members are ethnic Bulgarians), but a liberal party in the European mould. They are seeking to expand their support base further among non-Turkish groups, and are eager to emphasize the need to overcome "old stereotypes" about the ethnic base of their party.

The Euroleft is still recovering from its defeat in the polls in the 2001 elections and is currently seeking to reorient itself. This reorientation has several aspects. First, the party leadership has witnessed a recent influx of younger members, signaling a generational change within the party. Second, the party has developed an 'open door policy' in an effort to attract a broader range of parties into a center-left coalition.

Gergjovden is unusual in the Bulgarian party constellation for a number of reasons. First, they do not aspire to be a mass party or a party of government, but are content with exerting an indirect influence on political life. Secondly, the party has, unlike many other political organizations in Bulgaria, been very successful in cultivating an attractive image and in communicating their message to the people. At the same time, they appear to be more image than substance, which may account for their lament that, in the words of their chairperson, they have "more admirers than voters."

The Bulgarian Business Block/George Ganchev Block: The Bulgarian Business Block appears to have suspended its active existence, following the split in the party and the creation of a separate George Ganchev Block around the figure of their eponymous leader. Ganchev, for his part, is planning to withdraw from politics. He supports Prime Minister Saxecoburggotski, and sees little point in pursuing independent political activity. It is unclear whether his party will survive his withdrawal.

The Free Democrats are a newly-formed splinter party of the UDF. Its main resource is its popular leader, Stefan Sofianski, the mayor of Sofia. The party is not clearly differentiated in programmatic terms from the UDF; its distinguishing characteristic is rather its claim to be a 'clean' party, i.e., a party that is against corruption. Though the party appears eager to receive external assistance, it has yet to prove itself at the polls. Over the past twelve years, numerous parties have split away from the UDF in frustration with its turbulent internal politics, but few have managed to build substantial independent support bases, and most have faded, following their first electoral test. The same fate may well await the Free Democrats.

B. INTERNAL ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the legal framework within which parties operate, requires that parties submit formal statutes when they register, and it requires that the party leadership be elected by the membership. The structural variations among political parties are less a matter for formal hierarchical organization and more a matter of leadership style and degree of active geographical penetration.

1. LEGAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The statutes of the main political parties establish detailed frameworks in which democratic participation would, in theory, be possible. The dominant mode of organization is that of regular congresses of representatives of party branches that elect leadership bodies, from which an executive council is chosen. Parties differ, however, in the extent of active participation of the grass-roots supporters in party decision-making. The BSP prides itself in approving major party decision by "referendum" (though it is unclear what informal pressure may be brought to bear on party members to approve decisions taken by the central leadership). As the recent changes of leadership in many of the parties attest, there is opportunity for the exertion of pressure from below in most of the parties. Yet the informal leadership style of the parties varies considerably, from relative "unity" in the BSP and the MRF, to a history of factionalism in the UDF.

The territorial reach of the parties also varies. Though all of them (with the exception of Gergjovden and the newly-established Free Democrats) have branches in virtually every region of Bulgaria, only the BSP and the UDF can be said to be truly national parties, with a significant presence in virtually all major settlements. The most common organizational structure is a three-tier hierarchy of local branches (with associated party "clubs" at neighborhood level), regional branches, and the party central office. Interviews and discussions with local party leaders/members indicate that there is (in the large established parties at least) a problem with communication between the levels of this hierarchy. The greatest difficulty appears to be in communications between regional and municipal levels, where information flows do not always appear to function well. This problem appears to have been especially acute in recent times within the UDF, though there are hopes that the recent change of leadership in that party will have helped to remedy the problem.

In strategic terms, most parties are relatively centralized. Major policy decisions are taken by the central leadership and fed down to the grass-roots, and there do not appear to be well-developed aggregation structures in most of the parties (Gergjovden being a partial--but unusual--exception to this rule). There are cultural as well as technical aspects to this; most parties appear to view policy leadership at the top as appropriate, and have not established structures to aggregate interests; where these do exist (as, for example, in the BSP), it is not clear to what extent rank-and-file members have genuine input into the policy development process. Platform development strategies within central party structures are opaque.

a. Membership Recruitment

Membership recruitment is not a well-developed practice among Bulgarian political parties. Few engage in active membership drives, though low membership figures are not viewed by the majority of parties as a significant problem. There is also limited evidence that parties have specific strategies for the professional development of leaders.

b. Fund-raising

Fund-raising is another area in which parties are generally lacking in explicit strategies. Again, Gergjovden was the only party that demonstrated a systematic and active approach to fund-raising, with special events designed to generate income. The other parties claim simply to wait for funds to be given to them (in addition to the funds that they are, as of this year, to be

allocated out of the state budget). The apparent disingenuousness of such a claim lends to party fund-raising what is purported to be a shady, underhanded image, which a more open approach might well help to dispel. Greater transparency in party expenditure might well go some way toward rebuilding confidence in parties. Calls for transparency were common across the political spectrum, especially among members of parliament, who bear the brunt of criticisms on this score.

C. INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF PARTY STRUCTURE

The structural complexity of Bulgaria's parties varies considerably from organization to organization. Parties such as the BSP and the MRF appear to possess established structures that serve their needs well (and in some sense they may even be said to be "too" well structured for the good of their rank-and-file members, who have limited opportunity to mould the party anew). The UDF, on the other hand, has been wracked, since its inception, by organizational difficulties and problems by accommodating strong personalities within the broad party it was meant to be. This affliction is undoubtedly one of the primary causes of the frequent fissures within the party and the divided nature of the Bulgarian political right.

But the greatest organizational problems are faced by the newest parties, and most particularly by the NMSII, which has faced substantial difficulties in adapting its rather weak structure to its phenomenal pace of growth in the initial period and its subsequent ascent to power. The Movement, as an organization, has languished, and internal tensions (most notably between the founding parties of the block that carries the National Movement's name and others within the organization) abound. As of yet, the Movement has no fixed structure to speak of.

In short, the degree of party structure is highly diverse. It is therefore difficult to make generalizations. But it is worth noting that, in all, the established Bulgarian political parties are more institutionalized than their counterparts in other post-communist countries, if only because they have, in most cases, been in existence longer. The characteristic that most distinguishes Bulgarian parties from parties in west-central Europe, is the fact that they are organized largely on the basis of patronage, rather than policy, and that their programmatic distinctiveness is weak. Their general willingness to form coalitions is also a feature that, though beneficial in some respects, limits the extent to which parties can develop coherent, autonomous internal institutions.

D. PROSPECTS FOR PARTY REFORM

There is undoubtedly a need for Bulgarian political parties to reform their internal structures, both to improve information flows and to enhance input from the grass-roots.

1. CONSTRAINTS

There are several factors that suggest that attempts at encouraging internal party reform would meet with limited success.

First, there are limits inherent in the framework within which political actors are currently operating, that restrict their ability to respond to pressure from below. For example, members of

parliament have relatively meager resources to devote to constituency work, and they largely rely for this function on open meetings organized by their local party branches. None of the persons interviewed had a systematic mechanism for ascertaining the views of their constituents at large. When asked how they discovered what their constituents wanted of them, one MP even suggested that she was not concerned with the views of those who did not contact her, claiming that "if they are not contacting us, they are not interested in us," with the clear implication that she was not interested in such voters either.

There is also little evidence to suggest that parliamentary work in the parliament is structured around the views of geographically-defined constituents. MPs appear to base their vote decisions in parliament largely on the instructions given to them by their parliamentary faction (though several respondents claimed that the views of the party coincided with the views of their constituents). Only one MP interviewed (a Socialist) said that she would abstain in a vote, if her view failed to agree with that of her party. Thus in practice, representation in Bulgaria appears to be structured on a partisan rather than on a geographic basis.

Second, the parties most favorably disposed to externally-driven party reform have already experienced assistance efforts that have not proven successful. There is, therefore, a certain reluctance to initiate yet another round of reforms. Those parties that have not previously welcomed efforts to reform their internal structures, are not likely to do so in the future, unless they have an incentive to do so. That incentive is most likely to come in the form of the need to reform, in order to be admitted to European party family institutions, and, in this context, U. S. aid is less relevant than that offered by sister parties in Europe.

2. OPPORTUNITIES

Given the above constraints on aiming to alter internal party structures directly, a preferable solution might be to work with currently vulnerable groups within parties, in order to empower them. In this context, potential areas of particularly useful involvement might be work with women and youth. These two areas are addressed in turn.

E. THE NEEDS OF WOMEN IN POLITICS

The Bulgarian women's movement is weakly developed overall. Though individual women had played prominent roles in politics, none of the numerous movements active in the country was until recently, able to make a strong mark on politics. Yet, the 2001 parliamentary elections produced the unlikely rise to prominence of numerous members of the previously obscure Party of Bulgarian Women (PBW), on the coattails of a groundswell of support for former King Simeon.

During the communist period, women were relatively well represented in Bulgarian political life, making up between 20 and 30 percent of the Bulgarian Communist Party membership. Following the collapse of communism in 1989, their presence in politics declined dramatically to only 8.8 percent of the members of the Grand National Assembly elected in 1990. During the first decade of transition, the proportion of female members of parliament hovered just above the ten percent mark, before rising to approximately 25 percent in the 2001 elections (see Table 1).

Table 1: Women's Representation in Bulgaria, 1986-2002

Year	Proportion of Women Elected to Parliament
1986	21.8%
1990	8.8%
1991	13.8%
1994	12.9%
1997	10.4%
2002	25.0%

Sources: Tatiana Kostadinova, 'Women's Legislative Representation in Post-Communist Bulgaria', in Richard Matland and Kathleen Montgomery (eds.), *Women's Representation in Eastern Europe*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming; data supplied by the USAID Mission to Bulgaria.

This increase is almost entirely due to the large number of female candidates elected from the National Movement Simeon II (NMSII). The NMSII was co-founded by the Party of Bulgarian Women--emphatically not a "feminist party"--which helps to explain the large number of female candidates mobilized into its ranks. Among the established parties, the proportion of women remains as low as 11.7 percent (see Table 2), largely because they have been unwilling to place many female candidates in top (winnable) positions on their party lists.

Table 2: Women in the Bulgarian Parliament, 2002

Party	Number of women elected	Proportion of women elected
NMSII	46	38.3%
UDF	8	15.7%
BSP coalition	5	10.4%
MRF	1	4.8%
All	60	25.0%

Yet women have also achieved leadership positions in the established parties. Anastasia Moser is head of the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union and a Vice-President of the UDF; Emel Etem is a Vice-Chairperson of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms; the contest for the UDF leadership, which took place in February 2002 was between two women--Nadezhda Mihailova - the eventual winner - and Ekaterina Mihailova.

There is evidence, however, that politics is still perceived to be "men's work." One female MP commented spontaneously that when she was in parliament, she often "felt like a man." Moreover, the influx of women into parliament does not appear to have been associated with a decrease in the confrontational nature of politics. For example, there was a tense period in recent months when NMSII women opposed equal opportunities legislation necessary for EU accession, on the grounds that equal rights were already guaranteed in the Bulgarian constitution and that passing specific legislation to this effect would give a false impression that there was a problem with gender equality in Bulgaria. Women from parties that supported the legislation were outraged by this view and reacted strongly against it.

All in all, the position of women at the top levels of Bulgarian politics appears to have improved considerably since the early 1990s. Concerted efforts of some and a lucky break for others have promoted a not insubstantial number of women to leadership positions. The experience they gain from these roles is undoubtedly the best form of training they could hope to receive. Under

these circumstances, it is unclear whether assistance programs targeted specifically at female MPs or party leaders would be either necessary or appropriate. If some form of assistance were given to women in Bulgarian political parties, it would probably be best directed at those in the lower ranks of party organizations, and it would ideally take the form of skills development.

F. YOUTH NEEDS

Young people in Bulgaria are among the most disaffected and the most disengaged from the political process. At the same time they often have well developed skills in the area of electronic communication. Their communications skills are an asset on which political parties can, in theory, draw in elaborating their campaign strategies and in shaping their internal organization. There is thus evidence that parties need to find ways of attracting more young people and take advantage of the skills they offer. From the perspective of party assistance, young people are an obvious target group. Not only are they more likely to be open to training, but they are also likely to benefit longer from it.

There was general support among party members for assistance to party youth organizations and youth training. The MRF spontaneously suggested such activities when the purpose of the interview was explained, and members of other parties expressed enthusiasm when the possibility of youth training was mentioned. When asked to prioritize the usefulness of possible training activities, work with youth was put in first place by members of several parties. Youth groups themselves were also very open to cooperation and welcomed possible training initiatives; a large proportion of their members are active Internet users, and they appear to be well connected with international youth organizations, and aware of international youth issues. This value orientation is likely to make them particularly receptive to international assistance.

The following assesses the level of development of the parties' youth associations or clubs.

National Movement Simeon the Second: The identity and internal structure of this political entity is at the current time too unclear for substantive analysis of its youth component to be useful.

Bulgarian Socialist Party: Party department leaders Georgi Dimov and Stefan Sergev emphasized their desire to modernize the BSP and gave as examples of recent party modernization the election of a young party leader and a relatively young presidential candidate. This suggests that the BSP leadership is aware of the need to prepare their party for a generation change.

The leaders of the Bulgarian Socialist Youth (BSY) were not so sanguine about the extent of modernization in the party. They were frustrated by the difficulties young people have in rising within the BSP hierarchy (which they attributed largely to the fact that leadership positions are filled not on the basis of skills, but through "connections"). They complained that the party leadership rarely paid attention to their ideas, and one of the youths complained that, "from time to time they listen to our proposals, but in most cases they are blind." The proposals in question appear to be mostly in the area of organizational activities, such as ideas for making electoral campaigns more 'dynamic' and for attracting more young members to the party. This reflects an evident tendency for the BSY to view their role, in terms of organization and mobilization, rather than advocacy and policy formation. When asked what the concerns of young people in Bulgaria

were, and how the party ought to address those concerns, they found it difficult to answer, and they had evidently not formulated distinct policy positions on issues pertaining to youth. This suggests that training in the sphere of interest aggregation and articulation might enable the BSY to take a stronger leadership within their party, which might in turn give greater weight to forces of modernization within the BSP.

The Union of Democratic Forces: The UDF has given increased attention to cultivating young people in recent months. Youth UDF (YUDF) was created shortly after the June 2001 elections, and it has already managed to attract as many members as the long-established Bulgarian Socialist Youth. The YUDF has chapters in 26 of Bulgaria's 28 regions, and has plans to establish chapters in the remaining regions soon. The organization claims to play a significant role within the party; for example, they were the first group to support Nadezhda Mikhailova for the leadership contest, which she eventually won. However, they do not appear to have common views on many issues pertaining to youth policy. As with the BSY, their role within their party appears to be largely one of out-reach and mobilization, rather than advocacy or policy-development. But unlike the BSY, the YUDF do appear to aspire to the latter role; they said that their organization should be "a nucleus of ideas." When pressed to say what Bulgarian youth demanded from politicians, they expressed the view that young people in Bulgaria "know that they have the right to demand things, but don't know how to demand them."

The Movement for Rights and Freedoms: The MRF leaders interviewed (Kasim Dal and Chetin Kazak) were eager to emphasize the role of young politicians in their party, pointing out that half of the MRF MPs elected in 2001 were new faces, many of whom were from the younger generation. When discussing the increase between the 1997 and the 2001 parliamentary elections, in the absolute number of votes won by the MRF, Dal claimed, "we managed to gain headway because we focused on young people." With 13,000 members, the MRF youth organization is the largest of the youth groups of the three main parties (Bulgarian Socialist Youth and the Youth UDF both have approximately 4,000 members). The MRF Youth leadership is very receptive to the idea of assistance. The organization has evidently experienced problems managing a rather large and loose structure, and according to its Chairman, Mustafa Karadaja, it is currently trying to orient itself more toward grass-roots involvement and improving internal communication channels. Assistance in this and other areas was viewed as being of potential benefit to the organization.

The Euroleft: As mentioned earlier, there has been a generational change within the Euroleft, since the 2001 parliamentary elections. Many of the top positions in the party are currently occupied by young, dynamic individuals with a positive orientation toward the West. Moreover, the party apparently sees itself as a sort of 'Trojan horse' that would reform the left from within. The party is also favorably disposed toward working with foreign assistance bodies. For all these reasons, the Euroleft would seem to be a party well suited for receiving assistance. It might be advisable to train BSP and Euroleft youth together, so as to help build bonds which might help to bridge the divide between the two parties, and initiate more thoroughgoing reform within the BSP.

