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## The Decline of Trust in Post-communist Societies: The Case of Bulgaria and Russia

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After the fall of communism in Bulgaria and Russia, the form of underground communities still remained in the collective consciousness, as people became even more secluded around their tight circles of family and friends. The family bonds became the new cradle of trust that might have resulted in the low levels of bridging and out-group trust. Trust toward government institutions and formal organisations have dramatically declined in accord with the decline in social and political participation. From observations of the Bulgarian society from 2000 to present, I propose that informal personal contacts on the micro-level rather than formal institutional participation on the macro-level tend to generate social trust and thus hamper institutional legitimacy. The family substitutes the role of the institution as it provides for value priorities and moral resources for one's realisation. Contrary to the Tocqueville and Putnam model, I propose that in Bulgaria and Russia such interpersonal relations generate trust and intermediary organisations do not. Furthermore, the paper will study: 1) the levels of trust in comparison to the levels of social participation, 2) the level of economic development and 3) the development of the family structure as an influential factor of trust and social/political participation. The study will focus on the social development of post-communist Bulgaria and Russia (from 1999 to present), with the Chinese and Dutch societal model as comparison.

**Key words:** trust, social capital, confidence, fatalism, social and political participation, intermediary organisations, legitimacy organisations

### 1. Background:

After the death of Stalin in 1953 the Soviet Union experienced the melt-down period, referred to as The Thaw. The Khrushchev era gave rise to multiple underground associations that were the building blocks of the future democracy. They were non-conformist groups like the *Lianozovo School* of Oscar Rabin and musicians such as Visotsky and Akudjava that gradually destabilized the regime from within and consequently became the catalysts for the break of the Soviet Union. This was the period in which

underground, non-conformist art groups formed to share their independent views on society and culture; it was the common goal that united them and created a rich social capital throughout. Breaking away from the government influence and commands, radical young individuals formed social groups that were built around a common scepticism toward the government and the goal to radically break away the order. People formed tight circles based around their family and friends, as they shared common views and ideas about life. However, after the fall of communism in Bulgaria and in Russia, the form of

underground communities still remained in the collective consciousness, as people became even more secluded around their tight circles of family and friends. The family bonds became the new cradle of trust that might have resulted in the low levels of bridging and out-group trust. Trust toward government institutions and formal organisations have dramatically declined in accord with the decline in social and political participation.

Through my observations of the Bulgarian society from 2000 to present, I propose that the informal personal contacts, rather than formal institutional participation, tend to generate social trust and hamper institutional legitimacy. The family substitutes the role of the institution as it provides for value priorities and moral resources for one's realisation. Contrary to the Tocqueville<sup>1</sup> and Putnam model, I propose that in Bulgaria and Russia, such personal relations generate trust and intermediary organisations do not. Furthermore, the paper will study the levels of trust in comparison to the levels of participation; to the level of economic development, and the development of the family structure as an influential factor of trust and social/political participation. The study will focus on the development of post-communist Bulgaria and Russia (from 1999 to the present) and it uses the Chinese and Dutch societal model for comparison.

## 2. Introduction

With the fall of communism in both post-communist countries (Bulgaria and Russia) the formal public participation declined in accord with the decrease in social and political trust. However, the interwoven structure of the family functions as the epicentre for the continuation of social traditions. From the World Value Survey we learn that people in both countries trust most their families and close friends, and distrust any kind of social and political structures (esp. government). We also see that most participation takes place in activities involving tight social circles and less in any kind of formal (sport, church, work) organisations, and least in any kind of political or governmental institutions. For example, the World Value Survey shows us that - in Russia 38.5% and in Bulgaria 24% of society does not trust the Parliament at all, in contrast to the Neth-

<sup>1</sup> Civic and political organisations educate individuals about being citizens in a free society. Such groups may also form alliances with like-minded organisations in order to lobby or coordinate their advocacy messages. Most importantly, these organisations become reservoirs of social capital and trust.

erlands with 4.8%. Furthermore, from the survey sections — "Frequency of spent time", we notice that Bulgaria and Russia prevail in spending time with family and friends and minimal with formal organisations (like church, sports and communal organisation). It is shocking to note that 79.6% of the Bulgarian and 67.8% of the Russian population claims "not involved" in any voluntary organisations. Whereas in the US and the Netherlands the cultural participation has dramatically risen, Bulgaria and Russia report almost 90% of their population as "no member of any organisation".<sup>2</sup>

According to the results from the Eurobarometer survey for 2004, the Bulgarian institutions were facing a crisis of confidence. Low levels of trust have remained the same (since the fall of the regime) for most of the national political institutions, while some "don't knows" have been transformed into negative opinions. Plamen Georgiev claims that, "the result is 10 points decrease in trust in the National Parliament (81%), 6 point decrease in political parties (83%), a 7 point decrease in national government (70%) and 5 point higher mistrust in the Bulgarian justice system (70%)." (Plamen, 2007: 138). Out of all countries surveyed by the Euro barometer, Bulgarians tend to mistrust the most their national legal system. The survey also shows that, out of all countries polled, Bulgarians and Romanians are the most dissatisfied with their quality of life. While pessimistic about the political institutions and their quality of life, Bulgarians have shown high expectations towards the European Union. Particular support and optimism has been reflected by young people between 15 and 24 years of age. In general, the Euro-barometer reports show that Bulgarians have become less pessimistic in national terms and more realistic in their Euro-optimism and the role of Europe in the future of their country. However, what is the reason for the decline of trust and participation after the fall of the regime? How can we compare the Bulgarian case with the Chinese socio-political model? How do we fight antagonism and growing pessimism in the Balkans?

