

Université de Montréal

The role of European Union integration in post-communist democratization
in Bulgaria and Macedonia

par
Simeon Mitropolitski

Département de science politique
Faculté des arts et des sciences

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The role of European Union integration in post-communist democratization
in Bulgaria and Macedonia

Présentée par :
Simeon Mitropolitski

a été évaluée par un jury composé des personnes suivantes :

Charles Blattberg,
président-rapporteur

Laurence McFalls,
directeur de recherche

Frédéric Mérand,
membre du jury

Paul Kubicek,
examineur externe

Pierre Hamel,
représentant du doyen de la FES

Résumé

Cette recherche porte sur la dimension interprétative de l'intégration européenne et sur son rôle dans la démocratisation au sein des pays postcommunistes. Je focalise mon attention sur la signification pour les gens desdits pays que revêtent la participation politique, la compétence politique, et l'action collective. Cette signification prend forme selon des circonstances spécifiques, agencées par les relations de pouvoir asymétriques avec l'Union européenne (UE).

J'examine la littérature sur le rôle de l'intégration européenne dans la démocratisation des pays postcommunistes et je distingue deux paradigmes théoriques principaux : un premier qui met l'accent sur le processus institutionnel, l'autre sur le processus instrumental stratégique. Au sein de ces deux approches, je présente différents auteurs qui voient l'UE soit comme un facteur pro-démocratique, soit comme un facteur antidémocratique dans le contexte postcommuniste de transition politique.

Cette recherche ne suit pas théoriquement et méthodologiquement les études contenues dans la revue de la littérature. Plutôt, elle s'appuie sur un modèle théorique inspiré des recherches de McFalls sur la réunification culturelle allemande après 1989. Ce modèle, sans négliger les approches institutionnelles et stratégiques, met l'accent sur d'autres écoles théoriques, interprétatives et constructivistes.

Mes conclusions se basent sur les résultats de séjours d'étude dans deux pays postcommunistes : la Bulgarie, membre de l'UE depuis 2007, et la Macédoine, pays-candidat. J'ai recours à des méthodes qualitatives et à des techniques ethnographiques qui triangulent des résultats puisés à des sources multiples et variées pour exposer des trajectoires dynamiques de changement culturel influencées par l'intégration européenne.

Les conclusions montrent sous quelles conditions les idéaux-types de changement politique conventionnels, soit institutionnel ou stratégique, représentent des modèles utiles. Je présente aussi leurs limitations.

Ma conclusion principale est que l'intégration européenne représente un phénomène complexe dans le monde des significations. C'est un facteur qui est simultanément un amplificateur et un inhibiteur de la culture politique démocratique. Les gens créent des sous-cultures différentes où des interprétations multiples du processus d'intégration européenne mènent à des effets dissemblables sur la participation politique, la compétence et l'action collective. La conversation discursive entre les gens qui composent de telles sous-cultures distinctes peut produire des effets divergents au niveau national.

Cette recherche n'est pas une analyse de l'UE comme mécanisme institutionnel ; elle ne pose ainsi pas l'UE comme une institution qui détermine directement le processus de démocratisation postcommuniste. Plutôt, elle s'intéresse au processus d'intégration européenne en tant qu'interaction qui affecte la culture politique au sein des pays postcommunistes, et à la manière dont cette dernière peut agir sur le processus de démocratisation. Mon point d'intérêt central n'est donc pas l'eupéanisation ou le processus de devenir « comme l'Europe », à moins que l'eupéanisation ne devienne une composante de la culture politique avec des conséquences sur le comportement politique des acteurs.

Mots-clés: Europe de l'Est, postcommunisme, démocratie, Union européenne, intégration européenne, culture politique, Bulgarie, Macédoine.

Summary

This research focuses on the interpretative dimension of EU integration and on its role in post-communist democratization. It offers an understanding of the significance of taking part in political life, becoming politically competent and taking part in collective actions. This significance takes shape under specific circumstances, which are part of the asymmetrical power relation with the European Union (EU).