Bulgarian political parties evidently consider their youth branches to be primarily a means of mobilizing disaffected youth and attracting members of the new generation to their party. This understanding of their role is shared by most of those who participate in such organizations. Advocacy and input into the policy process figures far less in the activities of the youth groups,

and this is an area in which they would undoubtedly benefit from leadership training. The development of an increased policy-promoting capacity might well also make these groups more attractive to larger sectors of the young electorate--if it were recognized that these groups were actively promoting the interests of young people. Finally, it might be possible to combine support of women and youth by adopting a strategy of targeting women for training programs and workshops.

CHAPTER 4

POTENTIAL FOR EFFECTIVE PARTY GOVERNANCE

A. OUTREACH CAPACITY

1. GENERAL COMMUNICATIONS

Communication with the public is one of the main areas of weakness of Bulgarian political parties, and one of the main areas in which they expressed an interest in assistance. The UDF and the BSP both interpret their failure in the 2001 election, in terms of weaknesses in their respective communications strategies, and the NMSII has recently become acutely aware of its own lack of success in this domain, as its support in the polls has plummeted. Many party leaders blame the media for their inability to get their message across to the public. They also blame corruption of the media and of research organizations, such as polling agencies. But though tensions between the media and the parties are undoubtedly a factor, many persons interviewed also admitted that their own communications strategies were inadequate.

2. THE MEDIA AND ITS RELATIONS WITH VOTERS AND PARTIES

The contemporary Bulgarian media are a growth industry. Virtually the entire media are now privately owned and the potential profits to be made from media advertising regularly attract new investors. The number of Bulgarian radio and television outlets has greatly increased in the past few years. There are some 280 Bulgarian television outlets, including cable systems that carry news and information programs. The number of Bulgarian radio stations is nearly 290. The figure represents a quadrupling of radio and television outlets in the last few years.

The exact number of newspapers varies as smaller ones fail in the market place, and new ones replace them. The printed press ranges from large-circulation newspapers published in Sofia, but which are available on newsstands throughout the country, to local papers that concentrate on regional issues.

As in most countries, even those where the media are controlled by the government, television has achieved such influence over Bulgarian opinion that radio news on current affairs plays an almost insignificant role in politics--and newspapers have become the source of political news chiefly for the more educated, politically active and relatively well off segments of the population. One simple reason is that newspaper prices are high compared with most incomes, while television fees paid by the viewers, if in fact they pay them, and are low. The price of *Trud*, the largest daily in Bulgaria with a circulation of 250,000 to 300,000 is almost one leva. That price represents 20% of the average daily income of a Bulgarian worker. The monthly viewer fee is no more than 15 leva a month, which compares with a worker's income of, say, 150 leva. Moreover, Bulgarians, not unlike people in other countries, tend to prefer getting their news and information (along with entertainment) from the intellectually less challenging television, than from reading newspapers.

The result is that Bulgarian television reaches the broadest mass of Bulgarians, while newspapers appeal to select circles. Television exercises an influence over public opinion that Bulgarian political parties seemingly would only ignore at their peril. One Bulgarian politician describes television's power succinctly when he says, "Half of Bulgaria is governed by the 8 o'clock television news."

A director of a Bulgarian think tank that works with journalists notes parenthetically, however, that while television is a huge influence on public attitudes, newspapers set the social issues agenda. That is, the large-circulation dailies, like *Trud* and *24 Chasa*, publish the significant information about politics, economics and social problems, and the information is picked up by the major television stations to disseminate to a broader audience.

Time and again, Bulgarian editors and journalists say politicians seem not to be aware or convinced that the Bulgarian media, especially television, are a prime channel through which to reach voters with party programs and policies. One columnist for a large Sofia daily newspaper says, "Only 30% of politicians know how to deal with the media, to package their message, to reach the public." Another journalist puts the figure at 10%. One Bulgarian with long experience in journalism says, "Most politicians use the media to talk with one another."

In discussing the dominant role of television on Bulgarian public opinion, it is worth noting the impressive success of Balkan Television. Owned by the Rupert Murdoch media empire, bTV was granted a government broadcasting license in April, 2000. Although general entertainment programs went on the air soon afterward from well-equipped studios built in a part of Sofia's Palace of Culture, bTV did not begin broadcasting news and information programs until November, 2000. Remarkably in only a few months, bTV has become the number one television station in Bulgaria, outranking the government-subsidized Bulgarian National Television, the onetime voice of the Bulgarian communist government. Audience surveys show that bTV, on any given evening, reaches two million viewers, or roughly 25% of the Bulgarian population. Of Bulgarian television viewers, bTV has nearly a 60% market share--meaning, that 60 of every 100 television viewers are watching bTV at a particular time.

Bulgarian National Television pales by comparison. Surveys show that the only times state-sponsored national television reaches a large audience is when it broadcasts popular shows like the American-produced "ER."

But there is an important caveat. Surveys also show that there is a higher level of public trust in the Bulgarian government-financed television and radio broadcasts, than in private electronic media. An Alpha Research executive notes, "There is a difference between a high audience rating and level of confidence."

a. Media Representation of the Parties

Consequently, through television particularly, but also through radio and newspapers, Bulgarian political parties have at their disposal to a range of media, at all levels of Bulgarian society, to reach their constituents. The question is, can parties, even if they would be more prone to use the media, be accurately, fairly and thoroughly portrayed by the media?

Editors and journalists alike agree that from their perspective, the answer is yes. Some coverage of politics, they say, is not as professional as it could be, but this is because young Bulgarian journalists lack training and experience--and not because there is a deliberate attempt to distort what politicians say or do. The director of a leading news program for Bulgarian National Radio, which like state television is subsidized by the government, offers a representative view: "Our job is to report quickly and accurately, to inform the country, separating news from opinion and present all shades of opinion." Another senior news director says, "Our role is to be a watchdog on the government and political parties, to express public opinion and to present the news without opinion."

The idea that the Bulgarian media have a responsibility to convey facts divorced from opinion and analyses seems well entrenched in the country, 12 years after the collapse of the communist party information and propaganda machine.

There are, nonetheless, apparent lapses in practice and pressures on the media to relent on their responsibility to be a source of facts, not judgments. One Bulgarian whose organization monitors the press, says that there is a "nonstop mixing of news and opinion." A news editor for one of Bulgaria's most respected daily newspapers suggests there might be bias in the media, but "there is a variety of biases." The director of a nonprofit group in Sofia says that information provided to major newspapers is often reported inaccurately. Another representative of a non-government organization says that the Bulgarian press offers disorganized, scattered information. "If I had to understand some issue, I could not get it from the newspapers."

Bulgarian editors commonly agree that privately owned media, especially newspapers, are subject to economic pressures. The editor in chief of one of Bulgaria's largest newspapers, published in Plovdiv, suggests that the government can influence privately owned papers merely through the licensing of newspaper kiosks. A banker and BSP official in Stara Zagora says, "business can apply economic pressure on newspapers through placement of advertising by companies that are pro-UDF." In newspapers such as *Trud* that receive half of their revenues from commercial advertising and whose editors may have to answer to publishers interested in profits, the potential for influencing news coverage through economic pressure is obvious.

Bulgarian National Television and National Radio contend with special circumstances in an avowed aim to present thorough and dispassionate political news. A Council on Electronic Media has the authority to appoint directors of both television and radio. Five members of the council are chosen by parliament and four by the Bulgarian president. A simple majority vote determines appointments. That effectively means--as one observer puts it--control of the state media remains a valued spoil of political victory." Directors have been routinely dismissed and named in past years, with the Bulgarian political party in power expecting that state television and radio will appropriately adjust news and social issues programming to harmonize with the dominant party's views. A senior news director of Bulgarian National Radio says simply, "When the media depend on a government budget, news programs depend on the government."

The authority of the Council on Electronic Media has been severely criticized. Indeed, last year the party in power, the UDF, replaced the National Radio director before his term expired. State radio journalists rose up in protest, literally in the street. A court decision sided with the journalists and the UDF action was reversed. The problem remains, however, that political parties, once in power, have the legal authority to name state radio and television directors.

There is another issue confronting state media. The Bulgarian Election Law adopted in April, 2001, rigidly dictates the amount of time National Television and National Radio can devote to coverage of political parties during election campaigns. The law requires equal treatment and air time for parties in parliament. But it also stipulates that special news programs, during the 30 day campaign, can total no more than 120 minutes, and no more than five minutes a day (and less for political parties with no parliamentary representation). Journalists say that these restrictions undermine longer and more time consuming investigative reporting.

From the viewpoint of political parties, Bulgarian media are sometimes regarded as fair and objective. But, as one journalist says, Bulgarian politicians often think that the media focus on the trivial rather than on the important, and that they seek the negative rather than positive stories. The same criticism is voiced by a National Assembly press officer. The SUNY survey of members of parliament noted that relations with the media start well, and then deteriorate into accusations of media misrepresentations. These are the complaints of politicians in all democracies, and are not without merit. And, as common elsewhere, Bulgarian journalists are critical of the performance of politicians. Says one journalist, "Most politicians have no grounds to be proud of what they do."

b. Party and Government Communications to the Media

There is a separate problem with Bulgarian political parties and the media. Various observers say that politicians lack the skills to get their message across to the media in clear and comprehensive fashion. As a regional national television director says, "Politicians are sometimes antagonistic toward the press, but they don't do what is needed to get information to the public." Or, as another news director says, "Our politicians can't express in words for people to understand what they are doing." A Bulgarian National Radio news director says, "Unfortunately, our politicians haven't learned that those who fight with the media lose power."

The common complaint of journalists, at all political levels in Bulgaria, is that parties and the local and national government lack professional competent press offices, to which the media can turn for reliable information. A UDF regional official acknowledges a shortage of spokespersons in city governments. A reporter for a large circulation daily newspaper agrees that there are not enough professional press secretaries in political parties and in government. He cites the instance of a national government minister appointing his cousin as his spokesman.

In the most efficiently and effectively managed political parties and governments, press spokespersons occupy high positions. They are privy to private policy discussions. They can speak with the authority of the government and the party. They are trusted by the media to provide accurate information. Journalists are confident that, when they speak to press secretaries, they are talking with someone intimately informed about the positions and views of politicians, the government and parliament.

Spokesmen or women who fill these expectations are, by all accounts, rare in Bulgaria. Journalists in Haskovo praise the regional governor for naming an experienced journalist as spokeswoman--one who knows the needs of the press, but also knows the inner workings of the government. Journalists in Sofia have been encouraged by the appointment of a press secretary, who can speak with authority for the prime minister's party in the National Assembly. The National Assembly has a press office staffed by eight people, and a director who is privy to

private assembly leadership deliberations, as well as to the Assembly's work. The Bulgarian president's office has an information center staffed by five people, and a press secretary who worked as a political reporter on Bulgarian newspapers.

These cases are the exception, however. More often, editors and reporters see a need for far better trained and experienced journalists to occupy positions of press officers. Without them, the argument goes, the information that comes from political parties and politicians alike lacks accuracy and thoroughness. Such mundane matters as holding regular press briefings, of issuing regular press releases, of taking into account the different requirements of electronic and print media and of informing journalists, in a timely manner, of political news--all these practices that are routine in more professionally organized foreign government information offices, are seen as lacking in Bulgaria.

A senior staffer in the press center of the Bulgarian president agrees in saying that there is a demand among Bulgarian political parties and politicians for counsel in improving relations with the media, and in presenting coherent, unified messages.

A study by the National Democratic Institute, using focus groups, found that just days after last year's presidential election, "no one could say what the platform of the respective candidates was."

It seems apparent that Bulgarian media fail to transmit a full news file to Bulgarian audiences, to the voters who should be widely informed, if they are to make intelligent decisions about their elected representatives. Moreover, political parties and politicians, lacking professional press departments, need to improve their ability to convey clearly stated, understandable policies.

Moreover, politicians and officials lacking professional press advice, unnecessarily make political blunders that sap public confidence in government. Two recent events illustrate the problem:

In March, 2002, the newspaper *Trud* published transcripts of what were said to be confidential minutes of a council of ministers meeting held the previous October. The council approved a \$16 million contract with a British firm to manage Bulgarian customs, with the object of stemming the trafficking of drugs and people through Bulgaria. The *Trud* revelations immediately turned into a political controversy over the legality of the contract, with suggestions of corruption in high places. The Bulgarian government, not only was slow to react, but failed to marshal a strong case in defense of its decision and to present it to the media. One Bulgarian monitoring public opinion says, "I counted 17 different interpretations in the press of what had happened." Government "damage control" was almost absent. The result was a public relations debacle that could have been avoided, if the government had used professional press counsel.

A second debacle was a parliamentary seminar in Sandansky February 15-17, 2002. The serious business included lectures by foreign observers on the functioning of a parliament. But during a banquet evening, when politicians not only ate and drank, but took to the dance floor, the Bulgarian media had a field day. A headline in the daily *Dvenik* conveys the theme of dozens of news reports--Three Days the MPs Were Singing, Drinking and Partying." Professional media advisers would have easily prevented the stinging media coverage, if only by simply closing the banquet to reporters and photographers.

c. *Party Perceptions of Their Communications Needs*

Communications is an area in which political parties expressed a receptiveness to assistance, provided this assistance was oriented toward practical skills development. Getting messages across to the public, for example, was an area of interest to the parties, where Americans were often perceived as having a comparative advantage over Europeans.

A brief inventory of progress that the parties have made in developing their communications strategies follows:

National Movement Simeon the Second: The NMSII has experienced colossal difficulties in communicating with the public. The *de facto* party leader, Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, has made public statements equating effective rule with 'silence,' and it was not until nine months after having formed a government, that the movement finally appointed a press spokesperson. At the present time there does, however, appear to be a widespread recognition, within the Movement, that communication is a priority, and that it has heretofore failed in this sphere.

The Bulgarian Socialist Party: The BSP has extensive experience in 'propaganda,' which has served it well in the post-communist age. The party is able to regularly win a substantial proportion of the vote without spending large amounts of money on electoral campaigns, because their message is well understood by the people and they are well organized. At the same time there are elements within the BSP that perceive the party's failure to win the 2001 parliamentary elections in terms of failure to communicate with the public. There is a perception among party members that the NMSII 'stole' the BSP's policy stance on social issues during the campaign, and won many votes on the basis of its populist message. This electoral shock has prompted many within the party to review their communications strategies. There is evidently a move within the party, at the moment, to 'modernize' its links with the media.

The Union of Democratic Forces: Communications failure is at the heart of the crisis which the UDF has recently undergone. Not only has the UDF failed to accurately convey its message to the public, but channels of intra-party communication also appear to have broken down during its term of government (1997-2001). Of all the parties, the UDF appears most aware of this problem and most receptive to assistance in remedying it. Party members complain that, "we are not understood by the media," but also that, "we don't know how to talk to people." Other members admit that they are willing to bribe media outlets, in order to have their party activities covered. In sum, relations between the party and the public appear to have reached an acute state, and there is widespread recognition of this, within the party.

The Movement for Rights and Freedoms: In contrast, the MRF is largely content with its ability to communicate its message to its supporters. This is the only party (aside from Gergjovden) that does not voice dissatisfaction with the way the media reports its activities. Party organization chief Kasim Dal interprets this harmony in terms of the lack of scandals involving the MRF, noting that, "The media are always looking for sensations, and our party isn't very sensational, so they haven't covered us much." He seemed to view this as a positive fact rather than something to be regretted. The MRF may thus not be particularly receptive to assistance in this area, but at the same time they are unlikely to be hostile toward it.

Euroleft: The Euroleft is currently engaged in an act of collective soul-searching over its failure to win the necessary number of votes to be represented in parliament in the 2001 elections. Inability to communicate effectively is one of the factors that the party believes contributed to their failure at the polls. The party is currently devoting considerable attention to improving its image and its ability to

speak to people's needs. At the same time, they are receptive to suggestions of possible foreign assistance.

In conclusion, communications was a current theme in discussions with parties. There is a widespread perception, across the political spectrum, that Bulgarian parties have not managed to get their message across to voters. The cause of this failure is generally conceived, not in terms of lack of popularity of the policies proposed by the parties, but rather in terms of the relatively poor communications skills of the political elite. Given that the problem is widely understood in technical terms, this is an area in which foreign assistance is perceived as being of great benefit. Discussions with party leaders indicate that programs targeted at developing communication skills would be very favorably received by virtually all parties.