<sup>2</sup> The survey results have been extracted from the World Value Survey – Bulgaria (1999) and Russia (1999)

Table 1

Confidence in Institutions	
President	71%
Army	55%
Police	51%
Local Government	40%
Banking System	37%
Cabinet	30%
Prosecution	18%
Courts of Law	18%
Parliament	15%
* Survey conducted by Gallup, July 2005	

### 3. History and Old Age

The political and social behavior of the Balkans can be explained by the inherited culture of traditional antagonism that relates not only to their communist past. Nikolay Valkov describes this behavior as formed around culture, history and the political model of the country. (Valkov, 2009) Furthermore, his study closely compares the resemblance between Latin European countries to post-communist countries in their democratic political model and low voluntary organisational membership. It could be argued that the interpersonal relations on the micro-level influence the social and political structure of the state. Nevertheless, through his analysis, Valkov opposes this theory and concludes that the low associational life model in post-communist societies is not necessarily correlated with their democratic performance. Instead, he believes that the low membership rates should be understood as something which has its own internal logic and

explanation. "The origins lie in the nature of the societal transformation in the region." (Valkov, 2009: 14). Bulgarians in this way are less bound to the values of individual worthiness. Their social solidarity is a hybrid of the old structured collectivism that emerged as structures during the transition, believes Plamen Georgiev.

Eastern and Central Europe have good reason to distrust the government, since they have lived in authoritarian regimes, some more totalitarian than others, forced to subjugate individual interest to those of the Communist Party. Social participation in "volunteer" and political organisations was advocated (if not enforced), which led to drastic decline in any kind of political or civic organisations after the fall of communism. With the fall of the regime, the reaction was a massive alienation and distrust toward the communist regime and "lingering cynicism toward political and civil institutions" (Georgiev, 2007:138). One may speculate that with the fall of the regime, there would have been an

increase in social participation and enthusiasm for independent civic and cultural organisations. As Nikolay Valkov states in his study of post-communist countries, there is an expectation that vigorous civic engagement precedes, triggers, or follows democratization of an authoritarian political regime. (Valkov, 2009: 2). However, with the development of democracy in Bulgaria and Russia (1990-1999) the World Value Survey shows a decline in civic and political activism. The reappearance of democracy in Eastern and Central Europe coincided with the decline in associational activity. In relation to decline in social participation, we also witness a decline in political and civic trust. Contrary to the Tocquevillian model, which infers that democratic systems increase participation, it seems that post-communist societies such as Russia and Bulgaria do not necessarily manifest the inferred high voluntary activism.

To the question: "Can most people be trusted?"- Bulgaria (1997-1999) witnessed 8% decline, while Russia (1990-1999) witnessed a 15.7% decline. Confidence in Parliament declined: in Bulgaria (1990-1999) with 24% and in Russia (1990-1999) with 22%. The New Democracies Barometer (2001) exhibits Bulgaria and Romania as the countries with the highest level of distrust among the new democracies. The results here reflect the difference in experience of each country under communism. Furthermore, William Mishler and Robert Rose speculate that most citizens don't distinguish between institutions of state and society but they judge them holistically and evaluate them sceptically. (Mishler, Rose, 1997: 420). This argument resembles the one put forward by Thompson in Cultural Theory (Ellis, Thompson, Wildavski, 1990), and is ambitious enough to involve future studies on how fatalism affects participation. Why did trust decline and continues to decline in Bulgaria? On the other hand, how can we compare the Chinese social model to Bulgaria and Russia?

Trust is to be consequentially developed by the society and it needs to come from the positive performance of political and civil institutions that, as Hirschman says, is measured by "reasonable measure of individual and collective good" (Hirschman, 1970: 58). Trust is initially very important for the development of democracy in post-communist countries like Bulgaria and Russia. "Trust in civil institution doesn't diminish democracy but completes it, enhancing the effectiveness of political institutions" (Mishler, Rose, 1997: 420). In the case of Bulgaria and Russia, one can speculate that the fall of the

regime witnessed an increase in social activism, which adopted "the fight for democracy" as their slogan. However, the legitimacy of institutions was no longer judged by ideology but by performance. Thus, the economic downfall resulted in decreased political trust and participation, and increased social dissatisfaction. The Standard Eurobarometer Analysis of 2008 states the following:

"Bulgarians continue to be least satisfied with their way of life of the entire Eurobarometer poll (59%). However, while, in the spring (2008), they felt strongly the positive effects of EU membership and their life satisfaction was on the rise, reaching its highest scores (40%), now – under the influence of the crisis, it has decreased (by 2 points). This strong dissatisfaction with life may be explained by the unanimous opinion of citizens that compared to the average in the European countries, the situation in Bulgaria is worse in all areas: 88% give a negative assessment regarding the situation of the national economy, 77% - regarding the employment situation, 84% - regarding energy prices, and at least nine out of ten interviewed – regarding the cost of living (92%) and the quality of life (93%)." (Standard Eurobarometer 70, 2008)

The growing income gap between the people and the insufficient pensions also furthered the antagonism in Bulgaria. When asked: "How would you rate the current retirement funds in Bulgaria?", 82% of the Bulgarians answer as "Bad + Very Bad", while only 52% of the European Union population reports the same. Bulgaria and Hungary are presented as the European States with the highest dissatisfaction rate in their retirement funds. At the same time, 25% of Bulgarian households report in WVS to have the minimum salary income, in comparison to the only 9% of Russian, and 2% of Chinese and Dutch households. While we see highly skewed data for Russia and Bulgaria, Chinese and Dutch data have a rather uniform bell-shaped distribution. Do income and retirement funds affect participation? The data show that Bulgarians with lowest income levels tend not to participate in voluntary organisations. However, income is not the only cause for decline in participation; age proves to be another important factor that we have to control for.