I discuss the existing literature on the role of EU integration in post-communist democratization and discern two main theoretical paradigms, which put emphasis either on institutionalist learning or on the strategic instrumental process. Within these two approaches I present authors who see the EU either as a pro-democratic or anti-democratic factor in the context of post-communist political transition.

This research does not follow exactly, theoretically or methodologically, in the footsteps of the studies presented in the literature review. It starts from a theoretical model, inspired by McFalls' research on German cultural reunification after 1989. This model, without neglecting institutional and strategic approaches, emphasizes the importance of other theoretical schools, interpretative and constructivist.

My findings are based on field trips in two post-communist countries that are situated at different stages of the EU integration process: Bulgaria, which became a EU member in 2007, and Macedonia, which is a candidate country. Methodologically, I use qualitative methods and ethnographic techniques that triangulate findings from different sources into converging dynamic trajectories of cultural change under the influence of

EU integration. These findings show the specific conditions under which the conventional ideal-types of political change, institutionalist and strategic, represent useful theoretical models. I also display their limitations that call for an alternative approach.

I conclude that EU integration, as a complex phenomenon within the world of meaning, acts simultaneously as a booster and an inhibitor of democratic political culture. People create different subcultures where different interpretations of the EU integration process lead to dissimilar effects on their political participation, competence and collective action. Discursive conversations between people representing these different subcultures may also produce dissimilar effects on the national level.

This research is not an analysis of the EU as an institutional mechanism and therefore, it is not research that takes the EU as an institution affecting post-communist democratization. This research focuses on the way the process of EU integration as an interaction affects political culture in post-communist societies, and via this influence, how it affects the process of democratization. It is not about Europeanization, understood as becoming more European-like, unless this Europeanization becomes part of political culture, which affects political behavior.

Keywords: Eastern Europe, post-Communism, democracy, European Union, EU integration, political culture, Bulgaria, Macedonia.

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Introduction

Recently, a distant friend of mine posted an image on her Facebook wall. Under a gloomy sky, on an almost empty field with dry grass and few trees, two separate railway tracks merged, forming a new railway track in the back of the image. The friend had added a brief comment: “A nostalgia for what I went through”. Frankly, I felt this image very differently. So I posted a remark: “I see it as a hope for merger”. Other comments from common friends followed, different either from the initial posting and from my reaction: “I see it as a search for the perfect, unknown, and new in life”; “Me, as old and obsolete railway tracks”; “Perfect composition, the nostalgia makes it complete”; “Flying does not obey lines and tracks”. I tentatively wrapped this short discussion by saying that “obviously we dealt here with a piece of true art, anyone could see different things”. The author made the last posting, which sounded even more enigmatically than her initial one: “It is interesting that in my life nothing had been updated and modernized so much as railway tracks”.

I like enigmas, especially when I find a key to decipher them. So I privately contacted this distant friend, for whom I already knew that she was a former international journalist who lived in Japan. It turned out that she used railway tracks as a metaphor for her life. Growing up in a small village in Bulgaria where the railway station was the window to the larger world, she worked consecutively as a journalist in different, more developed countries than her own, before, finally, settling down in Japan. Her life went through seeing steam trains, diesel locomotives, European TGVs and Japanese bullet trains. As she got older, the trains and tracks in her life became more modern. The key to

the enigma of her postings was that she realized how old she became by seeing modern trains and railway tracks. These thoughts made her feel very nostalgic every time she saw railway tracks.