B. LINKS TO ADVOCACY GROUPS AND MEDIA

Some of the same problems politicians have in dealing with the media show up in the work of non-government organizations (NGOs). If politicians do not know how to present their policies and views to influence public opinion, editors and journalists say, advocacy groups and grassroots associations are no more capable, on the whole, of conveying their grievances, interests and programs to the media, and therefore to elected representatives.

In a country run for decades by a communist party that put little value on authentic public opinion, it is understandable that Bulgarian citizens were slow to form associations to enable them to effectively press for their programs. The picture is different today. The Sofia-based Union of Bulgarian Foundations and Associations counts about 10,000 nonprofit organizations in the country, most of them financed from abroad. Officials say that only about 1,000 are active and productive. And members of almost all these organizations, they say, have yet to learn how to convey their objectives and information to the media.

For example, a citizens' association in Haskovo, dealing with problems of children offered its findings to the local press. Although the association had information about poverty among children, it could not produce a more comprehensive survey, including facts on homeless children and domestic abuse of children. In this instance alone, it is apparent that a grassroots organization, with good intentions, did not know how to assemble and then present its material in a way that gained optimum publicity in the media.

By contrast, the city of Stara Zagora has a nonprofit ombudsman organization that operates beyond the normal definition of the term--that is, to act as the public's voice before the government and political parties. The Stara Zagora ombudsman organization can call on 20 volunteers and 30 experts, in such fields as law and education, to influence politicians and the government to respond to general and specific citizens' problems. As evidence of its professional relations with the media, a member of the organization can produce two thick books of newspaper clippings publicizing the ombudsman's accomplishments on behalf of the Stara Zagora citizenry.

Interviews with staff of several nonprofit groups in Sofia reveal clearly that they know how to marshal facts to support their objectives, and that they understand that the media play a vital role in conveying their programs to political parties and members of parliament alike. But these same

people, speaking more broadly about the work of NGOs in Bulgaria, say that most NGO have little understanding and experience in dealing with the media.

Bulgarian NGOs woefully lack the skills to affect public opinion through the media. They have yet to learn how to use the Internet, for example, to create websites that could convey their information and objectives to a wide audience, including Bulgarian journalists and politicians. Alpha Research data show that in Sofia, about 30% of the adult population uses the Internet (in the country as a whole, the percentage drops sharply to about 10%). The Internet offers large potential in transmitting information between political parties and nonprofit organizations.

On the whole, grassroots organizations have also yet to learn professional public relations practices, common in more developed democratic societies, which will aid them in packaging and in presenting their programs. These practices may seem obvious in countries where nonprofit and civic organizations are not only widespread, but where their activities are generally known through the media. These basic skills that experienced advocacy groups use, include arranging television coverage at a press briefing, the ability to be articulate "on camera," providing contacts for a spokesperson who can deal with press inquiries, or writing a concise, newsworthy press release.

The National Democratic Institute study found that Bulgarian media see NGOs as a source of news and a forum for framing issues on the public agenda. But television and newspaper editors also say that the organizations need spokespersons who are "concise, articulate, quotable in sound bites," and who understand how to present their information as newsworthy stories.

Even Bulgarians experienced in nonprofit organizations' relations with the media at the national level, let alone those groups in regional centers, seem to lack an awareness of the need to have a long-term information strategy to deal with television and the printed press. One activist involved in women's issues notes that her organization cannot seem to get its message across to political parties and parliament, in its attempt to win support for legislation.

If one considers on the political-media-public opinion culture in Bulgaria as an inseparable whole, the information flow vital to the functioning of a democratic society is constant in each direction. Political parties and elected representatives convey their programs and policies through the media to the public. Public opinion is likewise expressed through the media to political leaders. At each point, there must be professional and experienced press secretaries who can effectively convey the information. And there must be a media whose principles must include the reporting of factual political news and the representation of public interests.

The practical machinery to maintain this essential information flow works inefficiently in present-day Bulgaria. Political parties, it is generally agreed, do not understand, or understand only poorly, how to package their messages in clear and consistent form, and to present them to the media in a way that, at the least, benefits the parties and, at the most, informs the public.

Similarly, many Bulgarian advocacy groups lack knowledge of the most essential techniques and skills in forming their messages, with a factual foundation, and then in reaching political parties through the mass media. People working with grassroots organizations admit that they need help in learning how to work with television and newspapers. Television thrives on pictures, and nonprofit organizations need somehow, to provide pictures along with their messages, if they

hope to gain publicity. Newspapers fill their columns with facts and figures, a requirement that advocacy groups have to recognize and provide for.

Both political parties and nonprofit organizations need the same kinds of help in dealing with the media. Moreover, Bulgarian parties can benefit by maintaining close relations with the citizens' organizations, that not only assemble useful information, but represent the public opinion of voters. Bulgarian political parties cannot hope to consistently win at the polls, if they do not respond to the voters.

C. COALITION-BUILDING EXPERIENCE

The Bulgarian party system is unusual in its cohesiveness. Whereas most of the post-communist states have experienced high levels of party fragmentation and party system instability, the underlying opposition in Bulgaria between the 'red' Socialists and the 'blue' UDF (together with the orthogonally positioned MRF), generated a relatively stable partisan structure until 2001. The unexpected success of the NMSII disrupted this pattern of alignment, but it is unclear whether the basic pattern will reassert itself.

Bulgarian parties have been, by regional standards at least, remarkably adept at coalition-building, at the level of electoral competition as well as that of governance. The two broad political forces which continue to anchor the party system – the left-wing 'Coalition for Bulgaria', and the right-wing 'United Democratic Forces', are both coalitions in which a central political organization provides a center of gravity for a varying constellation of party names. The MRF has also, in the past, proven itself capable of forming electoral coalitions with other parties. The current government is a coalition, and though there is some discontent on the part of the MRE, that no formal coalition committee has been formed, this political union appears to be broadly satisfactory to both of the entities concerned.

Though the limited scope of the current research has not made it possible to assess the success of coalitions in a large range of municipalities, there is little evidence that the situation, at the local level, differs considerably from that at the national level. The left-right polarization which structures Bulgarian politics, appears to provide a template that allows political parties to orient their activities at all levels of organization. Moreover, the fact that mayors are directly elected, has generated situations of cohabitation in many municipalities (i.e. the mayor is from a party other than that of the dominant group on this council). This has encouraged a more consensual approach to local government, especially since the late 1990s.

D. ROLE OF THE OPPOSITION

The Bulgarian party system has, over the past twelve years, been highly polarized. This has limited the extent to which opposition forces have acted "constructively." There are frequent allegations that parties have sought, while in power, to undermine the position of future governments and to secure their own grip on politics. An example of this is the passage, at the end of the last (UDF) government, of a law designed to prevent the politicization of the civil service, by making it more difficult for public employees to be replaced. This act has been interpreted by opponents of the UDF, as an effort to secure the jobs of their own political

appointees; the UDF, for their part, have interpreted attempts of getting around this law, as a politically motivated "purge."

The extent to which the opposition is able to scrutinize the activities of the government is limited by the high levels of distrust among the parties and the paucity of high quality information. Criticisms of government actions tend to be discounted by the parties criticized, due to political tension in the system.

CHAPTER 5

AN OVERVIEW OF DONOR EXPERIENCE IN ASSISTING PARTY DEVELOPMENT

A. USAID EXPERIENCE IN DIRECT SUPPORT OF PARTY DEVELOPMENT

USAID has supported political party development in Bulgaria, through the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). Not all of this support has been implemented along partisan lines, but has been applied more broadly towards the development of fair elections and reform of the party system in general. The underlying rationale for USAID assistance is to promote the democratization of the Bulgarian electoral process and of the political party system, both of which should lead to the future political stability of the country. A secondary aim is to promote the democratic accession to effective leadership, of specific parties in the Bulgarian Parliament, through partisan support of single parties or coalitions of parties.

1. THE INTERNATIONAL REPUBLICAN INSTITUTE (IRI)

IRI began its assistance in Bulgaria in 1990, but did not post a representative there until 1994. The premise of IRI work was, according to a 1996 USAID review, to support the emergence of a “third force,” center-right political structure to provide healthy competition for the largest existing political structure on the right, the UDF.” An interview in Washington, D. C. by the present assessment team with the IRI in-country program officer, who was posted to Bulgaria during 1995-97 — provided some helpful detail. This program officer reported that, “in response to disarray in the UDF, IRI supported coalition building of the 16 parties making up the umbrella party.” At the time, IRI considered party unification to be an appropriate role. In addition to its work at the national level, it worked on local party development, including support for the UDF mayor of the city of Stara Zagora. While earlier, IRI had helped UDF with limited polling, at the beginning of the new century, it became involved in extensive polling.

During January-November 2001, IRI undertook monthly polls, right up to the Parliamentary elections, as well as focus group research, especially focused on women voters, youth, and voters outside of Sofia. Its May 2001 poll, in fact, pointed to the increased popularity of the Simeon Cobur-Gotha movement, which swept into power in June of that year. IRI also worked with the UDF and BSP in developing election campaign and get-out-the-vote messages.

IRI has worked with other donors and their partners, including the Conservative Party of Great Britain and the Greek center-right party, Neo-Democratia. Our interview pointed to a possible added value of U. S. Government assistance to political party development, namely, according to the Regional Director, “the in-country presence of IRI and NDI, as well as their capacity to work with more than just one party, and with non-political groupings.”

During most of 2001, IRI focused mainly on supporting the major parties by addressing voter concerns in the context of issues-oriented campaigns. Its support included training in interpretation of public opinion polls, for use in developing effective strategies for communicating party platforms to the electorate. An IRI training component in campaign

management included assistance to UDF, BSP, and the National Movement. This was focused on the parties' communications with the public, namely by developing campaign messages and get-out-the-vote promotional materials. That training for the major parties completed out last year's IRI grant activity.

Our interviews with IRI gave us an indication of issues that it faced in its work with some of the major parties. Regarding the MRF party, IRI's Regional Director, on tour in Sofia from Bratislava, suggested that MRF was pointedly "not interested in polling, since it felt that polls did not represent the sentiments of the Turkish population." It has been equally difficult to work with the National Movement, according to IRI's Country Director, "because of the Movement's internal disorganization and the lack of substance in the party's campaign messages." These officials depicted the National Movement as having "no program, no plan, no trained Parliamentarians, and that content-wise the party is essentially about the King." IRI suggested that its work with the UDF has been hampered by the party's fractious quality. IRI officials characterized the UDF party as having "a consensus on the issues — but because of its different camps, it is unsure of its strategy." They consider BSP to be well organized on issues, though not very open to public debate. On the other hand, BSP's national issues were described as having local party input.

A general constraint to working with the political parties is that the parties are in and out of power so frequently. This complicates the development of longer-term strategies developed by external political institutes in shaping their work with the parties or coalitions. Electoral patterns have recently become somewhat more difficult to predict, also complicating how external support for the parties is structured. An additional constraint to working with the parties, noted by the earlier-mentioned IRI representative to Bulgaria during 1995-97, was that, "in the 1994 and 1997 elections, the parties that won and consequently went into government, left no one behind to run the party organizations." Referring to both the UDF and BSP, this representative suggested that the members of those parties had either gone into executive positions, or were elected to parliament, and were thus unavailable to lead or manage their parties.

2. THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE (NDI)

NDI has supported fair elections and civil society in Bulgaria since 1990. In the past three years, its funding shifted from NDI to a National Endowment for Democracy grant. NDI's role in the country has involved broad support for political party activity. The 1996 USAID review referred to earlier, reported that, as of its most recent workplan, NDI was "working to reverse the trends of power relationships that give national party headquarters the authority to choose local candidates, by inserting community views and people power into the equation."

One of NDI's major objectives, over most of the decade comprising the 1990s, was to foster the growth of the Bulgarian Association of Fair Elections and Civil Rights (BAFECE). BAFECE's role has been to develop civic education and election monitoring programs, as well as to serve as a government watchdog organization. Basically nonpartisan, BAFECE has, according to NDI's 1999 closeout report on its work with that organization, "sought to educate citizens on their rights to hold elected officials accountable to citizen concerns." BAFECE has also worked to increase elected officials' awareness of their obligations to citizens. Through a national network of 26 local clubs, BAFECE provided supervision in organizing election-monitoring programs

from 1994 to 1997. This activity included help in get-out-the-vote efforts, developing training materials for election observers, and publication of voter education leaflets.

NDI also supported BAFECR in implementing a civic action program, aimed at greater public participation and local government accountability. In addition, it launched a nationwide education and advocacy program, directed at informing the public about a range of human and civic rights. This initiative included community meetings and gatherings of elected officials and citizens to design such materials as a citizen guidebook. BAFECR also held meetings of media representatives from local and national newspapers, to consider the rights and responsibilities of journalists, legislative guarantees for freedom of speech, and the relationship between local and national media.

NDI has recently contracted with the British Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), a British funding organization for overseas party support, to conduct a series of focus group interviews with citizens, the media and MPs. This research aimed at helping NGOs to refine their short-term strategies for working with local governments in solving critical issues, which have been raised by local communities. It found that while people generally held a favorable view of local government (in contrast to a highly negative view of central government and the parties), they expressed almost no opinion about NGOs. One result of the focus group interviews is a program with six local governments, which work with NGOs to respond to local communities' urgent concerns. In this context, NDI has found, according to its Deputy Director that, "while neither the parties nor the NGOs believe the people can organize, Bulgarians will organize if they have real issues."

In additional work with WFD, NDI advises on the appropriateness of specific NGOs that WFD might wish to engage with. For this and other purposes, NDI has not only developed an extensive network of NGOs, including women and ethnic group NGOs, but it has also developed a detailed database of some 60 NGOs. These NGOs, which are not necessarily party affiliated, represent an important resource for working with local governments, in helping them to respond to local issues.

NDI's work, under a USAID-supported National Endowment for Democracy grant between 1998-99, included a parliamentary activity, directed at MP outreach to their constituencies in six smaller cities and towns. Consultations were offered to MPs from BSP, UDF, MRF, and Euroleft parties and their local staffers, in how to manage citizen concerns, daily staff schedules, and public outreach generally. Offered on a party basis, the consultations covered communications, including such practical knowledge as improved public speaking skills, how to speak and act in front of a TV camera, and hints on reaching specific audiences. MPs, staffers and citizens involved in the program, according to the NDI program coordinator, reported back that they "felt a greater sense of comfort in working with each other, as a result of the program."

In a get out the vote program aimed at the 2001 Parliamentary elections, NDI designed a media-based activity, called "You Choose," to mobilize underrepresented communities. Those underrepresented included youth, women, and Roma. Yet another NDI effort was a Candidacy Training School, aimed at single party training of party members, prior to the June 2001 elections. Training was conducted by an American, Irishman, and one MP from each major party, respectively.

General constraints faced by NDI are very similar to those mentioned earlier for IRI. Frequency and rapidity of party turnover make external political assistance in longterm party strategy development difficult. The absence of professional party organizers, leaders and managers also complicates work with the parties. At the same time, this weakness in party organization represents an opening for support from external institutes. Finally, another constraint is the factionalized character of the parties, making support of only the larger ones feasible — unless party coalition-building were to reemerge as an opportunity for the external party institutes.

B. OTHER DONOR EXPERIENCE IN DIRECT SUPPORT OF THE POLITICAL PARTY PROCESS

In addition to support from the U. S. Government, the British, Germans, and Netherlands have ongoing programs that support Bulgarian political party development. Other governments, such as Sweden and Greece, have supported short-term efforts, but do not have a presence in Bulgaria. Here, we will review the above Government programs, with the proviso that several of the foreign parties are not present in Bulgaria.

British Government and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy: The British Government provides direct support of parties, through the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD). WFD funds party to party work for all of the United Kingdom parties. It also funds some activities of a non-partisan character. The Conservatives have been affiliated with the UDF, mainly through their political institute, the Political Academy of Central and Eastern Europe. Labour, which once affiliated with the Euroleft (no longer a viable party), has since been unable to locate a suitable counterpart. On the other hand, the Liberal Democrats have had a relationship with the Liberal Democratic Union. While WFD has tried to persuade its parties to work with the NMS, which it sees in great need of training in all aspects of party politics, there have been no takers.