#### 4. Age

In order to dig deeper into the causality of the decline in trust and participation of the Bulgarian, Russian and Chinese society, we must look at the age distribution in these countries (Table 2). It is striking to see that 23.3% of the Bulgarian society consists of people over 65 years old, while in the Chinese they comprise only 6% of the population. There is a big difference in Bulgarian and Chinese demographics, where the Bulgarian population growth rate is -0.813% (2008 est.), the Chinese is 0.629% (2008 Est.). How does this affect the reports on trust and participation of the two populations?

The older generation in Bulgaria reports to participate least in voluntary organisations and expresses the highest dissatisfaction with life. For example, to the question in the World Value Survey: "Please look carefully at the following list of voluntary organisations and activities and say...which, if any, you belong to?" 79% of the Bulgarians answered "Belong to none". Here we see that only 20% of Bulgarians and 32% of Russians belong to any voluntary organisations, in contrast to 92% of Dutch. In order to explain this phenomenon of decline in associational life we must look at two factors: age and income of the population. As previously noted, 43% of the interviewed Bulgarians is above 50 years of age; while in China it is only 25%. In other words, the dominant population of Bulgaria consists of elderly (born after 1951) while China consists of predominantly 33-49 year olds. Therefore, the analysis has to control for the variable of age and

income to see whether their effect on participation. When controlling for age, the World Value Survey presents that 46% (BG) of the "Belong to None" section is made up of people above 50 years old (Table 3). Interestingly enough, the Chinese model shows that 43% of the "Belong to None" section is composed of 15-29 year olds. Therefore, the Bulgarian and Chinese model seems to differ in the level of participation between their age groups. What does this tell us about the younger generation in China and the older generation in Bulgaria? Since the Bulgarian population is dominated by the older generation, we see that this survey on participation is also influenced by the opinions of the elderly.

The outcomes also support observations made by Terry Clark in his *The New Political Culture* that younger people participate more than the elderly (Clark, Hoffmann-Martinot, 1998:126). In support of the New Political Model, we see that in Bulgaria there is a decline in associational life with the increase of the age factor. Similarly, the table below shows a decrease in cultural activism with the increase of age.

#### 5. Social and Cultural Participation

James Coleman and Robert Putnam both emphasize trust as an important factor for the establishment of civil society, the sense of community and connection between citizens in institutions that connect them with government. Political activism is an example where the social trust is measured in participation. In *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam chooses bowling as

Table 2: Participation declines with Age

Age vs. Mean of Belonging to Cultural Organisations	
15-24	0,175
25-34	0,123
35-44	0,11
45-64	0,1
65	0,085
Survey conducted by Terry Clark, University of Chicago * This table controls for the Age vs. Mean of people belonging to Cultural Activities	

an example of civic participation, which provides for bonding and establishment of social trust. He further argues that social trust is strongly associated with forms of civic engagement and social capital. Putnam implies that "people, who trust their fellow citizens, volunteer more often, participate more often in politics and community organisations." (Putnam, 2000: 136-137). It is discouraging to see the statistic on Bulgaria and Russia, which show a decline in participation and relevantly the decline in trust. In her article *Socialization for Participation*, Natalia Letki discusses that the low level of citizen involvement in politics, in East-Central Europe, is linked to low levels of social capital. Letki mentions the prevailing apathy, lack of interest and low participation in politics. (Letki, 2004: 669). Accordingly, the author cites leading sociologists such as Inglehart and Catterberg, who argue that the weakness of political involvement are blamed on the weakness of civil society and low levels of interpersonal trust.

The World Value Survey and the New Democracies Barometer present very little positive trust in civil and political institutions (for Bulgaria) with most distrust directed toward the Judiciary System and the Parliament. Participation in political parties, trade unions and other government organisations is witnessing a decline. From Putnam's point of view, Bulgaria and Russia are witnessing a great decline in participation in relation to trust. However, one might argue that this evaluation is based only on the analysis of formal civic and political organisations.

As argued by Clark, Achterberg and Navarro, Putnam doesn't take an account for *scenes*<sup>3</sup> and thus excludes the unofficial types of social participation, which also generate social

3 Scenes are the concept introduced in Clark, Achterberg, and Navarro conference paper *Culture is on the Rise - Why? Theories of Cultural Participation and Empirical Evidence*. Scenes are constructed by physical structures, people and neighborhoods. People's interaction with these structures creates the dynamic of scenes. The three aspects of scenes (values on which they are judged) are: legitimacy, authenticity and theatricality.

Table 3

Rising Membership of Cultural Activity Groups				
Country	1981	1990	2000	Delta
Netherlands	12,5	34,6	45,2	32,7
USA	13,9	19,7	36,9	23
<b>Bulgaria</b>		<b>4,3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>-0,3</b>
Portugal		6,2	3,7	-2,5
Brazil		5,4	2,4	-3
Latvia		6,8	3,7	-3,1
<b>Russia</b>		<b>4,9</b>	<b>1,2</b>	<b>-3,7</b>
Lithuania		7,3	2,9	-4,4
<b>China</b>		<b>7,3</b>	<b>2,2</b>	<b>-5,1</b>
* Survey conducted by Terry Clark, University of Chicago				

capital. For example, Clark studies the “rising membership of cultural activity groups” in order to emphasize the role of scenes in the post-materialist countries. (Clark, Achterberg, Navarro 2007: 11). The Netherlands witness the highest rise of membership, while Bulgaria, Russia and China present a negative delta growth. Why does membership decline in Bulgaria and Russia, and how can we compare their outcomes to the Chinese model?

