Ethnosymbolism and the Dynamics of Identity

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Cambridge
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Publishing

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This book first published 2015

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-4438-8085-X
ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-8085-5

To the memory of my parents

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part III. From an Emerged Nationality to a Nation

INTRODUCTION

Nations are modern constructs often fashioned from selectively chosen and reworked pre-modern materials. To conceptualise and to express their existence is to ascribe to them a certain identity. Identity itself is an immutable, subjective and evolving concept, defined by the process of identification. Among the various identifications, the only ethnic identity that matters is the one that the individuals as members of the group ascribe to. It is socially constructed as self-identified, and is perceived as such. It is constructed under the direct influence and guidance of societal interests and culture in interplay. The process of its establishment, this study accepts, draws much of its content and energy from pre-existing forms of solidarity and multifaceted images of collective belonging. It respectively explores the formation and expression of national identity by examining the role of cultural and political factors, and the way these have been shaped and changed over time. This study therefore sees the dynamics of identity as changes in consciousness brought about by cultural shifts (driven by societal powers and interests).

Their dual character, as modern inventions constructed largely from reworked pre-modern materials, has made nations and national identity difficult to fathom for scholars working in both the "Western" and "Eastern" liberal social science traditions. The analysis presented is pursued by relating the developments traced to certain similar, even parallel, antinomies in the orthodox Eastern European and the mainstream Western European theories of ethnicity, ethnos, nation, and identity. An analysis of modern Bulgarian identity can both draw upon and also help resolve some of the conceptual and theoretical issues in these intellectual traditions. This study seeks to place the construction of Bulgarian national identity as it exemplifies and highlights this concept, and is therefore focussed on cultural representations and their transmission and circulation. It analyses the ethnic sources of early Bulgarian identity, tracing the establishment of national identity from its formative stages, when it drew upon an existing and available ethnic legacy, to the intellectual crystallisation of the national idea in the mid-eighteenth century and the culmination of that idea in the national-emancipation and liberation movement of the middle and second half of the nineteenth century.

The first impulse for this study lies in the contemporary situation in the Balkans, with Bulgaria exemplifying the focus, especially in the rather unexpected flowering of ethnic movements particularly after the 1990s, active voluntary migration, and changes in attitudes to ethnic values that erupted amidst the recent process of democratisation. Inhabited by several major nations, scores of smaller ethnic groups and hundreds of local descent groups speaking different languages or dialects and following different religions (Islam and Christianity—including Orthodoxy, Protestantism and Catholicism—as well as Judaism), the Balkans have represented throughout their entire history an explosive mixture of conflicting social, economic and political interests. This diverse population, with its different social and cultural characteristics, created ideas, theories and programs in the past and current political practice that, whether officially promoted or neglected, fed into the various ethnic conflicts that in this region have always displayed, traditionally and in modern times, a prominent nationalistic dimension. The region offers therefore a rich diversity in issues of rivalries and conflicts, borders and memory. If neglected or treated incompetently, the national and national-territorial problems arising from the past can complicate the contemporary transition of the Balkan states to a political, economic and ideological pluralism. They can also hinder their acceptance into the international structures of the modern democratic world.

A dispassionate analysis of national identity and nation building in the Balkans during the nineteenth century is also a problem of current interest because of the close similarities with contemporary processes. Some scholars hold that we are facing a re-emergence of the nineteenth-century Balkan revival, of which ethnic renaissance is an inseparable part. Unlike that earlier revival, this modern renaissance of ethnic solidarity and sentiment, A. Smith suggests, "has taken its cue from a … romantic nationalism, [which] though often aggressive and fanatical, has tried to channel the passions and claims it unleashed into the creation of a new global political order based upon the 'nation-state'" (Smith 1981, XII). This "astonishing new interest in ethnicity, religion and national history of East-Central Europe after 1989" (Berger & Lorenz 2008, 189), continues to discuss identity as "based on national and ethnic factors rather than civilisational ones." This "return of the East-Central European nations" revived and made important "old heroes and narratives, with ethnicity and religion playing a major role" (Martins 2010, 189–200).

In Bulgaria, as a former "Eastern-bloc country," the theme of national identity has been treated entirely in the context of the Marxist-Leninist theory of historical processes in its Soviet version (sometimes known as

"Stalinist theory"). The ethnic theory created in this context was developed not to explain actually existing social realities but to mould them. In its origins, the formation and development the Marxist-Leninist ethnic and national theory was prescriptive, not descriptive. One can argue that the distinctive vision of the Soviet and "Eastern" theorists of ethnicity and nation is "rooted in a different political experience, rich in ethnic complexity" (Shanin 1986, 113–4), which has made "Eastern" studies of ethnic processes very different in their approach from the main "Western" analytical tradition. Yet, despite its constraints, this approach yielded some scholarly achievements. Among them has been the precise identification of the initial establishment and early forms of ethnic groupings, and of some consistent patterns and causalities in the evolving ethnic dynamics of actual societies. But unfortunately, as a social practice the Marxist-Leninist ethnic and national theory that determined and directed the relations between nations and nationalities, ethnic communities and groups in fact sought to favour and support the existence of artificially formed communities, in multinational states, such as the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, and other "Eastern-bloc countries" formally claimed as "monoethnic."