Not all WFD funds go directly to British counterpart parties; some of these funds are being channeled, for example, to the U. S.-based NDI. Some WFD funds are non-partisan, such as funding for a legal advice service for Roma in Sofia, and free legal aid and litigation of Bulgarians before the European Court of Human Rights. Typically, however, its funds are used directly to support specific, short-term partisan activities. Most of the support consists of a mix of moderately and relatively small grants for targeted work in, for example, 'promoting fair participation of roma elections,' 'support for the (Bulgarian) Political Academy for Central and Eastern Europe' (a Conservative affiliation), and 'establishment of parliamentary gender caucus.'

German Government and Political Party Foundations: The German Government supports four political party foundations (or *stiftungen*). Interviews were held with The Hanns Seidel Stiftung, an arm of the German Christian Social Union and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, an arm of the Social Democratic Party of Germany. The Konrad Adenauer (center-right affiliation, partnered with UDF), and Friedrich Naumann (liberal affiliation, partnered with MRF), were not represented in Sofia, at the time of our research. Generally, the German foundations have a very direct, one to one relationship, with their Bulgarian party counterparts.

Hanns Seidel works with the Union of Agrarian Parties and the Democratic Party, both breakaways from the UDF, in an attempt to align them. It also has ties with the Union of Free

Democrats, headed by the mayor of Sofia. An interview with the Director of Hanns Seidel pointed to significant inexperience in internal party management. As he noted, "Parties don't know how to develop strategies and tactics for addressing the people, there are no party structures in the towns to allow politicians to meet the people, and parties tend to focus on the 'star system' (personality-based), versus developing a party that can launch meaningful campaigns." He was emphatic in stating the importance of youth in party politics, of the need for party leaders to bring in youth to work in the parties, and of the value of responding to grassroots initiatives.

The Ebert Foundation works with the Union of the New Left, namely the BSP and the United Labor Block, and it worked with the Euroleft until it became nonfunctioning. It promotes principles of democracy, decentralization and local self-development, labor relations and social security matters, youth programs, EU integration, and regional (Central and Eastern Europe) cooperation. Ebert's Young Leaders project is an activity that goes beyond New Left parties to gather youth of different parties for political management training. The foundation's program associate, whom we interviewed, indicated that Bulgaria "does not have a well developed political culture...and for that reason, we are working with the young to promote a better political culture."

The same associate admitted that the BSP had had a very bad stint, in recent years, in leading the government, and had made "many mistakes with the economy that were very bad for the country." Nevertheless, he stated that "the BSP is the most democratic of all the parties." He proposed that, because the central parties tend to control from the center, more effort is required in organizing parties outside of Sofia.

Netherlands Government Support of Parties and Parliament Based on Netherlands' foreign legislation, their partisan-based cooperation with European parties is similar to the Germans. Netherlands support in Bulgaria, however, is not based on a permanent presence of the foundations. The Labor-oriented Alfred Mozer Foundation, whose Amsterdam-based project manager was visiting Sofia, has had difficulty locating a partner. In an interview, the project manager indicated, "There is a question of which party to work with, since there are several labor-type parties." The most obvious counterpart is the BSP, with which it may decide to work, once it is assured that the reformists have taken over. Its planned support consists of capacity building, including such basics as dealing with the media, how to communicate with voters, and negotiating techniques. Mozer's orientation, according to the project manager, is that it has "given up on the older generation leadership, focuses on a mentality change that will result in youth staffing the party, and which will ultimately make the party aware of the rules of the game."

A second Netherlands effort has only an indirect influence on party development, through an NGO activity called, the East-West Parliamentary Practice Project. Working with MPs across parties, it is aimed at linking Parliament and local NGOs, in addressing pressing problems of society, in this case Black Sea environmental and labor legislation. In an interview with the East-West Project Officer, he noted that this project is also intended to "make Parliament more transparent."

C. USAID EXPERIENCE IN INDIRECT SUPPORT OF PARTY SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

Since parties do not occur in a vacuum, but rather are embedded in a myriad of political, economic and social conditions, it is instructive to review a sampling of USAID activities that contribute to more effective governance in Bulgaria. USAID supports a number of partners who have an indirect effect on parties, especially those civil society organizations that initiate citizen demand for more transparent and accountable elected officials and political parties. These include, both USAID partner organizations, and some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are not USAID funded, including think tanks and advocacy organizations. The team met with many such partners and NGOs. And, while their link to political party building or electoral processes was not always explicit, the team was able to derive meaningful program related data from our interviews. We begin with USAID partner organizations, and then move to local, non-USAID funded advocacy NGOs.

1. USAID PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Legislative Support Project: The State University of New York (SUNY) Legislative Strengthening Project provides seminars and workshops to newly elected MPs on the role of political parties in a democracy. This program, which provides cross-party training to 168 new legislators, has faced certain constraints. One in particular, according to the SUNY project head, is that "some of the MPs don't know what they don't know and are unwilling to admit it." Their indifference or outright antipathy is expressed in their unavailability for the weeklong SUNY training program. In this context it became evident to our team that 12-13 years of transition training in democracy and governance of elected officials has worn thin. According to our interviews, training fatigue was much more apparent in Sofia than in the municipalities.

Local Government Initiative The Local Government Initiative (LGI), implemented by U. S. partner Research Triangle Institute, contributes directly to USAID's intermediate result of more accountable, transparent local government. LGI has an indirect influence on the parties, through the cooperation of mayors in the National Association of Bulgarian Municipalities, an organization that crosscuts parties. This association acts like an advocacy group for local government, regardless of party affiliation. An interview with the LGI chief of party pointed out that national political parties relate quite differently to their local parties and mayors. For example, he noted, "BSP is much more linked to its local parties and mayors than UDF, which has very little local focus."

Democracy Network Program: Implemented by the Institute for Sustainable Communities (ISC), the Democracy Network Program (DemNet), according to its mission statement, contributes to "the important role of engaging the public in policy dialogue and developing the habits of active civic participation." A recent assessment by ISC of advocacy activities by Bulgarian CSOs points to a finding important to future program planning: It found the most active advocacy to be at regional and local, in contrast to national levels. That assessment further suggests that this is a positive sign, "because it is arguable that change in the political culture must occur first at the local level."

Coalition 2000: This is an anti-corruption activity carried out by the Bulgarian-based Center for the Study of Democracy (CSD). Coalition 2000 works with parties indirectly through Parliament

to help establish internal controls and codes of ethics. In an interview with a CSD Senior Fellow, he proposed several approaches to assisting parties, including dealing with parties at the national level through Expert Groups in Parliament. He also proposed working with the youth leaders of the parties, exclusive of MPs since, as he noted, "they think they know everything." Furthermore, he recommended moving out from the center, with the "support of the enlightened leadership in Sofia," to work with parties in the towns.

Foundation for Local Government Reform (FLGR): This USAID grant recipient is an advocacy NGO that works directly with Government and NGOs to increase the responsiveness of regional and municipal government. In an interview with the Executive Director (herself a former mayor), she noted that, "Unfortunately there is no Ministry of Local Government, since it's not clear in government who is responsible for municipal development." FLGR helps to fill this gap through active involvement in training and consulting to the municipalities. For program purposes, the Executive Director offered the suggestion of working with parties in more disadvantaged regions.

International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL): This Bulgarian branch of a U. S.-sponsored NGO of the same name, supports NGOs and civil society organizations (CSO). It has worked with the MPs of UDF, MRF and BSP, on European Union-proposed "democracy criteria" bearing on NGO law. This is relevant to parties, since they have their own NGOs. The ICNL representative suggested that, "It is essential to any program that supports political party development to have a civil society component."

Ethnic Integration—the Roma: A USAID grant with Partners Bulgaria Foundation (PBF) for ethnic integration and conflict resolution, is directed to highly disadvantaged Roma people in three cities. Targeted Roma have a purported unemployment rate of 98% (vs. 38% for Roma generally, and 21% for all Bulgarians). The PBF Director noted, during an interview, that Roma political participation was generally weak. However, she also pointed out that there is an "opening for Roma participation, through educating them to know their rights, to work with them through institutions, and help them defend their rights."

2. LOCAL, NON-USAID FUNDED ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS

Open Society Foundation: The Open Society Foundation (OSF)—also known by its sponsor's name, Soros—a self- and donor-supported Bulgarian NGO—actively supports other NGOs that contribute to civil society development. OSF is presently considering working with parties on what the Program Director defined as, "developmental activities, such as relations with the media, with civil society and the electorate." In an interview with the OSF Executive Director, she reiterated her organization's interest in supporting parties in "clarifying their agendas, since most parties, especially the one presently in control, have only vaguely defined goals."

A Roma Advocacy Organization—Creating Effective Grassroots Alternatives (CEGA): An advocacy and community development organization, CEGA funding comes from the Netherlands and the C. S. Mott Foundation. It has assisted the Roma for five years in the northern city of Lom. When asked why the Roma have not formed a viable, representative party, the Executive Director replied, "there is a saying here that 'every Roma is a leader' and, furthermore, they themselves claim that they are all 'informal leaders.'" Another reason, he avowed, is that in elections, "the Roma vote can be bought for pennies." He further noted that

even though the "Roma like having influence in elections, as much as they like the money," they have so far been unable to launch a solid party base.

Centre for Social Practices (CSP): This NGO supports such civil society activities as citizen empowerment and participation in policy and decision-making. CSP has a grant from the USAID-funded DemNet program, through which it provides 30 NGOs with practical, capacity building skills. In CSP's work with elected officials over the years, its Director mentioned, in the course of an interview, that he has "failed to convince party members of the need to manage information." "Instead," he continued, "MPs, who are the keepers of information at the regional level, block communications to their constituencies." In the context of any applied program with the parties, he contended that it was important to "bypass the regional level and go directly to municipalities."

Eurointegration Association (EA) This is a grouping of about a dozen NGOs formed in June 2000, according to its mission statement, "to represent an independent approach to the European and Euro-Atlantic integration of Bulgaria." EA has 15 district centers or clubs around the country (comprising some 1,000 members), whose aim is to disseminate information at the grassroots level on the country's entry into the EU and NATO. It seems to have a Union of Agrarian parties link. According to an interview with the EA Spokesperson, the Association intends "to create a broad coalition and to mobilize the intellectual potential of the people, so as to give them some hope for the future."

D. FUTURE PLANS AND POTENTIAL DONOR COOPERATION

Donors and many of the international foundations or institutes supporting partisan party development in Bulgaria, have been somewhat stalled in their planning, precisely because the political party system is in flux, and it is uncertain how it will turn out. Partly at stake is whether the NMS can make a convincing case with the public, the Government, and with the other parties on its eligibility and legitimacy in establishing its party status. The opinion of many persons interviewed is that NMS status will only unfold gradually. Since this report is being written on the cusp of NMS potential accession to party hood, it is difficult to project very far into the future on its presumed status.

If the scenario of a viable NMS party comes to pass, then support from its most natural U. S. counterpart, IRI, could be considered as a clear option. NMS would, of course, have to pass the U. S. Foreign Assistance legislation test of eligibility for political party assistance. Such a "test" includes judgments about whether the party is democratic, has the potential to be a serious player, is capable of effectively absorbing the assistance, and matches USAID's resource allocations. On the other hand, if a vacuum develops, because of a greatly diminished or imploded NMS, then new opportunities may emerge for alternative party assistance. However, such a situation could also lead to greater mistrust and cynicism among the public, leading to presently unpredictable results.

Generally, because of the partisan work of international political party foundations, there is not much programmatic cooperation among the parties. Party foundations with common political agendas, seem to coordinate and there are a few instances of cross-national cooperation. The WFD, for example, has engaged the NDI to coordinate some of its grant management effort in Bulgaria. In the case of indirect donor assistance to open up the political system, some donor

cooperation has taken place. An example is the cooperation between the UNDP and USAID for the latter to fund the development of the traditional *Chitalishto*, or reading room/community center, as part of an effort, among others, to create a dialogue among citizens and politicians on local development issues.

For the most part, donors and party institutes working in Bulgaria concur on the need to focus on the future party situation. This has led most to draw the conclusion that working with youth political leaders and youth association members is the most favored approach. Another conclusion, from our interviews and observations, is that support for the Roma people is important, elusive as their society may be. Coupled with the above focus on youth, a Roma youth activity involving support for nascent political party development might be considered.

Donors and party foundations are generally supportive of civil society organizational (CSO) development in Bulgaria, and most support CSOs. In general, donors support CSOs because of their advocacy, social services, or think tank roles. Now, it is true that there are many partisan NGOs and whether they, in fact, qualify as CSOs is debatable. Nevertheless, there may be a role for these and other, less partisan NGO/CSOs in supporting party development. However, one proviso is that such NGO/CSO support has to reflect true citizen demand for advocacy of greater party transparency and accountability. Generally, though, it seems that many of the ingredients for a successful relationship between the parties and CSOs/NGOs are present, boding well for future donor support of a more transparent and accountable political party system.

Finally, it is conceivable to develop opportunities for cooperation, both among donors, and between the party foundations or institutes that they fund. Such cooperation would have to be 'situational'—that is, it would have to respond to an effective demand from the Bulgarian parties, or from their affiliated youth associations or clubs. While cooperation among partisan party foundations, based on mixing funds, presents constraints, and is not recommended—where there is a complementarity of interest and capability among two foreign institutes, they might find a way of supporting parties through a single program activity. An example is the Ebert Foundation, which supports youth leadership training for New Left parties it works with. Technical consultations with Ebert from U. S.-supported party institutes (IRI or NDI) might be feasible, for example, in certain aspects of capacity building among party youth leadership. We address this topic again in the design section of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND PROGRAM DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

A. CONCLUSIONS

1. POLITICAL PARTIES

The political party spectrum in Bulgaria is diverse; some political organizations can trace their history back to the nineteenth century, while others are only a few months old. It is, therefore, not surprising that they should have diverse needs. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify a number of common constraints related to the institutional context in which parties are operating, to their access to resources, as well as to their evolving relations with the electorate.

First, the conditions for geographical representation are absent in contemporary Bulgaria. The closed list electoral system provides individual representative with little incentive to cater to the needs of geographically-defined groups of voters. Though there is some recognition among some members of the current government that open lists or a mixed majoritarian-proportional system would be preferable, there appears to be little realistic expectation that change will be brought about in the near future. MPs also lack the resources necessary to carry out constituency-based functions. The funding that they receive for staff and offices is generally inadequate to perform extensive constituency service, and it is not politically feasible to increase funding levels at this time, given the low overall standard of living of the population. Finally, the personalization of representative links might risk, under current Bulgarian conditions, degenerating into clientelistic relations or worse, were the constituency link to be strengthened. This suggests that territorial representation is not likely to have strong prospects in the near future. National policy-based representation is, under the current conditions, a more promising avenue and one that should be actively promoted.

The second main common feature of Bulgarian political parties is that they have been largely unsuccessful in demonstrating popular accountability. In order for parties to be accountable, a number of conditions must be met: Parties must formulate attractive, realistic policies; they must communicate these policies to the people; people must vote on the basis of policy preferences; and voters must be prepared to reward parties for the successful implementation of their preferred policies, and punish parties for failure to implement their programs. Bulgarian parties are largely failing to formulate attractive, realistic policies and to communicate them to the people. It also appears that voters are increasingly voting on the basis of personalities, rather than on policy preferences. This is due partly to the perceived lack of policy differentiation among the parties. It can also be linked to the fact that many individuals are viewed as failing to live up to the standards of democratic politics, thereby intensifying the focus on personal characteristics, such as integrity and honesty.

Though Bulgarian voters have, several times in the past twelve years, punished parties for failing to deliver on their promises, the punishment has lasted only until the next election, when the incumbent had in each case, so discredited himself that the previous power-holders have been re-elected. This pattern was shattered with the unexpected rise to power of the NMSII in June 2001; however, popular discontent with the Movement since that time, points to a high level of

frustration on the part of the citizenry with regards to the efficacy of elections as a means of holding politicians to account. Survey research has indicated that NMSII voters were among the most disaffected and the most frustrated at the time of the 2001 elections, and the recent decline of the Movement in opinion polls shows that these citizens have in the interim become still more frustrated.