The studies and analysis of Clark, Achterberg and Navarro show that cultural participation in post-communist or communist countries is decreasing (Table 3). They explain this phenomenon as - participation in the post-communist countries doesn't lead to legitimacy. On the other hand, we should consider the idea that social structures have lost their legitimacy on the grounds of historical ineffectiveness and forceful authoritarian model. Furthermore, how does China compare to this model? We see in the table above that Chinese participation in cultural organisations is even lower than Bulgaria and Russia. In regards to the state economy, Bulgaria reports the lowest economic growth between the three countries, which could be correlated with the negative participation levels. On the other hand, China reports a GDP of \$3.251 trillion (2007 est.) and at the same time witnesses the lowest social association. What does this say about the Chinese model? The Chinese society reports to be most concerned with materialistic, not post-materialistic values. Since the change of the regime from legitimacy based on ideology to legitimacy based on performance, the Chinese society has witnessed increase in trust toward the economic performance of the country, rather than the cultural/voluntary institutions. Students place a great deal of faith in the capacity of economic growth to solve their problems. While students agree that the environment is a serious problem, they place economic development before environmental protection in terms of domestic goals. (Stalley, Yang, 2006: 13) Another example becomes the environmental NGOs, which maintain only about 100 volunteers, of which only 20 are considered regular contributors. Many Chinese environmental organisations possess a degree of freedom, say Phillip Stalley and Dongning Yang. Nevertheless, these philanthropic and environmental organisations remain closely tied to the state and perform functions in line with the central government policies. The government's restrictions on NGOs and social organisations are argued by Peter Ho to have this negative effect on participation (Ho, 2001).

In general, the Chinese society remains restricted because of limitations in its political opportunity structure – the lack of elections, the restrictions on social organisations and the lack of civil society. In addition, the Chinese society has been focusing on the two most important domestic development goals – 1) promoting scientific advancement and 2) controlling the population. So, environmental protection has been viewed as post-materialist issue and has been ranked below the government's materialist goals. The belief in the “ideology of economic development” has hampered the likelihood of anti-pollution movement and the support in post-materialist issues. Therefore, the Chinese society can be defined as materialistic and not yet issue-based, which partially explains its negative cultural participation levels. Here, the Chinese model is similar to outcomes of Bulgaria and Russia; however the mechanism, which explains it turns out to be very different. While the Bulgarian society shows a decrease in cultural participation because of distrust and antagonistic behavioral patterns, China's negative delta membership comes from the government's emphasis on the economic, rather than cultural, development.

Another explanation to why there is a decline in voluntary and cultural organisations on the Balkans and Russia, given by Plamen Georgiev in *The Bulgarian Political Culture*, is that their society is less aware of the instruments of genuine democratic government; their mentality is still set on the centralist model, like China (Georgiev, 2007:111). As previously noted by Gallup International (2005), the President earns 71% of the Bulgarian's trust and the Army 55%, while the Parliament earns only 15%. Cross compared internationally, the survey by the All-Russian Public Opinion Research Center (2009) found that trust levels for President Medvedev (Russia) have grown to 73 percent in the past three years. It is striking to see that both Bulgarian and Russian presidents have earned more than 70 percent of their citizens' trust, when at the same time 22 percent of them express that the previous political regime was “Bad” (1999). However, the Gallup International presents a dualistic concept. Does the survey actually test the “Trust in the President” or the “Trust in the Presidency”?

Plamen Goergiev infers that the survey defined rather dualistically by the concepts of “President” and “The Presidency” seems to be not less consistent (Georgiev, 2007: 112). He presents data for the levels of trust in different presidents: (1992) saw an 88% of the “blue”

cohort strongly supporting the President, while 1993 reported less than 50% support. The turning point was the reign of Z. Zhelev's appeal for a national agreement and the restructuring of the political space. The results proved a drop in shared trust toward his personality and at the end of 1995 Bulgarian voters reported less than 50% support. It is interesting to note that Georgiev also argues that the attitudes toward the Presidency are not influenced by the hypothetical models of "imperial", "corporative" or "symbolically weak". Instead of evaluating on the "ideal type model", the Bulgarians prove to be influenced more by the personality of the individual. Personal legitimacy has clearly become more important than the institutional legitimacy model of the Soviet past. Here charisma dominates "the regime". "President of 'all Bulgarians' has been the most acceptable mantra of latest voting campaigns, whereby a 'non-militant' (even though paternalist) role of the President is given merit." (Georgiev, 2007: 112). The Alpha Research<sup>4</sup> done in October 2000 further discusses the trust toward the President:

"In general, the Bulgarians are more likely to trust institutions as the President and the mayor, which are directly elected and are embodied by a certain personality. This to large extent is due to the strict reticence towards the people around - 77% of the respondents stand to the position that "one has to be very cautious with the people" (Alpha Research, 2000: 4).

Unfortunately, the World Value Survey doesn't study the confidence level for the role of the president in the Bulgarian society. Nevertheless, WVS shows "Confidence in the Armed Forces" as being 60%. The Bulgarian army enjoys higher trust than any other institution since 1989. This is because the army has been traditionally and rather sentimentally bound institution in the nation's political culture. Georgiev further defines the army as a contributor toward the territorial integrity and has played a role of significant socializing institution (Georgiev, 2007:112). Just as Tocqueville defines the intermediary organizations as socialization structures, the Bulgarian army is seen as a "melting pot" for ethnic, educational and cultural differences in the country.

<sup>4</sup> Alpha Research is a private, independent full-service research agency, established in 1997. It is a member of ESO-MAR (The European Society for Opinion and Market Research) and of the Bulgarian Sociological Association.

Therefore, the army counts as a reliable factor of stability in Southeastern Europe. Since societal expectations remained unmet after the fall of the regime, the social distress and antagonism grew constantly. Negativism toward the previous political system is mostly observed in the younger generation (15-29 year olds). The elderly, however, show more trust and more optimism toward the old political regime and towards the armed forces. Instead, the people over 50 years of age report the most dissatisfaction with life; they tend to have the lowest income levels and to be mistreated by the state as they receive miserable pensions.