In Bulgaria, as in most of these countries, the application of this theory has also led to a historiographical limitation in the study of the national theme. In particular, social scientists did not separate ethnic phenomena and processes from the ethnosocial phenomena and processes; i.e. they did not separate past ethnic legacies from contemporary social dynamics. A distinction has been made between *ethnos* and *ethnic processes*, on the one hand, and the public forms of existence and organisation of the ethnoses on the other. A pre-national stage, called *народност* [narodnost], necessarily meant an ethnos, a nation equalling an ethnos, representing the highest realised form achieved by an ensemble of changeable ethnic characteristics. This context excludes the idea that nations are to a great extent the result of modern communicative and interactive processes, that they can be created and directed. But for this orthodox approach, the thesis that primordial ethnic features were the main element of nation and its identity was the only possible interpretation.

Together with the scholarly dependence on the ideological dogmas of historical materialism in its Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist's version, there is another reason for the "primordial" preference of Bulgarian scholars. Bulgarians are still very sensitive about the period of Ottoman dominance (1396–1878), and the primordial approach seemed to best explain the emotional basis of ethnicity and the tenacity of ethnic bonds. The extensive literature on the development of Bulgarian national identity still

tends to ascribe to Marxism—i.e. the adherents of historical materialism with its heavy primordialism—the ideas that are still taught at universities there. This problem of Bulgarian methodological backwardness, persistent until a few decades ago, was even more complicated because historians and sociologists needlessly ignored the development of other relevant theories of nation and identity for a long time—not only those from the West but also those from the former Soviet and East German social sciences. Supreme and unchallenged, Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist theory did not impel the creation of new concepts and schemes in Bulgarian historiography but, on the contrary, reaffirmed existing stereotypes and delayed the interest in Bulgarian ethnic and social history (Dimitrov 1992, 62).

Accordingly, apart from the impetus of new interpretive concepts, this study also arises from the belief that Bulgarian social science still needs to acknowledge and respect the achievements of the former Soviet and Bulgarian ethnographers in the field of ethnic theory. Over the last thirty-five years, they introduced new methods to the study of ethnic history that made a more realistic understanding of ethnic processes possible. Unfortunately, the achievements of scholars such as Yu. Bromley in the former USSR and St. Gentchev and T. Iv. Jivkov in Bulgaria remained largely unknown and were avoided, even by Bulgarian scholars. Until recently, most of them still outwardly adhered on the grounds of a Marxist commitment to Stalin's obsolete four-element national scheme. It was certainly much easier to do this than evaluate and form an independent critical stand toward the multitude of views now propounded by various Marxist scholars or the concepts of "Eastern" authors. After the beginning of the process of democratisation in the former socialist countries, two controversial tendencies appeared in the attitude to the achievements of those Marxist scholars. They were both completely and dogmatically followed as providing the only acceptable approach to historical phenomena (this was usually the case when only the "classical" Marxist inheritance was recognised), or they were completely rejected. The theoretical inadequacies and predictive failures of Leninist/Stalinist social scientists in the study of ethnicity and nation in the last few decades of the twentieth century were a constant cause of disappointment for leading scholars, in some cases resulting in deep personal crises. Therefore, their students and disciples still owe them a critical yet respectful evaluation.

The main objective of the present study is to trace the deep ethnic roots of early modern Bulgarian national identity. The assertion that such roots existed and shaped the identity to some extent is questionable in the literature; there is still "little agreement ... about the nature and role of

ethnicity in national identity" (Hutchinson & Smith 1994a, 4). Theoretically, Bulgaria is an interesting case study because of the unusually demanding historic-political context of its nation-building processes, and therefore can add some new arguments in defence of the above account. The thesis that, among the other Balkan nations, the Bulgarian one is a new nation with strong primordial roots is recognised and accepted in this work, as is the contention that it is a good example of an early cultural nationalism in its state- and nation-constructive forms. What this study does is, on the basis of the Bulgarian example, to refine those key concepts. Its fundamental issue is identity as cultural phenomena, e.g. as reworking and mobilising significant historical symbols, but with implications for all fields of collective endeavour adequate to the modern time. Older forms of social identities, such as religion, language, traditional culture and class, are investigated as determining the sense of belonging.

The title of the study also suggests the "primordial" orientation of the analysis. In fact, the limitations of the two strongly contrasting approaches—the "primordialists" and the "modernists"—are clear. The former fails to account for Bulgarian ethnic change throughout the period studied, while the latter seems unable to cope with Bulgarian ethnic durability. One simply assumes ethnic persistence and continuity, and the other makes them almost inexplicable. Therefore, the approach of this study is to view the "primordial" (or "long-established") Bulgarian ethnic features in their trajectory into modernity, while also searching for the durable roots of the "instrumental" motives that drove Bulgarian ethnosocial development towards the national stage. It aims to show that ethnic loyalties, surviving and changing over centuries, become an immanent part of a national identity when organised and mobilised by modern social forces. At the same time, the work also seeks to examine the socio-psychological grounds for the emergence of Bulgarian national identification.

As stated, a modern Bulgarian sense of identity crystallised in the mid-eighteenth century and culminated in a liberation movement in the second half of the nineteenth century, but it was created using an existing ethnic legacy available for reworking. According to this position, the development of Bulgarian national identity was examined in relation to two main sources in interaction: the "inherited" ethnic parameters of rationalising the group commonality and distinctiveness, and the mobilising role of modern social forces.