This brief story taught me at least two lessons. First, there was no stable link between what we saw and the meaning we attributed to it. The image I saw on Facebook sparked as many different visions as they were viewers. Some reactions were easy to decipher, because they were based on more conventional, read socially more widespread, interpretations. The posting: “Flying does not obey lines and tracks” used the conventional image of tracks as a limitation of movement; the author clearly wanted to show his refusal to live in such a world of limitations. Other postings, such as the author’s, were more difficult to understand, but with some additional investigation a satisfying answer was found. This capacity to understand, to give a cohesive meaning to others’ interpretations, was the second lesson I learned from this communication. We, people, are not only capable in good faith to give different, sometimes contradicting, interpretations to seemingly identical physical phenomena, but we can also understand the others’ interpretations. In this process, we do not need to go through the same life experience as the others whose behavior and interpretations we try to understand. I could understand the distant friend’s metaphor without any real experience riding on TGV or on bullet train. Understanding also does not mean that I have to accept the others’ way to see the world. It gives me the unique opportunity to see the world differently without necessarily abandoning my own ivory tower. Understanding, therefore, makes me richer in experiences that, otherwise, I would had never had.

Understanding, however, is more than reconstructing one's particular frame of significance. It is also a key to access this person's social life, his or her priorities, limits, desired goals and forbidden fruits. Our world of significance, a stable relation between signifiers and signified, or culture, is not just a reflection of material world; it is also part of its constitution. Understanding culture is therefore a way to understand social behavior, a key element in social sciences, which escapes simplistic mechanical schemas and one-dimensional interpretative paradigms, such as rational choice. To take the Facebook example one step further, I can reconstruct the symbolic world of my distant friend; how she understands having friends, living among different cultures, taking part in voluntary activities, becoming involved in political life. To do so, I can use different techniques, more intrusive, such as in-depth interviews, or less intrusive, such as non-participant observations concerning residues and consequences of interaction. I can also make an analysis of this person's written texts or ask other persons to share their views regarding this particular person. When done, I will be able to encircle the range of her possible social activity as meaningful activity, and put it in comparison with other persons' activities, living in similar or in different social contexts. They will therefore represent different possible cultural trajectories. Depending on the research question, I can single out a particular causal factor that becomes part of the dynamic of cultural development.

This dissertation is about understanding the significance for people to take part in political life, in a specific historic context, which is post-communist Eastern Europe, under specific circumstances, which are asymmetrical power relations with European

Union, here representing a causal factor and a foreign center of political domination. In order to understand this particular significance, I focus my research on revealing elements of political culture that establish the frame of possible meaningful social actions. I borrow my methodological apparatus from the circle of qualitative and ethnographic techniques. I present my conclusions as results of an inductive accumulation of findings. This dissertation, therefore, is a result of asking a particular research question *and* being at the crossroad of area studies, qualitative methodology and constructivist approach in political culture. A replacement of any of these key elements would, inevitably, produce different results. In the following paragraphs I present briefly this particular intersection of theoretical, methodological and empirical elements, and some of my tentative conclusions.

My research question is the role of European integration in development of democratic political culture in post-communist countries that have become or aspire to become EU members. It is a specific question, part of more general inquiries about the external impact on political system in the context of asymmetrical power relations. The main theoretical premise is that the dominant side in such relation does not impose automatically its will, but changes the way the subordinated side sees itself; this change in identity brings the possibility of behavioral changes that affect the functioning of the subordinated side's political system. This process is different from either an institutional learning or from strategic interests of both parties.

The case study or real life context I use to develop the theoretical framework of my research question is the post-communist world of Eastern Europe. The countries that

left communism in 1989 represent the subordinated side in the model; the dominant side is the European Union (EU); the asymmetrical power relation is inherent to the process of EU integration, in which the candidate countries must apply the EU conditionality in order to meet certain criteria for membership. Failing to do so may lead to unspecified delays of membership with high political consequences for the candidate countries' domestic political elites; succeeding to do so, on the other hand, may lead to grave social and economic consequences, again with consequences for the domestic political elites. Two post-communist countries in particular attract my attention, Bulgaria and Former Yugoslav Republic (F.Y.R.) of Macedonia. The former is a EU member since 2007; the latter, already with an official status of candidate, still waits to start the official negotiations for membership. I justify my methodological choice of these two countries in chapter II.