One of the main causes of the current situation is that the pre-conditions for successful policy accountability are not being met; parties are not formulating and communicating appealing messages to voters. A comparative survey of eight Balkan states, conducted in January-February 2002, found that Bulgarians are more dissatisfied with the political and economic direction of their country than are citizens of any other state; and they are most likely to criticize their government for failing to deliver. In objective terms, Bulgaria is actually performing considerably better than many of its neighbors. This discrepancy between perceptions and reality can, therefore, only be explained by the inability of Bulgarian politicians to manage expectations and communicate their accomplishments to the people.

Communication strategy-building is thus one of the key areas in which parties are under-developed, and one of the areas in which targeted assistance could prove to be most useful. Improved communication capacity on the part of the parties would help to rebuild confidence in the political system and to restore the link between citizens and politicians. It would also give citizens an enhanced sense that they are relevant players in politics and that their leaders listen to them.

2. THE MEDIA

The conventional wisdom in Bulgaria is that political parties lack experience and skills in working with the media, to the disadvantage of the public whom the parties are supposed to represent. Editors, reporters and veteran press officers, who have also worked as journalists, agree that Bulgarian political parties are too often unable to communicate their policies to the media, and hence to the voters at large. Parties are said to be secretive. They are said to have little interest in voters, once party candidates have been elected to national or even local office. They are said to lack trust in the accuracy of television and newspaper reports, and often show a hostile attitude toward the media. We found that some members of political parties now recognize that they should, for their own benefit, establish more productive relations with the media.

Bulgarian media have made considerable strides, in the last 12 years, to produce dispassionate, factual and comprehensive coverage of political developments. Television, radio and newspaper editors and reporters consistently say that their obligations are to communicate the news without opinion, and to present all points of view. Bulgarians who monitor the media, such as think tanks and politicians, contend that journalists still mix opinion and fact, and that their reporting not only lacks thoroughness, but tends to the sensational. Television is the dominant influence on Bulgarian public opinion, but newspapers still set the social issues agenda.

Much of what is said about political parties and the media also applies to Bulgarian advocacy groups. Some of these groups are quite skilled in assembling evidence to argue their causes, and then in attracting media attention. But the number of such groups remains small, and largely based in Sofia. Many hundreds more nonprofit organizations in smaller cities often have very

little experience in ways to promote their aims in the Bulgarian media. Thus, they fail to gain the attention of political parties and of other institutions that could address Bulgarian problems and grievances.

From the above, it can be concluded that Bulgarian political parties need assistance in framing their messages in coherent fashion, and then in consistently presenting them in attractive form to the media. The same can be said of Bulgarian advocacy groups. And, we conclude, the Bulgarian media need to develop more understanding of their role in responsibly reporting the country's political developments. The problem of communications is particularly acute, at the regional level, where political parties, the media and advocacy groups are staffed with people of less experience than in Sofia.

3. PARTY FOUNDATION SUPPORT FOR POLITICAL PARTY CHANGE

Every one of the international party foundations or institutes interviewed strongly voiced the need to begin, or intensify their capacity building among party youth. Most of the USAID partner organizations, providing advocacy or political development skills building, also expressed strong opinions on the need to bring a more youthful cast to the political party scene. Of the foundations, some of the center-left and leftist party institutes have even refused to work with their Bulgarian party counterpart because they perceived that coalition to be insufficiently democratized. They have vowed that they will not work with the present party leadership, until it changes.

Whatever their political orientation, all of the party-affiliated foundations have expressed a need to focus more on the party youth. More specifically, these foundations want to work with youth party associations or clubs, for the purpose of building a new capacity in selected youth, whom they expect to take a leadership role in their parties, in the not too distant future. All the foundations, in effect, indicated that the sooner the youth could assert a leadership role, the better--especially in order to contribute to the greater stability of Bulgaria's political party system and governance, generally, and for the wellbeing of its citizenry.

Our conclusions, then, point to a demand for a transformation of party leadership, which translates, in effect, into new younger leadership. As with all change from one generation to the next, tensions are inherent. While some of the parties have placed their youth in leadership positions, this is not the case for all. The fact is, however, that the transition from one generation to the next is inevitable. But, there are ways to mitigate the tug of war among generations, in bridging the generation gap. One way is to provide practical incentives to the party elders, to somehow empower them to support the eventual passing of the baton to the youth.

B. PROGRAM DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

Three design recommendations are proposed, based in general on the assessment's overall findings, and specifically on the above conclusions. The first program design is, National Party Communications Capacity Building; second, Enhancing Regional and Local Party Accountability; and third, Party Youth Political Leadership Development.

1. NATIONAL PARTY COMMUNICATIONS CAPACITY BUILDING (RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVE)

The above analysis has identified political communications as one of the main areas in which Bulgarian political parties are deficient. This is also an area where a well-designed technical assistance program could reliably be predicted to be of considerable assistance, given that the problem appears to be largely that of lack of skill and knowledge. There is, thus, considerable scope for building capacity in the area of communications. The proposed program would be designed to assess and serve the communications needs of individual parties.

The objective of the program is: To establish enhanced internal communications capability within the main Bulgarian political parties, in order to improve accountable political representation and governance.

The intended result of the program is: The establishment of self-sustaining mechanisms within the main political parties for gathering information and for disseminating party messages.

a. Target Group and Geographic Locus

The program would be targeted at central party organizational structures, including key party policy-makers and communicators (the designations of such people would vary from party to party, but they would include party leaders in charge of policy in various spheres, researchers, image-designers, electoral campaign managers, and spokespeople).

The objective of the program would be to establish internal party structures that would enable the central party apparatus to train party members at lower levels, to disseminate the party message effectively. The program would thus focus on the central party headquarters in Sofia, with the aim of prompting the parties to develop the capacity to coordinate message dissemination at lower levels.

b. Needs Assessment/Demand Analysis

As detailed above, lack of effective communications capacities and structures was a common complaint across the parties interviewed. This difficulty is viewed largely in technical terms; parties feel that they were lacking in the skills and know-how to convey their messages effectively, and there was widespread recognition that expertise in this field would be welcome.

This view was expressed by virtually all parties, but by some to a greater extent than others.

The National Movement Simeon the Second is just coming to recognize the importance of effective communications with the people, and is, at this point, likely to be highly receptive to support, as it builds its new party structures.

The Bulgarian Socialist Party has already established a relatively successful communications capacity, but there are elements among the party (especially among the younger generations) that appreciate the limits of the BSP's current strategies, and may well welcome support in broadening the party's communication reach.

The Union of Democratic Forces has recently been let down electorally by its failure to communicate its achievements to the people. The party has existing internal capacity, on which it would be possible to build, and is generally receptive to outside support at this juncture.

The Movement for Rights and Freedoms is relatively effective at communicating with its established supporters, but, as it seeks to broaden its support base to a wider range of ethnic groups, it may potentially require and welcome assistance in communications with these groups.

The Euroleft is, at this point, highly receptive to working on improving its communications techniques.

Role of Women: Women are in many cases placed in important communications roles within Bulgarian political parties. A number of the party spokespeople are women, and women have traditionally been active in getting messages across at crucial points, such as during electoral campaigns. A program that targeted key communications elites within parties would thus be bound to include a relatively large number and range of women, who would, thereby, benefit from improved skills, confidence, and the enhancement of their role within the party.

c. Constraints

Despite declared enthusiasm for support aimed at increasing communication capacity, there may be some resistance on the part of certain parties, once a program is initiated. This may be expected to be particularly the case with parties that believe that they already have effective mechanisms for getting the message across to their supporters, such as the BSP and the MRF.

There may also be objective constraints in the extent to which parties are able to package distinctive messages, given the narrow policy confines under which Bulgaria is currently operating. The dual goals of NATO and EU membership, which are shared by all major political actors in Bulgaria, have limited the extent to which parties are able to formulate alternative policy programs. Establishing party distinctiveness will thus be a challenge for all parties.

A final potential constraint to improving communications is the possible resistance, on the part of a citizenry that has become disillusioned over the past twelve years, and may be unwilling to accept party pledges, even if they are attractively packaged. Popular distrust of parties and a tendency among large parts of the electorate to discount party messages may hamper the extent to which improved communications strategies are noticed by the citizens.

Yet to a certain extent these constraints are ones in which all political communications take place; there is always resistance to change; there is generally a certain amount of policy consensus among the major parties in a democracy, and public opinion often contains an element of cynicism. Thus, these are challenges to be overcome, but they are not insurmountable challenges, and the parties have every reason to rise to them. They also have every incentive to welcome well-targeted professional assistance from experts in the sphere of political communications.

d. Program Components

An effective program would involve work with party central offices in designing and implementing internal communications strategies. The program would thus have two key components or phases:

First is the Design of Party Communications Strategies, including:

- Establishment of internal party mechanisms to formulate coherent messages, popularize party policies, and develop party image.
- Development of a media strategy and work with key party members (spokespeople, key leaders) in cultivating constructive relations with important media figures.
- Establishment of an information collation and interpretation capacity within parties, to keep leaders informed and enable them to answer questions (with an effort focused on collecting and interpreting information generated outside the state).

Second is Support for the Implementation of the Communication Strategy, including:

- Media training with top party leaders, development of training materials for the party to use in its own training, and training of trainers, in order to generate sustainable media skills.
- Standardization of promotional material design, production, and dissemination, so as to institutionalize best practices within the party.

Working with party information specialists to build internal party information resource departments and to establish effective channels for disseminating this information within the party, and to regularize its input into the party policy-development process.

Technical support of this program will be provided by external political party organization experts, coupled with counterpart Bulgarian specialists. Separate teams will work concurrently with interested parties.

If effectively implemented, this program would enhance the skills of existing party members and institutionalize skills development within party structures. The benefit of the program would, thus, be both rapid gain for a select group of top party officials, who would work intensively with specialized consultants on a short-term basis, and longer-term gain for party structures, at lower levels, as skills are disseminated, via the institutions established during the first phase of the program.

e. Timing

The program would be most effectively implemented, over a two to three year period, and designed in such a way that an electoral campaign (local or national) fell in the second or third year of implementation. This would provide time for the initial design stage to have been completed, before the mechanisms developed at this point, could be tested in elections. At this point, the mechanisms could be revised and refined to suit the evolving needs of the party, and effort could be focused in the final period on guaranteeing their sustainability.

2. ENHANCING REGIONAL AND LOCAL PARTY ACCOUNTABILITY

a. *Rationale and Objective*

For the Bulgarian political culture - which includes political parties, the media and citizens' groups - to develop along democratic paths, it seems clear that political parties need to deal more openly, fully and effectively with the media, so that voters know what parties stand for, and so that parties are more accountable to the public. This is the rationale for a program offering to regional political party workshops instruction in basic techniques in dealing effectively with the media, and generally in reaching the voting public. By the same token, nonprofit organizations, which often have valuable information about Bulgaria's social problems, must learn to communicate that information through the media especially, to reach political parties and elected representatives.

The objective of the program is: To aid Bulgarian political parties, in their own interests, to broaden channels of information to the media, and thus lead to a better informed public, which ultimately must hold political leaders accountable for their conduct in and out of office.

The intended result of the program is: Local and regional political party organizations better able to communicate with their constituents and with the public generally; and having the capacity to engage the media and advocacy groups in conveying a measurably greater volume of reliable political information to voters.

b. *Target Group and Geographic Locus*

The program should be directed to major party organizations located in large regional Bulgarian cities, with some outreach to smaller towns. A starting point would be men and women of local party organizations, who are delegated to deal with the media, who field questions, prepare information for the press, and who otherwise are responsible for communications with voters, at large, either through the media or other means. These party activists are the ones who, with proper assistance and counsel, could adopt proven techniques to express clearly, concisely and consistently the party's programs to the public, and thus assure transparency and accountability of political party actions.

The program would also engage the staff of regional newspapers and television stations assigned to report political party activities and policies. This part of the program would include work with journalists whose standard should be factual, comprehensive and dispassionate reporting about local political parties and related institutions, such as city councils.

Finally, the program would engage citizens' groups, since they are an essential part of the democratic political process. The program would select members of regional advocacy groups with an already proven ability to collect and organize information, but lacking experience in effectively reaching the media with their messages, in order to influence political party opinion. Advocacy organizations could be brought together with political parties, for example, in focus groups to express their problems in reaching party members.

c. Needs Assessment/Demand Analysis

Virtually everyone interviewed agrees that Bulgarian political parties do not know how to communicate well with the public, either through the media or other channels. And virtually everyone outside of the media agrees that political reporting in Bulgaria still lacks professional quality. And, finally, virtually everyone interviewed says that Bulgarian grassroots organizations are still young and inexperienced, and need help to promote their causes. They need help in reaching political leaders with their programs, through the media or by direct contact.

Given these findings—all drawn from anecdotal information—it still is not clear what regional Bulgarian political party organizations, if any, would welcome foreign expertise for any purpose. Nor is it clear whether journalists who work for local television stations and newspapers and are focused on political reporting, are interested in taking part in a program to improve their professional skills. And, finally, there is no available database in Bulgaria to select citizen activists, who are at a stage where they could learn and put into practice skills to advance their programs and to hold political parties accountable.

Therefore, a first step in considering a program dealing with political parties, the media and citizens groups is a survey in six Bulgarian regional cities to identify who would welcome what, in regards to workshops, seminars and longer-term training in the areas of politics/media/voting public. Without a professional survey of needs and wants in these areas, it would be unwise to proceed to formulating a concrete program of assistance. This applies to regional political parties and media, and to citizens' groups as well. Once concrete survey data is on hand, decisions can be made about specific activities.

Suggested Bulgarian cities for a survey are: Plovdiv, Sliven, Burgas, Varna, Rus and Pleven. These six are geographically situated, so as to provide a national sampling of attitudes of political party activists, journalists and citizens involved in grassroots causes.

d. Constraints

The prime constraint to an assistance program is, of course, the possibility that few, if any, regional political parties believe that they have problems in communicating their policies to the public. It is possible, as well, that political journalists and nonprofit organizations see no particular need for professional advice (especially foreign) in improving their work.

One can also imagine that, even if political parties, the media and citizens' groups, accept that they have failings in particular areas, they nonetheless are not prepared to commit to a program requiring many weeks of instruction.

Lack of positive acceptance of a program and willingness to participate enthusiastically in it, clearly would be a constraint to success. It should be measured with a reasonable degree of accuracy, before a program is undertaken. Informal sampling of opinion, rather than an elaborate attitude survey, should produce the necessary information. The sampling could be carried out, in conjunction with the above mentioned survey, in the six Bulgarian cities on the attitudes of political party officials, journalists and citizen activists. Hard data is required before a program is implemented.

e. Program Components

The program would focus on political party-media relations. Work with advocacy groups would be a secondary interest, attended to possibly, in conjunction with USAID/Bulgaria's existing and continuing assistance to these groups. Advocacy group relations with political parties are dealt with in workshops primarily instructing party officials.

The political party-media segment of the program would be overseen by a U. S. citizen. This person should have a party organization and journalism/public relations background, and experience in working with political parties and the press. As program director, this person will be assisted by local specialists in party organization, who, on demand, organize and conduct workshops for political party leaders, staffers and journalists. They also will design seminars involving both politicians and journalists. Further, the program staff will include one or two specialists with experience in designing party promotional materials, campaign strategies, and media relations, to work with the parties.

The program, while perhaps headquartered in Sofia, should operate out of a regional center, for example, Sliven, in order to be centrally located and near major urban centers. This could have the benefit of lowering costs and creating closer contacts with regional political parties.

The program for regional political parties will follow the following format in each city in which it is undertaken: Workshops will be held in appropriate instructional facilities and in media centers or operations. Each workshop will offer printed instructional material in Bulgarian, drawn from existing titles or compiled especially for the workshops. Consideration should be given to practical applications by party staff, in concert with media and advocacy groups. Illustrative workshops are outline as follows:

Workshop-Week One: Instruction in and examples of preparation of a concise, clear and comprehensive communications strategy. This will include advice in establishing long and short-term political goals relative to the media and to voters. The workshop includes instruction in the creation of party printed and, if appropriate, visual materials appealing to two different audiences—the media and the general public. It will cover an analysis of the needs of the different media—television and newspapers—and how to meet those needs, in order to communicate party policies and activities in a positive light.

Workshop-Week Two: Basic training in working with television. This includes discussion of the editorial process that produces television news and social issues programs, to educate political activists and other party staff on the attitudes of television news producers. It covers the various possibilities in preparing visual materials attractive to producers and reporters. It includes advice and practical discussion on organizing events that appeal to a medium relying on pictures more than on words, and that convey an image of a political party attractive to voters.