A 45% of the people over 50 years of age (the sociodemographics given by the WVS) witness total butchering of their expectations by the mistreatment of the state. Thus, the growth of antagonism and nostalgia within the circles of the older population seem inevitable. The need for a strong leader is expressed by the Bulgarian society in the WVS, which reports 48% being in favor of having a strong leader. Contrastingly, only 13% of the interviewed Chinese reported as being in favor of such model. Even after the fall of communism and the fight for democracy, the Bulgarian mentality remains most trustful in the paternalistic-authoritarian model.

Not very different from the Chinese case, the Eurobarometer for 2008 reports Bulgaria as definitely in favor of more economic development and interested in materialist values, rather than post-materialist issues. For example, "What expenditure, do you think, has the largest share of the European Union budget?" (2008), 38% of Bulgarians report as "don't knows". 35% think that they go for economic growth and only 1% think that they go for culture and media. However, when asked "For what sector would you like most of the EU budget to be used?" Bulgarians place first the economic growth (like the Chinese) and least the culture/media (*Table 6*).

This opinion study of the European Barometer (2008) shows that the society is in need of economic betterment; it focuses mostly on the materialist values, rather than post-materialist issues.

## 6. The Family

The analysis up to here aimed to explain the reasons and effects of decline in trust in the Bulgarian and Russian society. We looked at how income and economic levels affect participation, how materialist state goals hamper the rise of post-materialist values and movements.



On the other hand, we observed the increase in social antagonism as a result of growing inequality and dissatisfaction with life in society. This section will try to further focus on the levels of trust that society reports and how does inside and outside group trust affect participation and the development of society. Who do Bulgarians trust? Why? And where do they spend most of their leisure time?

“Our Circle” became a common phrase used during the Thaw period in Russia and in Bulgaria, where tight circle of family and friends would meet and discuss shared ideology and opinions. The family structure, which was predominantly nuclear, helped in the establishment of tight bonds and facilitated the creation of strong social capital among its members. In a way, the circle generated the micro-level trust which has declined towards the state in the last years of the regime. Through tough political and economic transitions, the Bulgarian society witnessed a decline of the social ties that existed during communism. The social inequality and the later emergence of “dirty money” and corruption triggered the disintegration of society, which led to social alienation and loss of institutional legitimacy. The older generation in particular tends to express suspicion and negativism toward the newly rich. Inequality and miserable financial status of most elderly in Bulgaria has proven to affect their social and political trust levels. From my personal observations of the older generation in Bulgaria, it seems that the elderly have isolated themselves within a very limited circle of family and friends who have earned their trust.

It can be argued that the family substitutes the role of the institutions as it provides for value priorities and moral resources for one’s realization. Contrary to the Tocqueville and Putnam model, I propose that in Bulgaria and Russia, such personal relations generate trust and intermediary organisations do not.

Relevant to the WVS study of “Participation in Voluntary organisations”, (Table 4), the survey based on “Spending of leisure time” analyses where and how people spend their time. According to Terry Clark, unofficial social interactions, such as consumption, generate a strong social capital (Clark, Achterberg, Navarro 2007: 11). In this sense, based on the survey on “spending leisure time” we could analyse where and how people interact and hypothesize how social capital is constructed in the different countries.

From this table presented by the WVS, we can see that in contrast to the United States, more than 70% of the interviewed from China, Russia and Bulgaria report to “not at all” spend their time in sports, cultural or communal organisations. When we add the variable of “age” to the table, we see that in Bulgaria (1999) 55% of the people over 50 years of age don’t spend any time, while 45% of the younger spend their time weekly in such organisations,. On the other hand, in Russia (1999) - 60% of the 30-49 year olds don’t spend any time, but 65% of the younger interviewees spend their time weekly in communal organisations. Why is there such a generational gap? What makes the older population

Table 4

Spending of leisure time: “How often do you spend time with people at sports, culture, communal organisations?”				
Country	Not at all	Only a few times	Once a month	Weekly
Bulgaria	70%	7%	11%	10%
China	85%	9%	2%	2%
Russian Federation	75%	10%	5%	6%
United States	25%	26%	24%	20%
* World Value Survey (1999)				

more isolated, less trustful and not participating? When we test the WVS section of “Spend leisure time”, the data shows that Russians and Bulgarians hardly spend any time in formal clubs, organisations or cultural gatherings. An influential factor for these negative results are the opinions reported by the older generation. Nevertheless, we should a question: why is this so? The marginals table shows very intriguing results under the section “Not applicable”. It is interesting to note that only Bulgaria and Russia show percentage outcome in this section. The result for

Bulgaria (46%) and the Russia (23%) shows a very high percentage that shouldn't be ignored in this analysis. What does “Not applicable” mean? Does it mean that such organisations are a non-existing concept for 46% of the Bulgarians and 23% of the Russians? During the communistic regime, the Bulgarian and Russian society were required to become members of organisations – such as sports clubs, youth clubs, party organisations, and various professional unions – which were controlled by the state. However, with the fall of the regime, these organisations vanished

Taking note of the marginals section under this study, the following is observed:

Table 5

<b>Marginals for question: “How often do you spend time with people at sport, culture, communal organisations?”</b>		
<b>Country</b>	<b>Not applicable %</b>	<b>n</b>
Bulgaria	<b>46</b>	460
China	<b>0,0</b>	0
Russian Federation	<b>23,3</b>	583
United States	<b>0,0</b>	0
<i>World Value Survey (1999)</i>		
*The marginals section pays attention to the section “Not Applicable” and the results that follow under the countries of Bulgarian (1999) and Russia (1999).		

or were modified and altered into new forms adaptable to the new democratic society. It is reasonable to infer that with the disintegration of these formal clubs and organisations, the older generation couldn't adapt with the new forms or was not well-informed about the emergence of new ones. In general, the older generation experienced inequality from the state (in terms of income and pension) and was left in isolation from the rapidly emerging new forms of civil life. This neglect and seclusion left the elderly with the inability to adapt to the tempo of the social modernizations. In these terms, older people in both countries might show inadequate responses to surveys like the one shown above. “Not applicable”, thus proves to be a very important field for further examinations and speculations.