The ethnic origins of Bulgarian identity are researched as based in the rationalisation of five dimensions of group commonality and distinctiveness that were present in the pre-modern cultural heritage: the linguistic,

historical, religious, territorial and political. Acknowledging this cultural heritage is the necessary basis for discussion of the continuity between the older Bulgarian ethnicity and the new nation that subsequently and constructively evolved. The older ethnic identity was transcended, first in the Bulgarian nationality, and was later used in the early modern nation formed through the political activation of selected elements from this cultural heritage and transformed under the impact of new social and political interests.

While analysing the process of change in early modern Bulgarian identity that occurred under specific historical circumstances (i.e. long-lasting foreign political and economic dominance, coupled with the cultural and religious superiority of another ethnicity), this study questions three general postulates of conventional Bulgarian national historiography up to the 1990s.

First, it examines the thesis that the Bulgarian medieval *narodnost*, established in the ninth century, existed (being designated by the same notion), up to the beginning of the eighteenth century, when the slow emergence of a nation supposedly began. Clarification of the analogous obscurities and recognition of some important parallels and convergences between the above-mentioned contrasting approaches make possible the identification and analysis of an important intermediate stage between the pre-modern sense of a common, historically grounded ethnic identity of a medieval Bulgarian *narodnost* and that of a modern state-oriented *nation*, that might be called Bulgarian *nationality* and existed from the first half of the eighteenth century up to the third quarter of the nineteenth century. The identity of such a nationality is non-institutionalised, and the nationality itself is not a political, juridical and economic community. Rather it reflects, in the specific Bulgarian case, the ethnic community at a pre-nation state level.

Second, the presented study opposes the idea that the Bulgarian nation was an accomplished fact in the 1870s, as the standard literature claimed. It views the national movements for an independent church and education system and for national liberation and the nation-state as manifestations of a national identity that to some extent already existed and was created as a prerequisite of a nation. The nation itself comes into being, exists and acts only when the group or formation possessing and manifesting national identity achieves control of the levers and mechanisms of a state structure, i.e. within the achieved nation-state.

Third, since Bulgarian nationalism is realised as a characteristic of an established nation, it is a problem of a more recent period. Accordingly, the following research is not about the specifics of Bulgarian nationalism

(in its conventional interpretation, as this term has been used by the political scientists and also employed in Bulgarian literature, based on its ideological and political content). Because of the particularities of the nation-building process in the Balkans, which initially coincided with the late Renaissance and Enlightenment (in their Western European meanings), the term *nationalism* cannot be appropriately used to describe the historical nature of this process in any clearly defined sense (Yolton, Porter, Rodgers & Stattford 1992, 350). Ethnic and cultural-religious links were here more important than political ones; and certain major forces such as the East Orthodox Church and Slavic culture transcended national boundaries. Among many of the Balkan peoples and similar to almost all of Eastern Europe, there was in early eighteenth-century Bulgaria only a poorly developed sense of national awareness. This sense played a very important part in the formation of national identity, but it was far from the psychological profile of a classical nationalism. At the same time, some elements of cosmopolitanism—in terms of a recognition and acceptance of some modern social-political and cultural achievements of Western Europe—had also been present since the beginning of the eighteenth century. Together with religious, linguistic and historical identifications they became a significant source for a distinct national identity in the second half of the century and therefore the birth of a Bulgarian nation. Only in this *culturally sensitive* meaning can we speak of an early Bulgarian nationalism that enters its formative stage through the Bulgarian national-liberation ideology at the end of the period studied—the third quarter of the nineteenth century.

Two important problems are directly related to this work's principal theme, but are beyond the scope of the book. First, the main constitutive part of the early Bulgarian nation was the Slavic-speaking population of an Eastern Orthodox religious persuasion, but it was not the only one. Although problems with the minority groups occurred after the Liberation from the Turks, mostly from the beginning of the twentieth century, a complete study of Bulgarian national identity ideally involves an exploration of analogous processes among other non-Slavic and non-Eastern Orthodox or non-Christian groups. Such an analysis is beyond the scope of this work and not possible on the basis of available historical documentation from the early period. Second, the ideal analysis of identity building for theoretical purposes should be approached comparatively. In this case, developments among the Bulgarian population should be examined in close relation to comparable processes among all the Balkan peoples. Both directions of research and interpretation are left for the future.

Drawing upon the strategic strengths of both the "essentialist" and the "modernist" approaches to the study of ethnicity and nation, this work traces the creation of a Bulgarian national identity as a modern phenomenon, based on archaic or even "primordial" elements that were reworked to make something different and new under the demands of modernity. As noted in the literature, the necessary synthesis between these two approaches (presented in various branches) has already been achieved and demonstrated at the theoretical level. As an academic current, the *ethnosymbolic approach* reflects the growing interest in the complexities of how identities were created, represented and adopted by the group. It is therefore a study of how a national community could be considered and sustained. Now, "the question is rather how far such synthesis can be empirically helpful" (Hutchinson & Smith 1996, 9). In recent decades, serious and successful attempts have been made to apply the ethnosymbolic approach as a working synthesis (Hutchinson & Smith 1994b, 122–131; Guibernau & Hutchinson 2004; Ichijo & Uzelac 2005; Leoussi & Grosby 2006; Smith 2009; Kaplan, Catterall & Rembold 2011). The present study is a modest attempt to illustrate the potentials of this approach towards empirical data from the Bulgarian case, and thereby enrich our understanding of that concrete case with theoretical insights drawn from one debated conceptual perspective. That is, the approbation of ethnosymbolism as an investigative textual and contextual tool of the construction of national identity from its formative stages (and less as a theoretical concept!), is among the major goals of the study. In this sense, the study, as one of anthropological reflection, would adopt possible convergences between disciplinary domains applied and the academic environment.