Workshop-Week Three: Organizing televised news conferences and interviews. The instruction includes mock press conferences and one-on-one mock interviews with political journalists. In these instruction sessions, the news conferences and interviews are held in real-life studio settings, with camera crews and appropriate lighting, in order to acquaint participants with sometimes distracting surroundings. The mock press conferences and interviews are taped and subsequently critiqued by experienced instructors, who point out failings and flaws to

participants. At least two, and preferably three mock sessions are held for each participant, in order to perfect his or her appearance before a television camera, and to polish his or her presentation of party policies and activities. At least one session stages a hostile news conference or interview for each participant, to provide practice in maintaining a positive demeanor under aggressive questioning.

Workshop-Week Four: Essentials of communicating with newspaper journalists. The workshop includes discussion of what, from a newspaper editor's point of view, constitutes a newsworthy story. It includes practice in producing news releases - if such practice is needed - and in holding a news conference for the print media to effectively convey party views and statements. The workshop also stages mock interviews with political journalists, to accustom participants to deal with typical questioning posed by print journalists, as contrasted to television reporters. The workshop further covers the advantageous use of background and of off-the-record briefings for the press, as a means of conveying information, and of gaining the goodwill of journalists.

Workshop-Week Five: Exploring party and press relations. This workshop brings together, in an informal setting, and under the guidance of an American and Bulgarian specialist, regional party officials with political journalists. The purpose of this workshop is to explore the attitudes of each party towards the other. These would include, for example, the common complaint among political officials that their views are distorted or presented inaccurately, and that the press is ideologically hostile toward them. Attitudes would also include, for example, the frequent criticism of journalists that politicians are not forthcoming with information, that there are no designated press spokespersons or that politicians are unpracticed in presenting programs to the media. The workshop would be staged over several days, or enough time to explore attitudes on the role of the press and political parties, and also to help find common ground between politicians and journalists—mindful, however, that in a democracy they will always be adversaries, to one degree or another.

Workshop-Week Six: Political work at the grassroots level. This workshop is designed to give instruction on means to inform voters of political party activities, other than through the media. This includes discussion of open meetings with voters to gather their opinions, and with advocacy groups to gain their special knowledge and consider their particular causes. Focus groups and open forum meetings with representative voters and nonprofit organizations can be arranged to acquaint political leaders with popular opinion, and to encourage, among voters, a sense of transparency and accountability on the part of their political parties. The focus groups and citizen forums are also intended to impress on political leaders the advantage, if not requirement, of continually monitoring public opinion.

Workshop-Week Seven: Political parties and the Internet. This workshop concentrates on the Internet, particularly web sites, to communicate regional political parties' fundamental programs, current policies and ongoing agenda and events to the public. Although use of the Internet, outside of Sofia, is so far limited—it will grow. Political parties must know how to take advantage of the Internet. Instruction in this workshop includes, as necessary, basic use of computers and the Internet. It includes, with the participation of local contractors or specialists, the design, construction and maintenance of a web site. The workshop advises on the advantages of web sites to convey a broad range of information to the media and to the voting public alike.

In addition to practical information conveyed in the workshops, the employment of four or five Bulgarian experts in the program would create a small reservoir of Bulgarian specialists to implement the program in other locations, and to train other Bulgarian specialists.

An evaluation system will be created at the outset of the program in order to judge the program's usefulness over its life. There will be an evaluation of such mundane items as the ability of participants to produce useful information or news releases for the media. There will be an evaluation of the broader impact of political leaders who have gone through workshops on public opinion, and their relative effect on the media. Evaluation of the program will use established and tested means of measuring public opinion and the political use of mass media, including results.

f. Timing

To contract with a Bulgarian public opinion research agency and then for the agency to conduct a survey of regional political parties will take up to three months. Assuming that there will be some positive response — the organization of the program office and staff, and the assembling of instructional materials and agenda will be done at the same time. Each workshop will last from three to five days, depending on the number of participants and the material ultimately included in the program. Generally, the entire series of seven workshops will require about six weeks, not necessarily consecutively. The first year of the program will include a demand survey and preparation of workshop materials, and then the staging of the workshops in six Bulgarian regional cities. The workshops will then be refined in light of experience, and undertaken in successive years in other Bulgarian cities. They will increasingly draw on Bulgarian experts to conduct the workshops.

3. PARTY YOUTH POLITICAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

a. Rationale and Objective

The rationale for the Party Youth Political Leadership Program is partially embodied in the conclusions stated earlier in the chapter. This is a capacity building program for young party leaders. Its purpose is to tap into an existing reservoir of politically active or potentially active youth, who belong to associations or clubs sponsored by their respective parties. The proposed Program is directed at a smaller number of youth than that which makes up the entire membership of a party youth association. It is targeted to those who are specifically interested and who demonstrate a capacity for basic leadership roles and responsibilities—which should serve as a foundation for intensive capacity building in political party leadership skills.

The objective of the Program is: Creation of a new generation of political leaders to spearhead the development of more effective and representative party structures and to improve relationships within the parties, with constituents, with the media, and with the public.

The intended result of the proposed Program is: A body of young, informed political party leaders with experience to lead their parties, with a capability to operate with transparency and accountability to the voting public, and to take on more and more responsibility for party leadership.

b. Target Group and Geographic Locus

The proposed Program is directed at youth party members belonging to youth associations or to clubs sponsored by sitting parties and to a few others seen as having potential roles on the party scene. Youth are defined in Bulgaria as belonging in the age group comprising approximately early 20s-35 years of age.

The geographic locus of the Program is the socio-economically disadvantaged regions. Such regions are further defined as having high concentrations of Roma, Turkish, Bulgarian Turkish, and Bulgarian Moslem inhabitants. In addition, party youth should be recruited, not just from urban centers in those regions, but also from small towns, even villages.

Youth members, male and female alike in reasonably proportionate numbers, of existing party associations or clubs are the major source of participants for the Program. Where youth do not belong to such clubs because none exist, young people should, nevertheless, be considered on the basis of an active community leadership role in some civic activity. For example, a Roma role model who is not a youth party club member, but respected for her/his reputation in defending Roma rights would make a viable candidate. Or a youth could be recommended by non-party community leaders. In this way, disenfranchised youth will be encouraged to become active politically, perhaps even the initiators to start thinking of a new party formation or party coalitions. There would have to be an agreement between an unaffiliated youth and a particular party youth club on that individual's participation.

Newcomers to politics, but generally younger members, should be targeted. In order to provide a reasonable mix of experience, participation of a few seasoned party youth leaders should be solicited as facilitators, in order to serve as role models for the newcomers and for those less experienced in party politics.

The Program should be offered on a party basis. This seems to be what works best in Bulgaria, based on the competitiveness of the parties, including the not unnatural, and felt need to keep party leadership matters and styles confidential—lest the other party gain the edge by learning of the competing party's leadership strategies. Where parties share a similar orientation, they might double up for program purposes. It is envisioned that three-four party groupings would comprise the focus of the leadership capacity building.

c. Needs Assessment/Demand Analysis

As reported earlier, young people in Bulgaria are among the most disaffected and the most disengaged from the political process. Simultaneously, some youth have adapted well to the electronic age, developing skills in electronic communications, namely the Internet. This skill is a potential asset to political parties in designing and packaging their campaign strategies and in shaping their internal organization. Equally important is the finding that the youth, as a target group for capacity building, are more open to training, whereas, at the elective level of national politics, training is seen as *passé*. Furthermore, youth training will pay higher dividends, given the longer time horizon for its application.

A second aspect of the demand for youth leadership capacity building is the general support by party members towards assisting party youth organizations and youth training. The general tenor

of response by party elders and youth, where they were already serving in party leadership positions, was enthusiastic. Several party leaders even prioritized work with youth as of the highest importance. Members of the youth groups were highly open to cooperation, welcoming potential training initiatives. Incentives for capacity building among the youth include their apparent thirst for knowledge, as judged by their active use of the Internet, their liaisons with international youth organizations, and awareness of international youth issues. The following is a thumbnail sketch of the present status of party youth associations or clubs, as well as a note on women in politics, both based on the more detailed assessment in Chapter 3.

National Movement Simeon the Second: The still new identity and internal structure of the Movement presently makes unfeasible an assessment of its youth activities.

Bulgarian Socialist Party: Party leaders stated a strong desire to modernize the BSP, their examples being drawn from the success of youth in achieving leadership and national candidacy positions. BSP leadership expressed a need to prepare their party for a generational change. A divergence of opinion was found between the elders and youth of the party, however, on the distinction between words and practice, with the youth often finding their way blocked to leadership positions. While the youth could benefit from forming their own interest group within the party, the elders may need to be provided with an incentive to support a strong party youth leadership capacity building program.

Union of Democratic Forces: The UDF has recently shown greater attention to young peoples' roles in the party, having supported formation of the Youth UDF (YUDF) association, and with chapters in 26/28 regions. While these youths recognize their need to eventually serve their party in leadership roles, they are unsure of how to press for those roles.

Movement for Rights and Freedoms: MRF leaders stressed the role of young politicians, noting the number of newly elected MPs from the younger generation. As the largest of the youth clubs among the three major parties, the MRF youth leadership expressed a strong interest in technical support. The party's focus on more grassroots involvement may also bode well for the possible greater participation of youth in eventual leadership roles.

The Euroleft: A recent generation change within the Euroleft has occurred since the 2001 parliamentary elections, with many of the leadership positions in the party being held by young, western-oriented members. This party seems to be well disposed to youth leadership capacity building.

Role of Women: A needs assessment of potential female youth interest in party leadership capacity building suggests a lack of clear definition. First, as detailed earlier in Chapter 3, the women's political movement is generally not well developed, though the 2001 parliamentary elections witnessed the succession to office of several members of the Party of Bulgarian Women. Further, the race for the leadership of the UDF was between two women. Nevertheless, these successes occurred, despite the formal role accorded to women by most of the parties.

d. Constraints

A potential constraint is the willingness of present party leaders, namely the elders of the parties, to agree to a program that implies their eventual displacement by the party youth. Some parties, as we have seen, already accord leadership roles to younger members, but not all party elders may be as sanguine about signing off on such a program. They might equate their acceptance with signaling that they may even be contemplating relinquishing their leadership to the next generation. Furthermore, party elders might try to exert an influence in appointing or nominating their candidates. This could lead to reasonable candidate choices, but not necessarily.

On the other side of the equation is the potential resistance among some youths to participate in such a program, for fear of upsetting, even alienating, party elders. Each, elders and youth, needs to understand the rationale for the Program, to see that in its absence nothing would change, that business as usual would prevail. Parties would continue to go in and out of office, musical chair style, getting what they can while in, but with no continuity of positive influence exerted by their party on the important business of their nation in transition. Clearly the voting public does not want that.

One solution might be to invite party elders to nominate one-third of participants, from the designated disadvantaged areas selected for the Program. Another might be to invite the formation of a committee of local and regional party leaders, youth club leaders, and a sampling of rank and file party members, in regions where the Program is to be implemented to nominate half the participants. The other half would be nominated by the youth clubs themselves.

e. Program Components

The following components are sequenced in the order in which they should be implemented:

An implementing team will be formed by technical specialists in discrete aspects of party development: Including leadership capacity building, party management, constituent relations, public outreach, electoral campaigns, and media relations. This includes one U. S. fulltime Program Chief of Party specialized in political party organization and leadership development, with the support of two-three Bulgarian nationals, specialized in one or more of the above specializations. They will support the management of the content and operations of the Program. While the main office will be situated in Sofia, it is understood that the main thrust of this program is not Sofia-centered, but rather based on outreach to disadvantaged areas of the country.

Up to ten sites, in the most highly socio-economically disadvantaged regions, should be established, in cooperation with local party leaders. Program capacity building (including training) sites should be determined, based on the periodic use of local spaces. This should be followed by the selection of party youth participants for the Program, based on the earlier targeting criteria and on a process to be determined.

A series of five Youth Leadership Capacity Building Modules will be developed, each to be conducted in selected disadvantaged area municipal centers. These are specified as follows:

Module 1: Leadership and Communications Techniques

- Module 2: Policy Development and Negotiating Skills
- Module 3: Relations with Advocacy Groups and with the Media
- Module 4: Intraparty Relations and Relations with Youth Clubs
- Module 5: Managing Campaigns

Each Module will be implemented over a three day period. This five-part program will be presented consecutively in each of the selected regional centers, such that Module 1 is offered in all the centers, prior to the offering of Module 2, etc. Modules should be highly practical and interactive, based on adult models of education, including role playing and team building exercises, sessions with the media on interviewing in front of the camera, among others. In combination with the TOT approach, an interactive approach might be used, in which American trainers with hands-on, grassroots expertise will team with Bulgarian experts, including trainers.

Development of a training of trainers (TOT) capacity in party leadership and party development and organization is a key element in this Program. This will serve to institutionalize the training developed by the implementer, as well as to reduce the perception that this is a program overly-influenced by foreigners. The initiative in the training of trainers will start immediately, and these trainers will be used from the outset of implementation. A pretest of the Modules should be carried out with a pilot group.

An annual Party Conferences of Youth Leadership will be developed with each party youth club (or combined parties depending on willingness to cooperate), including participants and other selected members of the party clubs, aimed to serve as a laboratory for the application of leadership skills derived through the Program. Participants will set the agenda for the Conference, in consultation with other stakeholders, perhaps directed at designing party youth activities for participation in upcoming local and national campaigns, launching local or regional party publicity, developing constituent relations, and managing intraparty relations (including communications with the national party leadership). Leaders may want to consider media coverage of the event, as another way of testing the capacity of new leadership to deal with the media. As with the capacity building implementation, these annual conferences will be single-party (or, where appropriate, combined party events).

The monitoring and evaluation of implementation will be built in from the outset of the Program. A baseline of participant capacity at arrival will be set (based on self-assessment combined with selected objective criteria), and then periodic monitoring of progress will be assessed individually and for the participant groups. Periodic assessments should also be made of participant contributions to their local party organization and agenda, as well as the party's national youth movement, in order to determine the spread effect of the capacity building/training.

f. Timing

It is proposed that this Program be implemented over a three-four year period. In that timeframe as many as 8-10 cycles of the five Modules could be presented. Approximately three-four months is estimated for startup, including the development of the Modules, pretests, TOT, selection of sites, discussions with party youth groups on the possibility of combining likeminded parties, and the selection of participants. The above startup actions will take place concurrently.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1

SCOPE OF WORK

AN ASSESSMENT

POLITICAL PARTY DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

BACKGROUND

The June 2001 parliamentary elections in Bulgaria resulted in a complete reshuffle in Bulgarian politics.

The National Movement Simeon II (NMS) won 46.7% of the vote and half of the seats in parliament even though it was a completely new formation established little more than two months before the elections. The Union of Democratic Forces (UDF), that had the first government in the transitional period strong enough to serve out its full term in office, won only 18% of the vote. The Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), the other party which together with the UDF had dominated Bulgarian politics over the last decade, was defeated as badly getting only 17% of the vote. In addition, none of the small parties except for the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF), the party of the Bulgarian Turks, was able to enter parliament.

The success of a newly founded movement to sweep the elections and to defeat the major established parties will have serious implications that will certainly put to the test Bulgaria's young democracy. The NMS has hardly had any experience as an organization and its only unifying element is the popularity of the former King Simeon II who returned from his long exile in Spain and headed the movement. It is new to government with a large number of members of parliament who are elected such for the first time. The NMS is yet to become a political party with programmatic identity and organizational structure, and like the UDF four years ago it will have to undergo this party building process while at the same time governing the country. Its coalition partner, the MRF is also new to government.

All these new developments show that the formation of the political party system in Bulgaria is far from complete and parties may need to be supported on the road to reform so that future political stability is ensured.

USAID/Bulgaria wishes to contract an assessment to 1) analyze Bulgarian political parties, and based on research to 2) design a political party assistance program.

ARTICLE I – TITLE

Assessment of the political environment and avenues of opportunity for political party building activities in Bulgaria to inform the design of a possible four-year political party assistance program.