Nevertheless, the WVS from 1999 observes a decline of social participation in formal

organisations in Bulgaria, Russia and China. A more recent study under the European Barometer examines the changes in the Bulgarian society after 2007 and it reports pessimistic outcomes not very different from the observations in 1999. “Citizens' mistrust towards national governments, parliaments and the judiciary has registered again, as in previous surveys, its highest levels, and trust – the lowest scores, in the whole Eurobarometer survey” (Eurobarometer, 2008: 5). On the other hand, the above mentioned economic inequality and the general influence of the economic downfall coincides with growing outgroup distrust in the Bulgarian and Russian society. WVS (1999) asks: “Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you need to be very careful in dealing with people?” The answers are:

- (1) Most people can be trusted  
(2) Can't be too careful

A 67.5% of Bulgarians and 73.7% Russians show increasing distrust toward the rest of the society. In contrast to China (43.8%) and the Netherlands (40%), the two post-communist countries report that most people cannot be trusted. In his article on the *E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-first*

*Century*, Robert Putnam proposed two theories that reflect the effect of growing diversity - Theory 1: Diversity enhances bridging and out-group solidarity and Theory 2: Diversity enhances bonding and in-group solidarity (Putnam, 2007: 115). Contrary to these theories, Bulgaria reports to be one of the Balkan countries with the highest diversity, and at the same time with steady ethnic tolerance. Thus, the increase in social distrust cannot be fully explained on the

Table 6

"Most people can be trusted?"		
Country	Most can be trusted	Can't be trusted
Bulgaria	24,9	67,5
China	52,5	43,8
Netherlands	59,4	39,9
Russian Federation	22,9	73,7
* World Value Survey (1999)		

terms of diversity. The growing distrust in the two countries might be a result of economic shifts, diversity growth or cultural value shifts in the different generations. These three factors should be a theme for further research on the decline of trust in these two communities. However, we will focus on another important factor that might have an influence on these social and cultural developments – the structure of the family. The structure of the Bulgarian and Russian family plays an important role throughout history and has contributed toward the formation of very particular communal social structures and folklore culture. The family has always been an epicenter of folklore and religious rituals and so it has generated strong interpersonal trust within its members. We can further note that during the Soviet years, society turned pessimistic toward the role of institutions and their ineffectiveness; it further obtained trust toward the role of interpersonal contacts as essential instruments to exchange and attain goods. Accordingly, the Alpha Research (October 2000) surveying the political participation in the Bulgarian society:

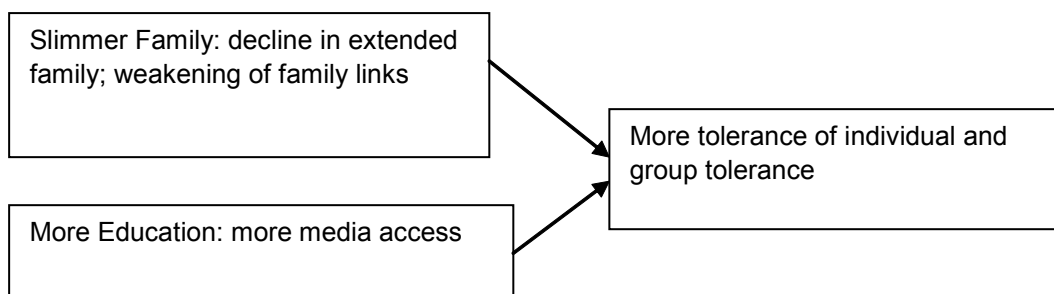
"Family and political institutions are positioned in the two poles of the public trust. Strongest is the confidence in kinship. According to a decimal grade scale (where 1 means absence of trust, and 10 marks full trust), only family and relatives receive grades close to the maximum - family takes 9.6, and relatives are assessed with 7.9. Next in place are neighbors (5.9) and Bulgarian nationals, i.e., those with whom people communicate directly." (Alpha Research, Oct. 2000)

Likewise, the WVS studies how these countries spend their leisure time. The questions that deal with a participation or spending time in formal or communal organisations show negative results, while the ones that deal with family and friends show strong positive outcomes. It is interesting to note that the Chinese spend most time with family, which is also observed in Bulgaria and Russia. We note further that Bulgaria and Russia show strong distrust toward their own societies, which indicates the outgroup

distrust of these societies. Nevertheless, we observe more ingroup trust, more bonding rather than bridging and more time spent with family and close friends rather than at any civic associations.