This research is not an analysis of the EU as an institutional mechanism and therefore, it is not research that takes the EU as an institution affecting post-communist democratization. This research focuses on the way the process of EU integration as an interaction affects political culture in post-communist societies, and via this influence, how it affects the process of democratization. It is not strictly speaking about Europeanization, understood as becoming more European-like (Mérand and Weisbein 2011, 139), unless this Europeanization is part of political culture, which affects political behavior.

The existing literature on EU integration and enlargement is still searching for a common ground as far as political regime outcomes of this integration process are concerned. Some positions are extremely optimistic; EU integration is always beneficial

for the creation and improvement of democratic political regimes. Others are extremely pessimistic: EU integration is always detrimental to the good functioning of political democracy. Between these two extremes, there are more nuance positions; they look at the different periods of EU integration's impact to point out the different possible outcomes. All these positions are presented in the literature review of chapter I.

Across the dividing line within the literature on this question, there are some common grounds regarding epistemological, ontological and methodological issues. The authors, in general, but not exclusively, no matter what their expectations, optimistic or pessimistic, put on positivist epistemological lenses; they look mainly at the presence or at the absence of easily observable social facts, institutions or individual political behavior. They use quantifiable data and trust quantifiable statistical resources. As far as their theoretical preferences are concerned, they usually make a choice between institutional and strategic approaches, or put their bets on a combination of both. They use a hypothetico-deductive mode of demonstration; they first launch general falsifiable theoretical assumptions, which are then confirmed or refuted with objective data.

For this dissertation, I follow a different epistemological and methodological path. I start from the premise that the good functioning of political regimes, including democratic one, requires not only the presence of objective social facts, such as institutions, procedures, behavior, "objective" in the positivist sense, but also another entirely different intersubjective and hence interpretative dimension. Institutions do not always mechanically impose a particular behavior; but they can do so as a result of an interactive intersubjective process, which has in its core attribution of meanings. This interpretative approach opens the gate for multiplicity of behavioral responses to

common institutional incentives; this opens also the gate for some uniformity of behavioral responses to different institutional incentives. I assume, following McFalls (2002), that the intersubjective dimension is relatively autonomous from the formal institutional framework; culture may or may not align itself to other social facts. When it aligns itself, it improves the functioning of these formal institutions; when it does not, their mechanical side, also autonomous, may still function, but its prospects for surviving and thriving are less good.

The choice of an interpretative epistemological paradigm makes the use of discrete quantifiable data, a natural choice for positivists, an uneasy methodological option. Such discrete data purposefully evacuates the intersubjective dimension of social facts and behavior, as if it does not matter, in order to make generalizations consistent with nomothetic research design. The interpretative paradigm breaks with this ambition of establishing universal laws, laws that akin to natural laws would automatically apply outside any specific cultural context. The case study of the post-communist cultural context of East Central Europe is one, but by no means the only, cultural context to study the political regime and culture changes under asymmetrical power relations. The conclusions made here would by no means being automatically applicable in other institutional and cultural contexts, such as, among others, the influence of other international organizations, asymmetrical federal arrangements or semi-colonial, neo-colonial relations and international protectorates of failed states. This study is inductive, meaning it presents tentative results of a progressive accumulation of knowledge; these results are flexible and can change as other cultural and institutional contexts provide additional and alternative insights.

The methodological apparatus that best answers the needs of an interpretative research is composed mainly of qualitative techniques, such as observations, semi-structured interviews, and qualitative discourse analyses, among the others. Instead of confronting the informants with a priori answers in order to count the incidence of a particular answer in correlation with other discrete data, the main goal is to reveal as many as possible independent logical interpretative answers; independent in the sense that they do not cause each other; logical because of their consistency with the entire way of thinking of the individuals; interpretative because of the intersubjective and interactive dimension that make them understandable as part of social life.

The structure of the dissertation follows the model of a classic monograph, not a dissertation by articles.