ARTICLE II – OBJECTIVE

The contractor shall:

- 1) *Conduct an assessment of the constraints for enhancing a democratic and competitive multi-party system in Bulgaria in the critical areas of:*
 - a. Electoral competitiveness
 - b. Developing broad based, viable, and internally democratic parties
 - c. Effective participation in governance.
- 2) *Give programmatic recommendations for political party building with defensible potential for measurable impact of the USAID/Bulgaria assistance in this area.*

ARTICLE III - STATEMENT OF WORK

The Contractor will be responsible for the research, preparation and presentation of the assessment and all deliverables. The Contractor shall be responsible for liaison with USAID/Bulgaria, and shall manage and coordinate the work of all contractor staff. The present assessment shall include the four parties represented in the Bulgarian Parliament at present plus Gergjovden, the Euroleft and the Bulgarian Business Block. The Contractor shall carry out the tasks outlined below.

Task One: Constraints to enhancing parties' electoral competitiveness

The Contractor shall assess the electoral process in Bulgaria and the specifics of the country's multi-party system. The Contractor shall look into the cultural and social attitudes towards political parties with a focus on the transitional period after 1989, and shall draw conclusions about the impact of these attitudes on the reform in the party system.

Further, the work on this task shall include analysis of the legal framework in terms of the legal rights and responsibilities of parties; adequate functioning of the voting system; adequacy of election law and party law provisions.

The Contractor shall assess the impact of local elections and the different electoral system they are held under on the behavior and activities of Bulgarian political parties. The local election levels shall be examined and how they compare to parliamentary election levels. The analysis shall address also how Bulgarian parties tackle the issues of: 1) single-member constituency system versus proportional system and 2) strong personality versus party affiliation.

The Contractor shall analyze the ability of Bulgarian political parties for election campaigning. The constraints of political parties in linking their messages to potential constituencies in the electorate must be addressed. Special attention should be paid to the nature of communications strategies, campaign planning, candidate recruitment, grassroots outreach, voter participation.

Task Two: Challenges to developing broad-based, viable, and internally democratic parties

The Contractor shall assess the internal organizational development of Bulgarian political parties and the degree of their institutionalization. The analysis shall include:

- party's by-laws and code of conduct;
- local chapters;
- platform development and strategic planning;
- membership recruitment;
- leadership development both at national and local level;
- mobilizing resources and fund raising;
- resource development: allocation of budgetary resources within party organizations.

All weaknesses should be outlined and the main assumptions on which the prospects for future reform can be based should be stressed.

Task Three: Challenges to parties to be effective in governance

The Contractor shall assess the challenges to Bulgarian political parties to participate in governance, whether in an executive capacity or in the opposition. The aftermath of the June 2001 elections for different parties in terms of their new roles must receive attention. The analysis must identify issues related to:

- communication with the general public;
- constituency relations;
- interaction with advocacy groups and the media;
- coalition building; and
- the role of opposition in governance.

Task Four: Assessment of Previous and Current Political Party Assistance in Bulgaria

The Contractor shall assess the scope of activities that the U.S. implementers have used and are currently using in support of political party building and electoral processes. Specifically, an assessment shall be made of the relative value and utility for party building and civil society development of the activities conducted by the two major implementers, the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute.

The Contractor shall examine other international donors' involvement in political party building in Bulgaria. This shall include identifying all current activities and future plans for assistance by the international donors, and recommendations for possible cooperative efforts.

Task Five: Programmatic Recommendations

The Contractor shall provide programmatic recommendations for party building and related activities with potential for measurable impact on promotion of the USAID/Bulgaria strategy. The report should draw on a thorough analysis of the findings and should be forward-looking with an emphasis on what should be done over the next few years and should be specific for Bulgaria. This portion shall include any recommendations for designing the results framework and indicators for measuring the impact of the recommended activities. The report shall identify any areas in which the team concludes that USAID should not be involved for any reason, such as intractability of a particular problem, unreasonably costly results, duplication of efforts by

other donors, high probability of success in the absence of USAID involvement, or inappropriateness of USAID intervention.

ARTICLE IV - REPORTS AND DELIVERABLES

Before commencing the assessment in Bulgaria the Contractor shall prepare a preliminary work plan that proposes a methodology for conducting successfully the political party development assessment, a detailed time-frame, and a preliminary list of the persons and institutions to be interviewed. The work plan shall be submitted to USAID/Bulgaria for CTO approval prior to starting work in the field. The Contractor will meet with USAID upon arrival to discuss approach and work plan.

The Contractor shall meet with USAID/Bulgaria for an exit briefing to present a summary of preliminary findings.

The Contractor shall produce a final report which will include:

Executive Summary.

A summary, not to exceed three single-spaced pages, should list, in order of priority, the major findings, conclusions, and lessons learned from the evaluation.

Body of the Report

Generally, the report should be organized into "Findings," "Conclusions," and "Recommendations."

Annexes:

Additional material should be submitted as Annexes, as appropriate (e.g. Scope of Work, bibliography of documents reviewed, list of agencies and persons interviewed, list of sites visited, etc.)

The draft final report is due one week after the completion of the work in the field and the final report is due one week after USAID/Bulgaria submits comments.

The assessment team will consist of no more than two or three experts, possessing the following required characteristics:

A team leader with a professional background in developmental work, especially democracy/civil society programming, and preferably with experience in transitional, post-communist settings. This person must have previous experience in working on assessments.
At least one team member should possess strong background knowledge of the region;
At least one team member should have experience in political party development work.

The CTO might join the team during the assessment in the capacity of an observer where appropriate.

The team shall begin work in October, or as early as possible.

ARTICLE V - RELATIONSHIPS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Contractor shall perform the tasks described above under the technical direction of USAID/Sofia (CTO), whose principal agent for this assignment shall be Ms. Radina Stoyanova.

ARTICLE VI - PERFORMANCE PERIOD

Develop instrument, preliminary research, set appointments	week 1
Assessment in Bulgaria	week 2,3,4
Report writing	week 5,6

This is an illustrative timeframe. The Contractor is asked to suggest a timeframe suitable for the contractors' needs.

ARTICLE VII - SPECIAL PROVISIONS

A six day work week is authorized in the field.

ANNEX 2: PERSONS INTERVIEWED

PARTY LEADERS AND MEMBERS

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

Adriana Brancheva, NMSII
Vesela Draganova, NMSII
Emil Koshlyukov, NMSII
Todor Peykov, NMSII
Svetoslav Spassov, NMSII
Teodora Litrova, NMSII
Nikolai Chukanov, NMSII
Irina Bokova, BSP
Asen Gagauzov, BSP
Evdokia Maneva, UDF
Anastasia Moser, UDF
Muravei Radev, UDF
Chetin Kazak, MRF

NB: Two other members of parliament (Nikolai Mladenov of the UDF and Kasim Dal of the MRF) were interviewed in the capacity of party leader.

PARTY LEADERS

Sonia Koltuklieva, advisor, NMSII, Sofia
Georgi Dimov, Head of the International Affairs Department, BSP, Sofia
Stefan Sergev, Head of the Organization Department, BSP, Sofia
Vladimir Vladimirov, President of the Bulgarian Socialist Youth, Sofia
Georgi Nikolov, Secretary of the Bulgarian Socialist Youth, Sofia
Vladimir Dimitrov, President of the Municipal Council of the BSP, Blagoevgrad
Mikhail Balabanov, Head of the Bulgarian Socialist Youth, Blagoevgrad
Delyan Damyanovski, Head of the Municipal Council of the BSP, Mezdra
Stefan Stamenov, BSP Council member, Mezdra
Maya Vasileva, BSP Council member, Mezdra
Genka Georgieva, BSP Council member, Mezdra
Boris Borisov, BSP Council member, Mezdra
Kotsa Gyosheva, BSP council member, Mezdra
Dimitur Petrov, BSP Council member, Mezdra
Plamen Rusev, BSP Council member, Mezdra
Svetla Dobрева, BSP Council member, Mezdra

Petur Stoyanovich, International Secretary, UDF, Sofia
Nikolai Mladenov, International Department, UDF, Sofia (also an MP)
Ivo Petrov, Regional Secretary of the UDF and Vice Chairperson of the Youth UDF, Sofia
Kaloyan Metodiev, International Secretary, Youth UDF

Elitza Yanakieva, Assistant in the International Affairs Department of the UDF and member of the Youth UDF

Ivailo Yordanov, Secretary, UDF, Blagoevgrad

Dinko Traikov, Head of the Youth UDF, Blagoevgrad

Ivan Traikovski, Chairman of the UDF, Blagoevgrad

Roumen Manchev, Deputy Head of the Municipal Office (Relations with Political Partners and NGOs), UDF, Stara Zagora

Metodii Guberov, Member of the Municipal Council of the UDF (Relations with Local Government and the Public), Stara Zagora

Maria Dimanova, Secretary of the Municipal Office of the UDF, Stara Zagora

Kasim Dal, Head of the Organizational Department. MRF, Sofia (also an MP)

Mustafa Karadaja, MRF, Chairperson of the MRF Youth organization

Georgi Ganchev, Head of the George Ganchev Block, Sofia

Aleksander Tomov, Chairman, Euroleft Party, Sofia

Kiril Avramov, International Secretary, Euroleft Party, Sofia

Khristo Khristov, International Secretary, Free Democrats, Sofia

Orlin Chochov, Chariman, Gergjovden, Sofia

RANK-AND-FILE PARTY MEMBERS

Two focus groups were conducted in Blagoevgrad with rank-and-file party members, one with UDF members and one with members of the Bulgarian Socialist Youth. The composition of these two groups is as follows:

UDF Blagoevgrad

Male 20-25

Female 20-25

Male 25-30

Male 30-35

Male 50-60

BSY Blagoevgrad

Male 20-25

Male 20-25

Male 25-30

Male 25-30

OTHER

Ivan Asparukhov, Mayor of Mezdra

Prof. Dimitur Dimitrov, Central Electoral Commission Member

Eva Sokolova, Genka Koicheva, and Svetlana Georgieva, 'Bulgarka' National Civic Forum

BULGARIA MEDIA AND MEDIA RELATED

Badjeva, Mira. *Sega*, Political Editor, Sofia
Baev, Anton. *Maritza*, Editor in Chief, Sofia
Bashlieva, Boyka. Office of the President of Bulgaria, Press Secretary, Sofia
Bodourova, Tanya. Office of the President of Bulgaria, Press Officer, Sofia
Danev, Marin. Radio Plovdiv, Editor in Chief, Plovdiv
Danov, Danail. Media Development Center, Senior Consultant, Sofia
Dashkalov, Georgi. *24 Chasa*, Columnist, Sofia
Delchev, Marin. *Dnevnik* and Radio Free Europe, Correspondent, Haskovo
Deneva, Valentina. Radio Plovdiv, Reporter, Plovdiv
Dimitrova, Boriana. Alpha Research, Managing Director, Sofia
Filipova, Pavlina. WAD Foundation, Staff Member, Sofia
Galev, Peter. Bulgarian National Radio, Director, "Horizont" News Show, Sofia
Georgiev, Petko. ProMedia, Resident Adviser, Sofia
Gorova, Nikilina. Ombudsman, Chairman, Stara Zagora
Indshewa, Regina. WAD Foundation, Staff Member, Sofia
Marinova, Jivka. Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation, Publishing Director, Sofia
Nickiforov, Dian. Radio Plovdiv, Director, Plovdiv
Popova, Dana. Bulgarian National Radio, Head, International Relations, Sofia
Popova, Pavlina. ExLege Consulting Ltd., Attorney at Law, Sofia
Rizova, Lyuba. Balkan Television, News Director, Sofia
Shishmanov, Desislava. Bulgarian National Television, Director, Sofia
Simova, Silvia. National Assembly of Bulgaria, Head of Press Office, Sofia
Stoicheva, Iliana. Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation, Projects, Sofia
Tisheva, Genoveva. Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation, Executive Director, Sofia
Tokin, Todor. *Trud*, Domestic News Editor, Sofia
Vladimirova, Petya. *Democratsia*, Political Analyst, Sofia
Vulkanova, Neli. Cable Television "Recording," Reporter, Haskovo
Zlatev, Ognian. Media Development Center, Chief Executive Officer, Sofia

DONOR AGENCIES

U. S. Government
Bridgett, Sundae. Democracy Officer, USAID, Washington, D.C.
Carpenter, Scott. (Former International Republican Institute Country Director), Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Bureau, Washington, D. C. (telephone interview)
Kaufman, Joshua. Democracy Specialist, USAID, Washington
Lee, Nadereh. Chief, Democracy and Local Government Office, USAID/Sofia
McFarland, Debra. Mission Director, USAID/Bulgaria
Moore, Roderick. Deputy Chief of Mission, U. S. Embassy, Sofia
Norman, Alain. Second Secretary, U. S. Embassy, Sofia
Tzankova, Ivanka. Program Officer, USAID/Bulgaria
Stoyanova, Radina. Project Specialist, Democracy and Local Government Office, USAID/Bulgaria

Other Donors

Louise, Christopher. Communication and Strategy Unit Coordinator, United Nations Development Programme, Sofia
Petrov, Peter. Political Officer, British Embassy, Sofia
Winterburn, Christine. Second Secretary (Political/Press), British Embassy, Sofia

OVERSEAS POLITICAL PARTY SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS

Antova, Djani. (former) Program Coordinator, National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, Sofia
Glasker, Wolfgang Dr. Director, Hanns Seidel Stiftung (Germany) Bulgarien, Sofia
Hesp, Irma. Project Manager, Alfred Mozer Stichting (Holland), Foundation for Eastern Europe, Amsterdam (Interviewed in Sofia)
Houbtchev, Pentcho Dr. Friedrich Ebert Foundation (Germany), Sofia
Lloyd, Lindsay. Program Director, Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe, International Republican Institute, Bratislava, Slovakia (interviewed in Sofia)
Tavanier, Joeri Buhner. Project officer, East-West Parliamentary Practice Project (Holland), Sofia
Voynova, Sevdalina. Deputy Director, National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, Sofia

USAID PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Boyadjiev, Mihail. Legal Consultant. International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, Sofia
Carlson, James P. Chief of Party, State University of New York, Legislative Support Project
Jekova, Petya. Office Manager, State University of New York, Legislative Support Project, Sofia
Kapitanova, Ginka. Executive Director, Foundation for Local Government Reform, Sofia
Kolarova, Daniela, Ph.D. Partners Bulgaria Foundation, Sofia.
Leavitt, Virginia. Deputy Chief of Party, Judicial Development Project for Bulgaria, Sofia
Minis, Henry P. Chief of Party, Research Triangle Institute, Local Government Initiative, Sofia
Rangelov, Iavor, Deputy Chief of Party, State University of New York, Legislative Support Project, Sofia
Tsenkov, Emil. Senior Fellow, Center for the Study of Democracy, Sofia
Williams-Grube, Jane. Country Director, Institute for Sustainable Communities, Democracy Network Program, Sofia

BULGARIAN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS/REPRESENTATIVES

Dainov, Evgenii, Ph.D. Director, Centre for Social Practices, Sofia
Djorgov, Victor. Executive Director, Creating Effective Grassroots Alternatives, Sofia
Gavrilova, Rayna. Executive Director, Open Society Foundation, Sofia
Gorova, Kikolina. Director, Ombudsman, Sarya Zagora
Ilchev, Nickolay. Program Director, Open Society Foundation, Sofia
Mitev. Executive Director, Union of Bulgarian Foundations and Associations, Sofia

Nenchev, Nikolay. Deputy Chairperson, Eurointegration Association, Sofia
Vazharov, Miroslav. Spokesperson and Executive Board Member, Eurointegration
Association, Sofia

ANNEX 3: INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

BULGARIAN PARTY ASSISTANCE PROJECT

NB: The questions are organized into three broad categories, reflecting the tasks set out in the SOW: (1) internal party organization, (2) electoral competitiveness, and (3) capacity for governance. These are supplemented by general contextual questions. I have judged it best to stray on the side of excess, in the knowledge that questions can quite easily be chopped.

SCHEDULE 1: POLITICAL PARTY LEADERS

NB: I am assuming we will have established prior to the interview: when the party was founded, what its electoral history has been, when/how long it has participated in government, and what types of previous assistance it has received.

A. *Context*

Explain the purpose the meeting/interview (permission to record?)

Explore the individual's role in the party (duties, length of service, previous roles)

Party's role in the political system: Would you say [party x] was a left-wing, centrist, right-wing party, or what?