In *The New Political Culture*, a following model is proposed (Clark, Hoffmann-Martinet, 1998: 27):

Having a slimmer family and more education contributes towards the increase in individual and group tolerance. These factors also facilitate the rise of the New Political Culture.



family households since 1863 (Todorova, 2006: 25). Changes within the family structure have occurred due to variety of factors – social structure and social values, economy and environmental constraints. Nuclear family dominated during the Ottoman rule and the extended family expanded during the Soviet period. Following the Soviet era, observations show an increase of extended households during the 1990s. Second, it appears likely that some reversal occurred over the first quarter of the 20th century due to the substantial increase in the share of solitaries. For the long Soviet period, however, the relative order of the categories remains roughly the same. The largest group is simple family households, accounting for 41% and 55%. The second and third largest categories are solitaries and extended/multiple households with 18–22 and 15–24%. Finally, there is a more or less stable 10–15% one-parent households. During pre-soviet and Soviet period, it was the norm for newly married couples to co-reside with the parents of one of the two spouses. “For the years up to 1970 they yield an expected bandwidth variation of extended households of between 30 and 45%, i.e. well above the actual percentage of extension found in the population census data for these years.” (Afontsev et al., 2008: 177). According to the logic of the model, Afontsev argues that this would mean that not even all ‘available’ widows joined their married children’s household at

However, having a slimmer family and the possession of individualistic values is not embedded in the Bulgarian and Russian history. Instead the cultural forms of the two countries have developed around the nuclear and extended family structures, which Maria Todorova has studied as far as during the Ottoman rule of Bulgaria. The “cult of the family” can be explained through the evolution of the family model in the Balkan history. In her *Balkan Family Structure and the European Pattern: Demographic Developments in Ottoman Bulgaria*, Maria Todorova emphasizes the Balkan tendency to predominate in nuclear

old age, and she strongly suggest that nuclear family formation was the norm. Starting from the 1970s, however, the calculations yield an expected share of extended households of around 20%, which approaches the ‘real’ values enough to hint at the possible existence of an extended family system during the later Soviet period.

Similar to the Bulgarian model, the Russian family structure also portrays a traditional pattern of nuclear and extended family structures. In looking at the history of the family structure, we must also take under consideration the structure and availability of housing as a factor that influences patterns of household formation. As Sergey Afontsev et al. mention in their study urban housing in Russia was in very short supply throughout most of the 20th century, with the exception of the years of actual de-urbanization during the Civil War. (Afontsev et al., 2008: 190). In the table above, it is seen that the share of solitaries among urban households was lowest during the 1930s to 1950s, when housing was most scarce due to the combination of high rates of rural–urban migration and low investment in civil construction. The shortage of housing thus obviously became an important factor behind the formation of extended and multiple households, and influenced the cultural preferences that favored such households. Newly married couples often could not obtain separate apartments until their 30s and so, like the Bulgarian families,

had not much of a choice but to reside with their parents. Important is to consider the ecology-dependent mechanism, which the communal apartments (*komunalki*) introduced towards the pattern of family life. From the Communal Living in Russia Project we are able to grasp the atmosphere of the interior structure of the *komunalki*, and to also read primary documents written by members of these social/family structures. There are many reasons why people lived in communal apartments in the Soviet period, and why many continued to live in them after the collapse. From a simple historical view, the severe shortages of housing explain the existence in these *komunalki* (in Bulgaria and Russia) during the entire USSR. The ideology behind this mass phenomenon came from the state's communist philosophy of "communal lifestyle". After the collapse, many unmarried, divorced or widowed women remained living in them, because of the inability to improve their standard of living and the decline in their pensions/incomes. "Unless they have cash income apart from their primary salaries, personnel in education, health care, the sciences, civil administration, and other public sectors earn less than the average monthly salary (as of 2006, 9900 rubles per month or approximately \$343, according to the Russian Federal State Statistics Service)" (Buckley, Gurenko, 1997: 1).

In Bulgaria (1990), the *Country Studies Series* by the Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress reports: 65% of the population averaged only half a room per family member. Only 36% of families with children under eighteen had a separate children's room; 65% used the living room as a bedroom; and 57 % used the kitchen as a bedroom. By 1990 communal apartments were becoming rarer, however; at that time, 12 percent of families shared a kitchen with another family (Nations Encyclopedia, 1992). The *Country Studies* also report that 60 % of the younger generation was forced to stay in their parents' homes after marriage. In 1990 over 40 % of homes included two or more families or other relatives of one family. Members of three or even four generations often lived together. Traditional acceptance of the extended family contributed to this situation, but long waits for separate housing also played a critical role. In 1979 the government established a special Young Newlywed Families Fund that ensured that new families would receive at least 25 % of new government housing. This program delivered more housing to young families in the 1980s, but waiting lists also grew longer during

that period.

The relationship between housing and patterns of household formation proves to be much emphasized in the 1990s because of construction standstill in both countries. The 2002 census outcomes also reflect the emergence of a phenomenon relatively new to the Russian and Bulgaria society — young urban professionals leaving the parental home before marriage and setting up one-person households in rented or purchased apartments (Afontsev, 2008: 178). The modernization tendencies enforce of the emergence of a contingent of young urban professionals who set up a separate household before marriage. Nevertheless, social and economic instability in these two countries continues to strengthen the institute of family as an income-pooling unit, including the traditional extended family household. Because of the economic instability and the transitional processes that are still underway, it cannot yet be predicted, which of these trends will eventually prevail.

In these terms, the family remains a strong institution which has traditionally formed the moral values and cultural patterns in both Bulgaria and Russia. As Inglehart has noted, some post materialistic values have had an impact on the younger Bulgarian generation — autonomy, postponing marriage and increased mobility (Inglehart, 1997: 132). However, he also claims that empirical evidence is still limited and not representative to predict the development of the activist role of the family in relation to affirmation of the democratic values (Georgiev, 2007: 121). In addition, the Bulgarian and Russian family structure cannot yet be defined as "slim", as mentioned by Clark's model in *The New Political Culture* (Clark, Hoffmann-Martinot, 1998). Even though not slim, the contemporary Bulgarian family is to be characterized with high educational homogeneity, says Plamen Georgiev. (Georgiev, 2007: 120). As previously noted, Terry Clark's model suggests that higher education and slimmer family lead to the increase in individual and group tolerance (Clark, Hoffmann-Martinot, 1998). However, the two influential factors are not fully expressed in the Bulgarian case. The educational level seems relatively high but the family has not evolved to answer the category of "slim". As a result, though, Georgiev further notes that the Bulgarian society reports a steady ethnic tolerance, especially concerning religion. The Ottoman occupation and the WWII Jewish immigrant population in Bulgaria have resulted in gradual increase in ethnic tolerance. Therefore, the Bulgarian social mechanism doesn't

seem to fit the NPC model proposed by Clark.