On the other hand, it has been conducted in what has sometimes been referred to as an "ethnological context" of contemporary anthropology, which is to say that the research has been characterised by a specific ethnological understanding of culture. In such an understanding, it is taken as axiomatic that culture (and all its embodiments, such as language, religious faith and expression, emotional attachments, memories, ways of communication and behaviour, and encounters with "the other") is ethnically determined, and cultural boundaries, though fluid and contingent, are ethnohistorical givens. Such a point is very much questioned and challenged today. Some leading European scholars reject even mentioning the term "ethnological," steadily substituting it in all scholarly aspects with "anthropological." Because of this "ethnological" pretension of the study it may look that the *ethnic* is a presupposed, objectively existing phenomenon in the world of human groupings, and

that might seem very old-fashioned and retrograde. Actually, such an impression is not quite true, or at least is more complicated. Bearing some of the positives and all the negatives of an advanced Bulgarian educational tradition, despite the personal and long-lasting investigations into the theory, the author still modestly considers herself "an ethnographer" who recently turned to "ethnological" horizons (together with the whole post-socialist East-European discipline and its representatives), but who is still far from the breadth and depth of anthropological insights in terms of knowledge, expertise and envisioning. This does not mean, however, that the following study does not questioning and test the sustainability of *ethnic* throughout a certain historical duration and its existence in gradually evolving forms. This study is focused around the ideas of ethnosymbolic approach to nation and identity, but proving its potentials not as a general theoretical concept but as an instrumental tool for research into the mechanisms of identity-building, i.e. within the constructionalist perspective. The sensitive point here is the way *the ethnic* participates in the creation of modern structures, particularly nations and their identities.

The empirical sources and signs of this participation are under investigation, and the involvement of a large textual and contextual framework is the understandable choice. Such approach believes itself to be free of the "ethnocentrism" often viewed as a main feature of Bulgarian ethnology, and its dependence on particular scholarly dogmas. Therefore, it can be interpreted as part of a painful present-day attempt of the self-determination of Bulgarian ethnology in its theoretical parameters. The author's belief is that this approach could contribute to some serious discussion within the post-socialist ethnological schools about the contemporary view on *ethnicity, ethnos* and the *ethnic* and their postmodern definitions, some of which have already begun (Hann, Sárkány & Skalník 2005; Mihăilescu, Iliev & Naumović 2008; Hann 2013; Roth 2015, 9–19; Tzaneva 2015, 381–400).

PART I:

DEFINITIONAL DEBATES ON ETHNICITY AND ETHNOS— CONFLICTING OR COMPLEMENTARY CONCEPTS

CHAPTER ONE

ETHNICITY/ETHNOS AS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON AND RESEARCH CATEGORY: HISTORIOGRAPHICAL SURVEY AND ASSESSMENT

Nations, as this study chose to recognise them, are modern constructs often devised from available and selected pre-modern, even archaic, materials. Such a viewpoint obviously consists of a perhaps paradoxical duality. Understanding it has not been easy, either for scholars working in the "Western" social sciences or those in the Marxist and Neo-Marxist "Eastern" intellectual tradition. Both these traditions have struggled to come to terms with the phenomena of nation and nationalism and to make sense of them as crucial components of modern nineteenth- and twentieth-century experience. Both approaches have registered their achievements, but both have also suffered from their own distinctive conceptual confusions or theoretical "blind-spots." The accumulation of case study analyses of nation-building processes both in Europe and globally in the last decades has shown the necessity for a combined theoretical approach that overcomes these blind-spots and enriches the theory for the sake of its adequacy to the historical realities.

In general, this chapter reviews the treatment of ethnic and national phenomena in the main scholarly traditions, in their directorial primordial and modern paths, and with attention to the branches within the general streams. It seeks to demonstrate, rather than a simple convergence between the two general approaches, a similarity in the impasse, which scholars in the two traditions experienced in the face of nations' dual characters and the re-appropriation of older materials in modern forms for novel purposes. How modern nations draw upon simple continuations of pre-modern ethnic memories and cultural legacies, but have grown to be different and even to contradict them, is a complex process, and one that a careful investigation of the Bulgarian case may throw some light on. This investigation is focused on the social circumstances and procedural tools

that allowed nations to use and mould previous characteristics in their need to construct innovative thinking and social sensibility.

Although the word *ethnicity* is not specifically mentioned in the title of this study, research on the "quality of being ethnic" throughout a certain historical period is its logical theoretical focus. Further, how and to which extent the "quality of being national" rests upon the *ethnic* prerequisites is investigated.

Research on ethnicity is also one of those themes in social sciences that seem to not only generate recurrent and intensive debates, but also feed constant doubts and questions about how correctly the subject has in fact been explored on theoretical and empirical levels. What is needed at the outset is a definition of the content and the approach to the central notion in question here, from which the analysis can depart. Yet the purpose of the present work is not a theoretical exploration of the term but its application in a concrete case study—the collective Bulgarian identifications on ethnic grounds in the nineteenth century in those parameters that fed the construction of national identity and consciousness. The analysis of some classical and newer definitions of the term and its related conceptual circle provided here is therefore directed to empirical research on particular ethnic groupings.