B. *Internal Party Organization*

- What types of people join [party x]?
- What is your current membership [or membership of the branch for local party leaders/activists]? Has membership fallen or risen in recent years?
- Does [party x] have any corporate members?
- How does [party x] go about recruiting members? What mechanisms have proven most successful?
- [For central party leaders] How is your party organized in territorial terms? How many branches does it have [and where are they located]?
- What type of internal structures/bodies does the party have?
- What leadership positions are there in the party and how are leaders chosen?
- How often are party conferences held, and who attends them? What happens at the conferences?
- How often do the executive bodies of the party meet? How is party strategy formulated? Are their formal procedures for doing this or is it mainly done through informal discussions?
- How many paid staff does the party have? Where are they based and what are their functions?
- Approximately how many un-paid activists does the party have? Are party members active in all parts of the country?

- How do you keep in contact with local party branches [or, for local party leaders: How does you branch keep contact with the central party leadership?]? Do you think these channels of communication are adequate? How could this type of communication be improved?
- Does the party have any affiliated organizations such as a youth wing or a women's group?
- Does the party have any publications? If so, how frequently are they published, and what circulation do they have?
- Does the party have associated think tanks or research facilities?
- How many offices does the party have? (possibly probe on equipment such as photocopiers and computers at local branches)
- How does [party x] fund its activities in the main? Membership dues? Corporate donations? Individual donations? State funding? Commercial activities? Other?
- Which fund-raising techniques have proven most successful?
- How do you manage conflicts within the party? Has this been a problem? Can you give specific examples of conflicts that have been managed well and examples also of conflicts that have been difficult to manage?
- Do you think the current legislation on political parties is adequate?
- What are your priorities for the future development of the party as an organization?

C. *Electoral Competitiveness*

- Do you think that people in Bulgaria generally trust political parties?
- What types of people vote for [party x]?
- What types of people would you like to vote for the party? Do you target certain sectors of the electorate?
- Do you think you have a realistic chance of winning the votes of the sectors you target?
- What types of people stand as candidates for [party x]?
- How are candidates for elections chosen? [at party conferences? through some democratic process?]
- How is your campaign manifesto/platform decided at election time?
- Who do you consider to be the main electoral opponents of [party x]?
- [Probe about propensity to join electoral coalitions - precise question wording will vary from party to party]
- How do you organize electoral campaigns? Who in the party is in charge of managing them and how are campaign-related tasks allocated?
- What campaign strategies does the party employ (paid poster advertising, paid mass electronic media advertising paid print media advertising, door-to-door canvassing, rallies and meetings, etc.)?
- Which of these strategies do you think is most successful, and why?
- How are the strategies devised? Are paid political consultants used?
- Do you think that, overall, you are successful in getting your message across to the people? What have been the main weaknesses of your past campaigns?
- Does [party x] commission opinion polls at the time of elections? If so, who does it survey? Its supporters? Its members? The general public?

- How useful are these polls?
- What means does [party x] employ to make sure your supporters go out and vote on election day?
- Do you think your supporters vote mainly for your party's policies or for its candidates?
- Does [party x] engage in political education? If so, what types of educational activities does it undertake and through what means?
- Do you think that, by and large, elections in Bulgaria are free and fair?
- [If problems have been identified in the answer to the previous question] In which types of elections (parliamentary, presidential, local) are there most problems?
- What measures could be taken to improve the electoral system and the quality of electoral administration?
- Is there any party in Bulgaria that you think ought to be banned? If so, on what grounds? [NB: this question is designed to gauge levels of political tolerance among the political elite]
- What single measure would help [party x] to be more competitive in elections?

D. Capacity for Governance

- [for smaller parties only?] Do you think [party x] has a realistic chance of participating in government (again)? Is participation in government a priority for [party x]?
- Do parties really influence policy outcomes in Bulgaria?
- What other factors restrain the ability of parties to formulate and implement policy? [e.g. business, other state institutions, external actors]
- How does [party x] go about formulating policy [when in government]? What sources of information and expertise are employed? Are special policy units formed within the party?
- Do you think it important for parties in government to maintain a distinction between party posts and civil service posts? [If the party had been in government] Do you think your party has managed to do this while in government? Do you think other parties have managed to do this while in government?
- If the party has been in government before:
- How would you rate your last period in government overall?
- What do you consider the main accomplishments of your last period in government?
- What do you consider to be the main failures of this period?
- How were government posts filled when you were last in government?
- In some cases difficult choices have to be made between competing policy aims. How did [party x] manage this process while in government?
- Do you think that in general party leaders ought to stand firm in their beliefs, or do you think they ought to be willing to co-operate with other groups, even if that means compromising some important beliefs?
- How did you go about explaining your policies to the people when you were last in government? Do you think you were successful? How do you think you could have been more successful?
- What was your approach to the media when you were last in government? Did you have regular media briefings? Were you happy with the way the media covered your time in government?

- What was your approach to advocacy groups/political lobbies when you were last in government? Do you think such groups influenced government policy? If so, was this influence positive overall, or negative?
- If the party has not been in government before:
- Would you be willing to participate in a government, even if it meant joining a coalition of parties?
- If so, which parties would you be willing to go into coalition with?
- Have you thought about how you would fill government positions were you to be in government?
- In some cases difficult choices have to be made between competing policy aims. How well have the parties that have been in government in Bulgaria managed this process?
- How well have the parties that have been in government explained their policies to the people?
- How would you evaluate the relations between the media and the parties that have been in government in Bulgaria?
- How would you evaluate the approach of governing parties to advocacy groups/political lobbies?
- For all parties:
- What do you think were the main accomplishments of the following parties when they were in government? (enumerate one by one the parties that have taken part in government since 1990, excluding the party being interviewed)
- What do you think were the main failures of the following parties when they were in government? (enumerate one by one the parties that have taken part in government since 1990, excluding the party being interviewed)
- How would you describe the proper role of opposition parties in a democratic government?
- Do you think opposition parties in Bulgaria have performed this role well?
- Seek copies of the party statutes; copies of any party publications; details of party income and expenditure, and possibly copies of campaign material from the 2001 elections.

SCHEDULE 2: POLITICAL PARTY ACTIVISTS/MEMBERS

A. Context

- Explain the purpose the meeting/interview (permission to record?)
- Explore the individual's role in the party (duties, length of service, previous roles)
- Party's role in the political system: Would you say [party x] was a left-wing, centrist, right-wing party, or what?

B. Internal Party Organization

- What types of people around here join [party x]?
- Why did you decide to join the party?
- Have you ever attended one of the party's conferences? If so, what was your experience of it? Do you think it was well run? Did it help you to understand the party's policies better? Was it democratic?

- Have you ever tried to gain a leadership position within the party?
- How does your local branch keep in contact with the central party leadership?
- Are you involved in party fund-raising activities? If so, what activities are most successful?
- How are conflicts within your local party branch managed? Has this been a problem? Can you give specific examples of conflicts that have been managed well and examples also of conflicts that have been difficult to manage?
- How democratic do you think the internal structures of your party are?
- Do you think you have the opportunity to have a real input into policy-making? If so, through what mechanism?
- In your view, what is the most important thing about a political party: its policies or the personality of its leaders
- Do you think the current legislation on political parties is adequate?
- What are your priorities for the future development of the party as an organization?

C. Electoral Competitiveness

- Do you think that people in Bulgaria generally trust political parties?
- What types of people around here vote for [party x]?
- What types of people would you like to vote for the party?
- Do you think [party x] has a realistic chance of winning the votes of the sectors you target?
- What types of people stand as candidates for [party x]?
- How are candidates for elections chosen? [at party conferences? through some democratic process?]
- How is your campaign manifesto/platform decided at election time?
- Who do you consider to be the main electoral opponents of [party x]?
- How does [party x] organize electoral campaigns? Who in the party is in charge of managing them and how are campaign-related tasks allocated?
- What campaign strategies does the party employ (paid poster advertising, paid mass electronic media advertising paid print media advertising, door-to-door canvassing, rallies and meetings, etc.)?
- Which of these strategies do you think is most successful, and why?
- Do you think that, overall, you are successful in getting your message across to the people? What have been the main weaknesses of your past campaigns?
- What means does [party x] employ to make sure your supporters go out and vote on election day?
- Do you think your supporters vote mainly for your party's policies or for its candidates?
- Does [party x] engage in political education? If so, what types of educational activities does it undertake and through what means?
- Do you think that, by and large, elections in Bulgaria are free and fair?
- [If problems have been identified in the answer to the previous question] In which types of elections (parliamentary, presidential, local) are there most problems?
- What measures could be taken to improve the electoral system and the quality of electoral administration?

- Is there any party in Bulgaria that you think ought to be banned? If so, on what grounds? [NB: this question is designed to gauge levels of political tolerance among the political elite]
- What single measure would help [party x] to be more competitive in elections?

D. Capacity for Governance

- [for smaller parties only?] Do you think [party x] has a realistic chance of participating in government (again)?
- Do parties really influence policy outcomes in Bulgaria?
- What other factors restrain the ability of parties to formulate and implement policy?
- Do you think it important for parties in government to maintain a distinction between party posts and civil service posts? [If the party had been in government] Do you think your party has managed to do this while in government? Do you think other parties have managed to do this while in government?
- If the party has been in government before:
 - How would you rate your last period in government overall?
 - What do you consider the main accomplishments of your last period in government?
 - What do you consider to be the main failures of this period?
 - In some cases difficult choices have to be made between competing policy aims. How did [party x] manage this process while in government?
- Do you think that in general party leaders ought to stand firm in their beliefs, or do you think they ought to be willing to co-operate with other groups, even if that means compromising some important beliefs?
- If the party has not been in government before:
 - In some cases difficult choices have to be made between competing policy aims. How well have the parties that have been in government in Bulgaria managed this process?
 - How well have the parties that have been in government explained their policies to the people?
 - How would you evaluate the relations between the media and the parties that have been in government in Bulgaria?
 - How would you evaluate the approach of governing parties to advocacy groups/political lobbies?
- For all parties:
 - What do you think were the main accomplishments of the following parties when they were in government? (enumerate one by one the parties that have taken part in government since 1990, excluding the party being interviewed)
 - What do you think were the main failures of the following parties when they were in government? (enumerate one by one the parties that have taken part in government since 1990, excluding the party being interviewed)
 - How would you describe the proper role of opposition parties in a democratic government?
 - Do you think opposition parties in Bulgaria have performed this role well?

SCHEDULE 3: ELECTION OFFICIALS AND LEGAL EXPERTS

A. Context

- Explain the purpose the meeting/interview (permission to record?)
- explore the individual's role in the electoral process

B. Electoral Competitiveness

- Do you think that people in Bulgaria generally trust political parties?
- What types of people stand as candidates in elections? Why do they stand?
- How would you evaluate the capacity of Bulgaria's political parties to organize electoral campaigns?
- Do you think voters vote mainly for parties' policies or for their candidates?
- Do you think that, by and large, elections in Bulgaria are free and fair?
- Are you aware of inaccuracies in the electoral register?
- Are you aware that intimidation of voters takes place at all?
- Do you think that political parties have good knowledge of the provisions of the electoral law? If not, of what aspects are they ignorant?
- Have you observed extensive violations of the regulations governing campaigns in Bulgaria?
- Have you observed extensive violations of the regulations governing campaign finance?
- Are you aware of problems in the counting of votes?
- Do you think the current electoral system for parliamentary elections is fair? [If not, probe dimensions of inequity]
- Do you think the current system for elections to local government is fair? [If not, probe dimensions of inequity]
- Do you think the current presidential electoral system is fair? [If not, probe dimensions of inequity]
- Do you think the system for choosing electoral administrators is fair?
- Are electoral commissions in Bulgaria unbiased?
- What measures could be taken to improve the quality of electoral administration in Bulgaria?
- What measures could be taken to improve the regulation of the activities of political parties?
- Overall, how might parliamentary politics in Bulgaria be strengthened?

SCHEDULE 4: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR POLITICAL PARTY SUPPORT GROUPS

- What is the strategic aim off your activity?
- What does your activity consist of?
- What is the relative level of funding for your activity?
- What has it accomplished?
- How has it changed what was done previously?
- How well has the assistance been received by the assisted organization?

- What are the accomplishments of the party during its last period in government? Failures? Why did they lose the election?
- How have communications between central and local party organizations been changed?
- How do you deal with individuals who tend to dominate?
- How democratic are the internal structures and processes of the assisted group and what are its weaknesses?
- How are the lists of candidates for elections chosen? How is the order determined?
- What is the relationship between central party leaders and local party leaders/members?
- What campaign strategies does the party use and how effective are they?
- Do you think the legislation on parties is adequate? Yes/No; Why/Why not?
- Do you think the elections law is adequate?
- What is the quality of the communications process with the general public between elections?
- Do the media accurately convey party platforms and action? Example: why/why not?
- What obstacles has it encountered?
- Do you know of any support group that has considered working with the National Movement? Have you considered working with it?
- What work is being done/being planned by other donors/organizations?

SCHEDULE 5: MEDIA, PUBLIC OPINION AND POLITICS

Role of Media

- Generally, what role do Bulgarian media play in politics?
- Do you think they perform that role well now?
- Could they do better? If so, how?
- More specifically, what role does (television or radio or newspapers) perform, different or separate from other media in covering Bulgarian political parties?
- Do magazines play any significant, influential role in Bulgarian politics?
- Do you think that different media reveal a point of view in news coverage (separate from editorial opinion) of political parties?
- Do central and regional media have different functions or roles regarding political parties and advocacy groups?

Role of Media – National TV and Radio

- Under the Election Law, National Television and Radio have special obligations to provide air time and newscasts during a political campaign. Do they carry out the obligations well? Where, if at all, do they fail?
- Should the law be refined or changed with regard to National Television and Radio? If so, in what ways?
-

Role of Media – Privately Owned TV, Radio and Newspapers

- Do the privately owned media cover politics and parties differently than National Television and Radio?

- If so, how specifically? The Election Law does not regulate political coverage for the private media as it does for National Television and Radio. Does this make a difference?

Media, Politics and Journalists

- Do you think that Bulgarian journalists and editors can cover politics and political parties objectively and dispassionately?
- Do you think they are influenced by their own political leanings, even their own activities with a political party?
- Can political journalists, for example, report what they believe to be accurate, factual accounts of political developments and political campaigns? Is there a “chill factor”, an awareness among journalists of what editors and/or publishers want?
- Do you think there are generational differences—e.g. young journalists versus older journalists/editors? If there are, how do these show up in political coverage of various Bulgarian media?
- Are there facilities (university programs, in-house training) to educate young journalists? What are they taught as to the role of Bulgarian media in reporting work of political parties and advocacy groups?
- Are young Bulgarians apt to choose journalism as a career? If so, why? If not, why not?

Media and Political Parties

- Do Bulgarian political parties do a good job of getting information about programs and candidates to the media? If not, what is the problem?
- Do parties try to influence coverage of politics? If so, how do they do it?
- Do various parties use political connections with National Television or Radio or with privately owned media to gain favorable coverage?

Media and Voters

- Do you think that viewers, or listeners or readers can detect political leanings or bias in Bulgarian media? If so, how?
- Do you think Bulgarian voters trust what they see, hear or read about Bulgarian politics and political parties? Has this been tested in public opinion surveys?
- Of the media, which are most influential on public opinion as far as shaping views and attitudes? Are there surveys showing this?
- Do results of public opinion surveys of attitudes toward the media have any effect on how the media cover politics?
- Generally, does a Bulgarian voter who wants to know about party programs, candidates and politics have access to a range of views and opinions in order to make intelligent choices?
- In other countries, television is the main source of news for the majority of people, including voters. Is that true in Bulgaria?
- Also, in other countries, voters who are serious, so to speak, about politics turn to newspapers for more thorough news and analyses of political events. Is that true in Bulgaria?

- Is there a generational difference among voters – e.g., younger voters prefer television, older, newspapers?

Bulgarian Media and the Future

- Looking ahead, how do you think Bulgarian media should develop, to improve or change their coverage of political party developments? What are the most pressing needs?
- Some foreign organizations such as ProMedia are trying to help Bulgarian media develop as a free and independent press, following the years of communist control of the media. Are any of these foreign programs helpful? In what ways?
- If you were to have a free hand in creating the best possible Bulgarian media—TV, radio and newspapers—to cover developments of political parties and advocacy groups what would you envision? How would you do it?

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Trud

24 Chasa

Sega

Democratsia

Duma

Maritza

Dvenik

Monitor

7 Days Stara Zagora

TELEVISION STATIONS

Balkan Television
Bulgarian National Television
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NEWS AGENCIES

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