In the Bulgarian and Russian case studies, the family has become the basic factor for political socialization and milestone for shaping the new civic culture. The economic instability in the two countries has enforced the strength of the family unit, while it has also increased the distrust toward local institutions and authorities. The social capital cannot be sought as a product of intermediary organisations, as De Tocqueville argues, but has allocated itself in the isolated family unit structures and the informal social folklore practices. Wedding processions, socializing over coffee, sitting parties and unofficial folklore dance collectives are types of these unofficial socio-cultural scenes in Bulgaria that encourage social participation in contrast to the institutionalized organisations. To relate it internationally, this unofficial cultural model of Bulgaria and Russia is similar to Spain's informal social scene of *Pandillas* and *Movidas*. Furthermore, these social practices reveal a continuation of folklore culture that is built around the family structure and inspired by an oral tradition. Folklore practices in general have been formed in a more intimate scale and have become situated around the circle of family and relatives.

Even though personal relations seem to generate trust and intermediary organisations do not, we should consider the social trust that is directed toward the national institutions. If the personal relations and family circle provide trust and other organisations do not, then how do we explain the trust in EU institutions that Eurobarometer (2008) reports?

“Trust in the European Union among Bulgarians is higher than the trust in other international organisations, such as NATO and UN. The high level of trust in the EU and its institutions is in sharp contrast with the new wave of mistrust in the Bulgarian institutions.” (Standard Eurobarometer 70, 2008)

Unlike the average EU citizen, but similar to the new member states, Bulgarians trust only the European Union, its institutions and international organisations. Also, at least every second Bulgarian trusts the European Commission (BG - 51%, EU27 - 47%) and the European Parliament (BG - 57%, EU27 - 51%), and almost half of those polled trust the European Central Bank (BG - 49%, EU27 - 48%) and the Council of the EU (BG - 46%, EU27 - 42%). On the contrary, mistrust in the Community institutions is on the

rise in the EU27, but in Bulgaria it has dropped and is now half the EU average for each and every EU institution. The Bulgarians show highest mistrust in the country's political and executive power. In contrast to the Bulgarians, the regional and local authorities gain the highest level of trust among citizens in the EU (50%). However, Bulgarians reports of mistrust towards national governments, parliaments and the judiciary prove to have the highest levels and the lowest trust scores in the whole Eurobarometer survey.

## 7. Conclusion

Albeit enthusiastic about their future at the beginning of the twenty first century, the citizens of Bulgaria and Russia display more apathy. Observing the development of post-communist societies has further proven that democratic conditions do not always co-exist with the vigorous political activism and civic associations. Instead, as stated by Nikolay Valkov, low associational activity rates in these countries should be understood as something, which has its own internal logic and explanation (Valkov, 2009: 14). These social patterns can be explained by the influence of cultural folklore on the social mentality, or through the institutional structures and political actors that are seen as responsible for the social welfare. While the social and economic levels in Bulgaria and Russia remain unstable, the cultural significance of the family structure will remain a stronger institution for the provision of social capital and trust than the intermediary and government organisations. Even with the progression of post-materialist values in these societies, the family will remain a traditional enforcer of moral values and cultural patterns. Thus, we have witnessed that both post-communist societies portray an ecology-dependent structures that establish cultural and social patterns.

The unsatisfactory financial status of individuals and the generational differences in the two societies also influence the levels of distrust and political and civic participation. While pessimistic about the political institutions and their quality of life, Bulgarians have shown high expectations towards the European Union. Particular support and optimism has been reflected by young people between 15 and 24 years of age. In general, the Eurobarometer (2008) reports show that Bulgarians have become less pessimistic in national terms and more realistic in their Euro-optimism and the role of Europe in the future of their country. According to these results,

the Bulgarians express some kind of institutional trust, however not toward any of their local ones. Hope seems to exist for the increase in national trust with the enhancement in economic prosperity and the effectiveness of local institutions.

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## Pad povjerenja u postkomunističkim društvima: Slučaj Bugarske i Rusije

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Nakon pada komunizma u Bugarskoj i Rusiji, oblici podzemnih zajednica su ostali u kolektivnoj svijesti, a ljudi su se još više povukli u uski krug obitelji i prijatelja. Obiteljske spone postale su novi izvor povjerenja što za moguću posljedicu ima nisku razinu povjerenja prema vani. Povjerenje prema državnim institucijama i formalnim organizacijama dramatično je opalo, sukladno s padom društvene i političke participacije. Na temelju opažanja u bugarskom društvu od 2000. godine naovamo, smatram kako osobni kontakti, naspram formalnih organizacija, stvaraju povjerenje te sprječavaju izvanjsku participaciju. Obitelj substituirala ulogu institucija, budući da pruža vrijednosne prioritete i moralne resurse za osobno samoostvarenje. Suprotno Tocquevilleovom i Putnamovom modelu, smatram kako u Bugarskoj i Rusiji osobni odnosi stvaraju povjerenje, dok posredničke institucije to ne čine. Nadalje, članak proučava razine povjerenja u usporedbi s razinama participacije, kao i gospodarskog razvoja i obiteljske strukture kao utjecajnim faktorima povjerenja i društvene/političke participacije. Studija se fokusira na razvoj postkomunističke Bugarske i Rusije (od 1999. naovamo) te koristi kineski i nizozemski model za usporedbu.

**Ključne riječi:** povjerenje, socijalni kapital, pouzdanje, fatalizam, društvena i politička participacija, posredničke institucije