Recently, some scholars, especially anthropologists, have tended to interpret ethnicity only as a tool for scholarly analyses, devised and used by academicians (Eriksen 1993, 4; Banks 1996, 6). Such an interpretation is reasonable. In Neo-Marxist ethnic theory, the only way to make sense of the variety of branched and subordinated ethnic terms is to view the main one among them—*ethnos* (literally adopted from its ancient Greek original)—as such a category of classification and an academic construct that serves analytical purposes (Tzaneva 2000, 55-85; 2001, 5-20). Such a view can clarify some misunderstandings in the popular ethnic lexicon, which got more complicated with each new publication on the subject since the mid-1960s. However, the question about the social content of this scholarly abstraction remains. Namely, as a social phenomenon, which denotes an important quality of peoples' groupings, ethnicity is still hard to define. The existing definitions seem to leave a significant part of the phenomenon beyond conceptualisation, and some of its important characteristics seem untranslatable into a language of theory. Every researcher of ethnicity soon recognises that not all its meanings can be grasped through objective scientific methodology, especially those linked to psychological elements, such as thinking, will, memory and identity.

The potential definitional problems were outlined early on in the intellectual history of the term *ethnicity* (beginning in the 1950s), when it

was first used to characterise the "quality of ethnic groups." Before World War II, "Western," and in particular American, ethnic theory was developed in the context of sociological interpretations of culture, especially under the influence of the Chicago School. Scientific interest in ethnic classification after the war was stimulated by the publication in 1963 of the now classic work by N. Glazer and D. Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot*. This work demonstrated the importance of ethnic divisions in society and the necessity for developing scientific terms to analyse them. The conceptual framework elaborated in the United States during the 1960s and later saw the alignment of national-cultural particularities within the formation of a homogeneous and culturally standardised society. Hence the conceptions of "melting pot" and "ethnic pluralism," which sought to explain such diverse phenomena as race relations, social and political changes, nation building, identity formation, and cultural and political assimilation. These concepts are now more or less of historiographical interest only, although they prove adequate and vivid in many real situations in our ethnically dynamic world.

In the same decade, leading representatives from some social sciences in the former USSR—historians, sociologists, ethnographers and psychologists—began an open discussion on the importance of ethnic phenomena, and offered some serious and useful theoretical insights. Since then, such discussions have been conducted regularly on the pages of social sciences periodicals. Among the most influential of these are the magazines *Voprosi istorii* in the 1960s to 1970s and *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie* in the 1990s to the present. In fact, even the earliest discussions were not entering entirely new territory since early twentieth-century Russian ethnographers, such as S. Shirokogorov, had provided interpretations of ethnic phenomena in a Neo-romanticist context based upon cultural values and psychological ethos (Filipov 2010, 182–194). While there were some major differences in the development of the "theory of ethnicity/ethnos" in the Western and former socialist social sciences, even at this early stage they shared one significant common characteristic—their focus on the need to develop policies towards contemporary politicised ethnic problems. These problems became very important in both "worlds" from the second half of the 1960s, and have remained so until now. This time witnessed the birth moment of a new topic in the social sciences—the theory of ethnic phenomena. At that time, many different kinds of ethnic phenomena—ethnic groups, ethnicities, ethnoses, ethnic communities, ethnic identity, ethnic units—were seen as similar.

Being a disciple of the Russian school in ethnic theory and simultaneously representing Bulgarian ethno-historical thinking, the author also pays attention to the processes in the changing methodological framework of the social sciences throughout the last three to four decades. For about half a century (due to the long influence on basic educational standards), Bulgarian ethnography/ethnology also pretended to contribute to the so-called "ethnos theory" as a logical theoretical-methodological concept. As said, this was a theory elaborated by dozens of talented scientists in Soviet ethnology most actively in the period from the end of the 1960s to the beginning of the 1990s.[1] Following this, in Russian and Bulgarian national schools the process of a famous "de-ideologisation of social scientific knowledge" began, including the ethnological one, which commemorated the end of the existing methodological unanimity. The situation was presented in the Russian social sciences' press as "episodes of a struggle between two paradigms—the positivist and the postmodern ones" (Sokolovski 1993, 5), obviously associating the positivist view with the primordial, and the postmodern with the instrumentalist ideas. For the majority of the scholars, however, it was an opportunity to eagerly adopt a framework that not only looked innovative, but also gave them the self-esteem to be measured according to accepted and recognised world-standards, claiming a "non-ideological" canvas.

The problems of a leading paradigm are important both in Russia and Bulgaria today. I should make it clear that a "Bulgarian ethnic theory" does not exist. No such theory existed in the decades preceding the political Changes (at the beginning of the 1990s), and neither was it formulated subsequently. Until the Changes, we can seek the seminal elements of such a theory in three directions: First, in the limited attempts to critically present the Soviet discussion on nation and its related phenomena, including ethnicity, on the pages of the Bulgarian scientific periodicals.[2] None of these presentations, however, overcame the format

[1] Recently, some detailed historiographical materials appeared, mostly in *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie* in Moscow, that gave critical and precise analyses of the first major contributions in the field of the "theory of ethnos," which have been traced back to the 1940s and 1950s and associated, prior to Yu. Bromley, with the names of V. Kozlov, S. Tokarev and N. Cheboksarov (Kuznetzov 2006, 54–71; Filipov 2003; 2010).

[2] Discussion itself unfold on the pages of the historical journals *Voprosi istorii* (1966/1968) (problems and debates on the nation) and *Sovetskaya etnografiya* (1967/1972) (debates on ethnicity, ethnic nomenclature and ethnic characteristics). Iv. Georgieva reviews these different perspectives in Bulgarian periodicals (1974, 1).

of a positive exposé, at best containing a few timid and groundless notes about the terminology or excessive fragmentation of the ethnic derivations in some suggested schemes.

The second direction, and more interesting, is presented by several small essays trying to adapt this theory to Bulgaria (Hadjinikolov 1979; Todorov 1989). The third, which, for the honour of native science, highlights the ability of Bulgarian theory-making in the ethnic field for the period until the Changes is a monograph by St. Genchev called *Folk Culture and Ethnography* (1984). Its creative idea is to approach ethnic hierarchy through the state and dynamics of folk culture. This approach rests upon the stage and attachment of culture to the socio-economic formation, but the original contribution also affects the horizontal standards of the culture, i.e. the relationship between local, regional and ethnic as three spatial levels. The author suggests that the ethnic level is directly related to the establishment of a specific ethnic culture. He reveals the independent and interpenetrating development of these three categories, their historical phasic dynamics and the predominance of one or another of them in different social conditions. It is this logic that leads him to the question of a hierarchy of the ethnic community and its internal structure. And because he considers in detail the course of ethnic processes in Bulgarian society from the time of ethnogenesis (when the ethnic culture is defined) to the formation of the nation (viewed by him as an ethno-transformation process), this work can be considered as the most detailed creative adaptation of the Soviet theory of ethnos, ethnic communities and processes in Bulgarian ethnology up to the late 1980s. The idea, without being specially formulated, is that two concepts—culture and statehood—pass along the theory of ethnicity as life supporting. Respectively, the starting and final points in this theory, ethnos/ethnicity and nationalism, can be understood on the grounds of their conceptualised relationship with culture and statehood. In contrast, in some recent monographic explorations of debates in studies of nationalism, especially in Eastern Europe, the complex relationship between state, ethnicity and nation is denied, the phenomena seen as conceptually unrelated by some authors, and proven as existing (found in the cultural resources of the past) by others (Eriksen 1993; Kolstø 2005; Smith 2000; Fenton & May 2002; Smith 2008).

Therefore, we can speak of a "Bulgarian ethnic theory" only as a reflection and adaptation of the Soviet ethnic theoretical model created in the context of the Marxist-Leninist theory of historical processes. From the mid-1990s the picture began to intensify with the publication of T. Jivkov's *The Ethnic Syndrome* (1994) and a series of publications on the

identity of minority groups, local groups, immigrants and immigrant communities and the Bulgarian diaspora (Krasteva et al. 1995; Krasteva 1998a; 1998b). With the accumulation of empirical materials, the active search for a methodological paradigm also began (Ivanov 1996; Todorov 2000). One such already approved paradigm was found in the West, and the mechanical non-creative copying of the instrumentalist and constructivist ideas became a matter of only pressing the computer key.

Since the mid-1990s a furious perception of the concept and rhetoric of "Western" models began in both national ethnological schools. They were deposited on the canvas of the historical-materialistic interpretation of ethnic phenomena but estranged from its methodological grounds, although still alive as knowledge, education and ways of thinking. Such appeals as: "Forget about nations; Nation—this is a metaphor; It is necessary to forget about nations on behalf of peoples, states and cultures …" (Tishkov 1993, 3; 1994, 65; 1997a, 89; 1997b, 13; 1998; 2001) shifted the track of the studies in both Bulgarian and Russian ethnologies, uncontrolled on a plane of politically and ideologically uncommitted (apart from historicism) themes, concepts and processes. This plane is easily shaken and is missing the red line of systematic methodological thinking. Today, this trend is greatly softened, not least as an effect of Western ethno-theoreticians who insistently seek parallel lines and similar constructs between the theories of ethnicity and ethnos, as well as options for their qualitative mutual enrichment. The goal is the creation of a common and general ethnic concept.[3]

The main contexts in the social scientific study of ethnos/ethnicity today can be listed as follows: understanding the comprehensive relationship between ethnic development and general social processes; identification and labelling of any grouping or category of people believed to be ethnically organised; understanding the principles of stereotyping and auto-stereotyping of the given group and other groups or categories; studying the self-identity systems; viewing ethnic changes in the context of cultural persistence, transformation and change, and of the maintenance and crossing of all established boundaries, including the construction of "conceptual" boundaries that both separate and bind people. Different social sciences have contributed to these various issues. An analysis of the particular views on ethnicity given by each discipline is one possible way to group together the existing theories on ethnos/ethnicity (and each "newcomer" in this research territory is obliged to pay tribute to at least

[3] About the historiographical debates on primordialism, constructivism and ethnosymbolism and their Bulgarian followers, see Tzaneva (2001, 5–25; 2014, 76–82).

three of them—sociology, ethnology and socio-biology). This approach has been successfully used not only in monographic works but also in encyclopaedic articles on the subject, and has proven useful.

The following pages, however, employ a different one that draws together the "Western" (West European and American) and Neo-Marxist (predominantly Soviet/Russian, and its reflections in South-Eastern Europe) understandings of the subject and attempts to examine the strengths and weaknesses of these apparently incompatible traditions. As a result, this is not an attempt to offer a new interpretation of ethnos/ethnicity and related phenomena, but to situate approaches and ideas from supposedly "conflicting" schools of thought in their socio-cultural and historical contexts, and to sharpen the focus of their value and perspectives in a discipline open for cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary interpretations. The latter scholarly tradition was, and to a great extent still is, a theoretical framework within which Bulgarian ethnic and national development has generally been seen in the literature. The former is the modern discourse, but one not completely known and accepted by established scholars from the East. But while they often simply neglected and avoided this "Western" approach, it was beginning to attract the attention of the young "Eastern" intelligentsia, freer from ideologised scholastic dogmas,[4] immediately after the opening of the scholarly dialogue in the last decade of the twentieth century. It should be noticed, however, that these two traditions differ not only in analytical approach but also in methodological contexts of interpretation, research purposes and results, and even in the particular aspect of the ethnic phenomenon selected for investigation (a choice that to some degree was also politically motivated).[5]

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[4] It should be noted that these general differences (within their more or less adequate geographical connotations), are slowly becoming a problem of the past. Today there is a clearly observable tendency toward cooperation and collective efforts among scholars from different methodological schools to mutually enrich the theory of ethnos/ethnicity, on the grounds of shared academic ideas, to overcome the ideological and non-scientific obstacles for building a general theory, and to formulate an all-valid definition of ethnic phenomenon. One of the first good signs for this tendency was in the seminal volume on ethnicity with a theoretical article written by two leading Russian ethnographers from the past, whose account proved their willingness to debate and eventually reach a consensus on these very disputable mattes (ESCA 1996, 190–3). Until the mid-1990s, this was unfortunately not true for the Bulgarian writings on the subject of ethnos/ethnicity, still dominated by the constructs of class theory and a complete economic determination of ethnic development.

[5] For the Bulgarian ethnologists today the conscious adoption as a research credo of ideas different from those that interpret ethnos as part of a consecutive chain of

Despite this, the following study hopes to demonstrate that some advanced ideas on ethnos/ethnicity and identity appear to have been independently (and simultaneously) invented by scholars from both "schools." It is the author's conviction that only by bringing scholars together from different perspectives to address the major issue can all of its contexts be empirically argued and conceptually grasped. Hence, the belief is that their cooperation and coherence today in a globalising world, and in the future, will enrich the empirical investigation and deepen the theoretical interpretations in the field of ethnic theory on the grounds of shared social and academic experience.

What follows in this chapter is a selective historiographical presentation of both concepts of ethnicity in the West (Western Europe and USA) and of ethnos in the East (Russia, Bulgaria). In this historiographical and theoretical cruising between the two traditions, the emphasis of the selection has been placed on the conceptual framework that both traditions elaborate, enabling an empirical investigation of national identity construction to be conducted.

Scholarly Approaches to Ethnicity

From the outset ethnicity was approached intuitively, its social frames and contents fading and washed away by the other, clearer elements of the community. As scholars searched for a suitable term, its concrete referent—ethnic as a collective social feature—was not completely and clearly revealed. The process of its differentiation from similar phenomena, such as nations and ethnic identity, has been a long and slow one. This process can be traced terminologically. However, a painstaking review of existing definitions is not only a tribute to the tradition of the relevant writings. Revealing the intellectual content and meaning of those definitions helps uncover the history of the phenomena in question, and therefore becomes a necessary part of the main analysis in this case. Discussing the different meanings of the terms *ethnicity* and *nation*, the German sociologist A. Kozing wrote that their evolution in fact leads to an important conclusion about their substantial nature, and could help to understand the social subjects determined by these terms (Kozing 1978, 35–6). Even earlier, in the 1930s, another German sociologist, H. Ziegler, found that the "history of the changing meaning of these definitions

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economically based formations is in fact an overcoming of tenacious educational and scholastic models of thinking, which is indeed an uneasy intellectual evolution.

contains an important part of the history of the phenomenon itself," a fact that obviously should be accepted (Ziegler 1931, 30). Hence the need for a simple theoretical formulation, but one truly indicative of its historical development. It must show how ethnicity was slowly separated from related phenomena and defined in terms of its own overt and hidden features—objective (with emphasis on cultural traits), subjective (which underline its fluid and contextual meanings), or both (inherited or newly constructed; actually existing in society or "imagined").[6] However, no matter which approach is adopted, definitions of ethnicity will be always partial and contradictory because they attempt to capture and reveal as a substance something that is vivid and dynamic, malleable and self-defining.

Semantically and linguistically, the term *ethnicity* is related to two major word families: "ethnic" and "nation," both central subjects of this study. According to dictionaries, "ethnic" generalises one of the elements in this family of words that derives from the Greek *ethnos*, meaning "a company, people or nation," a group sharing common customs. Variants of this word were used in the English language from the late fifteenth century, when it signified "nations not Christian or Jewish; Gentile, heathen, pagan." The more modern sense of "peculiar to a race or nation" appeared in the mid-nineteenth century (Macmillan 1983, 114; Snyder 1990, 94). In search of what is specific about ethnic phenomena, "Western" and especially American scholars have at different times developed three terms with an almost synonymous usage: "ethnicity," "ethnic group" and "ethnic identity." Numerous definitions of ethnicity, ethnic identity and ethnic group were given by social scientists, which were sometimes complementary and at others in opposition, but very rarely were the nuances in their particular meanings shown and explained. If we add to these confusions the "accelerating acceptance and application of the terms *ethnicity* and *ethnic* to refer to what was before often subsumed under *culture, cultural,* or *tribal*," then the term *ethnicity* was obviously lacking a content of its own at that time (Cohen 1978, 379; Tonkin, McDonald & Chapman 1989, 15). In the early 1980s, W. Isajiw examined over 40 specific attempts at defining these terms, which remained unknown to Bulgarian ethnologists for about twenty years. He noted that among 65 sociological and anthropological works, which dealt

[6] The following review includes the most significant opinions on these ethnic phenomena for which *ethnicity* was used as an equivalent, such as: ethnic group, ethnic unit, ethnic community and ethnic identity. Among the various definitions discussed are those where the term *ethnicity* has been specifically mentioned, or where it was contextually clear that *ethnicity* in its own particular sense is meant.

with the problem of ethnicity, only thirteen defined this term clearly (Isajiw 1981, 1–7).

The introduction of the term *ethnicity* into scientific practice was a consequence of the weakness of existing terms to interpret a whole variety of collective social forms based on common origin and culture. At the beginning of the 1970s, "ethnic group" was understandably and easily applied to denote a "subgroup in a larger society" (DSS 1964; Theodorson & Theodorson 1969, 135). This simple definition, especially in its later specification as "a group with a common cultural tradition and a sense of identity which exists as a sub-group of a larger society," or as "a collective body within a larger society" with a long list of shared common cultural elements (see the comments on these and similar definitions in Hutchinson & Smith 1996, 6–7, 15), seemed historically warranted. According to this definition, ethnic groups are hierarchically ordered; and since ethnic and minority group are synonymous the term "ethnic group" could not be applied to the majority group within the state. Hence, the term referred only to minority groups, and this tendency can still be observed today: "The discourse concerning ethnicity tends to concern itself with subnational units, or minorities of some kind or another" (Tonkin, Mcdonald & Chapman 1989, 17). This preference may be explained again with reference to the important social objective for which the newly established theory was used—principally for analysing and predicting the postcolonial political processes and changes in the status of minorities in multiethnic countries (Schermerhorn 1996, 17). Yet, deriving from W. Connor's definition, the later literature on the subject recognises that ethnicity characterises all ethnic formations along a developmental continuum—from the military and economic bonds of tribes up to the contemporary nationalities and nations.

It does not matter whether the groups have majority or minority status, or whether they are dominant or oppressed; they all possess ethnic characteristics, as T. Eriksen's acclaimed work proves, so the term is applicable "to majorities and minorities, host and immigrant communities" (Eriksen 1993, 121–146; Hutchinson & Smith 1996, 5; Banks 1996, 149–50). In this sense, there was merit in W. Connor's further specification—an ethnic group consists of those who conceive themselves as being alike by virtue of their common ancestry, and who are so regarded by others (quoted from Snyder 1990, 59). The lexical distinction in using "populus," "nation" (as "us"), and "ethnie," "ethnic" and "ethnicity" (as "others") is today a matter of the past. The authors and editors of one of the most popular and authoritative books on ethnic theory, *Ethnicity. Theory and Experience (1975),* expressed a similar position even earlier. In this, the

authors argued that ethnic terminology should not be limited to minority groups but applied to all social groups that possess ethnic features. For them, the ethnic group is "a social group, which exists in a larger cultural and social system, and possesses (or requires) a special status based on the complex of traditions ('ethnic traditions'), which are inherited by the group (or its members believe so)." Analysing present-day ethnic processes, the authors showed the necessity of a new term, "a new social category," to adequately define the status and specifics of an ethnic group in the contemporary world, and accordingly introduced the term *ethnicity* (Glazer & Moynihan 1975, 2–5). For them, there was a need to differentiate between the groups and the quality of the ethnicity that defined it. Despite this, W. Isajiw (1981) showed that in the early 1980s most authors saw the terms *ethnicity* and *ethnic group* as synonymous and interchangeable, which to a large extent continues today.

In Glazer & Moynihan's definition and its attendant distribution, which is almost universally useful, space is left for consideration of what the term "common ancestry" (in W. Connor's version) includes. Is it a direct kin linkage (by blood), a cultural inheritance, or a psychological self-identification? The definition of ethnicity in cultural terms gave rise to other confusions. For example, it is not clear by what principle ethnicity is "part of a larger system of social relations" and what kind of relations these might be. If these are relations within an ethnic formation, the first objective factor of comparison is the ethnic territory of the group (a non-cultural marker!). Here, the ethnic formation is in the first place a territorial one. As for the genetic-cultural connection between the members of that ethnicity, this approach does not identify the bond of common ancestry linking the minority and the main ethnic group—is there a type of a "blood kinship" between them, and do they share a common descent? If yes, the social position and, accordingly, the cultural particularism, of the minority group will be determined by factors other than the idea of kinship (Connor 1996, 69–75).

In this semantic and terminological context, the abstraction *ethnicity* as a denotation of distinctive ethnic groups and identities is a twentieth-century usage. Not recorded in dictionaries from the 1960s, it appeared in the *American Heritage Dictionary* of 1973 with the following meanings: (1) Belonging to a given ethnic group, and (2) Definition of ethnic pride. In this second meaning, ethnicity is an attribute, a characteristic and sign of ethnic belonging. The attributive nature of the term is embedded in a special noun built by a particular suffix in some languages indicating quality, for instance in German—*die Ethnizität*, or in some Slavic languages—*этничность* (Russian), and *етничност* (Bulgarian). The