Chapter I presents the main research question as it is developed out of my previous research on post-communist democratization and the assessment of different theoretical approaches; the main research question is the role of European integration in the transformation of political culture as part of post-communist democratization. It presents the literature on this question as well as the literature on a larger question of possible determinants accounting for political regime diversity in post-communist states. It concludes that the existing literature is heavily biased toward using institutional and strategic approaches in trying to explain EU integration impact on post-communist democratization; it is also heavily biased toward using discrete quantifiable data in order to produce a hypothetico-deductive mode of demonstration.

Chapter II presents an attempt to reframe the same question within a different theoretical paradigm. Instead of looking primarily at the presence or absence of

institutions, procedures and behavior, I focus my attention on different elements of the political culture, such as the acceptance of democratic procedural uncertainty, the feeling of civic competence to understand rules and major social issues, and the capacity to conceive collective action to promote individual or collective interests. These elements of democratic political culture follow logically from the dominant minimalist procedural definition of democracy; therefore, the present dissertation does not propose a new definition of democracy. This chapter presents an alternative theoretical base. I use as a reference the comprehensive sociology of Max Weber, which puts an accent on the subjective interpretation of social relations; by Antonio Gramsci's model of cultural hegemony as a form of political dialogue; by the interactive sociology of Norbert Elias, and by contemporary writings of my research director Laurence McFalls who uses the same theoretical sources and asks similar questions to mine (McFalls, 2002). This chapter defends my methodological choices, including the choice of cases within the large number of post-communist countries; these cases are Bulgaria and Macedonia. It ends with a short theoretical clarification that shows the value of this alternative model based on a comedy *The Governmental Inspector* of the classic Russian author Nikolaj Gogol.

In *chapter III*, I present, in brief, some of the main findings from field studies in two post-communist countries, Bulgaria and Macedonia. The findings follow the utilization of four autonomous techniques: semi-directed interviews, non-participant observations, text and text-analogue analysis. The reason to focus on different techniques, instead of one only is to eliminate the disadvantages related to each technique. In addition, the utilization of multiple techniques allows for methodological triangulation; this validation criterion makes more sure than not that the collected information is

objective and not part of someone's imagination, the author's included. This chapter presents different ways of understanding the influence of EU integration on the individual level, among top politicians, officials with extensive connections with the EU, and ordinary citizens. Within the latter two groups, it also shows some important correlations between the EU's influence on the political culture and some socio-economic prerequisites. Last but not least, it shows the presence of different cultural trajectories irrespective of socio-economic prerequisites. At this stage, it becomes clear that EU integration is by itself neither good nor bad for the evolution of post-communist political culture. Different cultural trajectories within each society move in opposing directions; the common point of them all being the symbolic link with the EU integration as sufficient or as necessary factor.

In *chapter IV*, I put to test the conventional models of cultural change, the institutional and the strategic. Here the objective is not to produce a hypothetico-deductive demonstration, although the design is very close to it. The significance of this chapter is to show the zones where each model provides better understanding of cultural changes. These zones are the conditions under which a particular explanation remains still viable when all other explanations are logically eliminated; these zones are the constellations of different, relatively independent, factors: material, individual and cultural, which create opportunity for these models to provide sufficient understanding of EU integration's influence on political culture. Thus, the institutional model of change predicts that the highest influence on political culture would occur when people are directly subordinated to chains of communication and control leading directly to the EU, without the obstruction of the nation-state's laws and procedures; on the other hand, the

strategic model of cultural change predicts that the highest influence on the political culture would occur when people use the EU asymmetric dominance in order to increase their bargaining power vis-à-vis their subordinate political subjects. Sometimes these two conventional modes of explanation, institutional and strategic, overlap, as far as their expectations are concerned. Nevertheless, they are based on different assumptions and preconditions that influence the national political culture, irrespective of the direction of change.

This chapter also shows my respect for those who work with conventional theoretical paradigms, institutional or strategic or of any combination of both. My dissertation is not intended to diminish the worth of their research; on the contrary, one of my goals is to provide alternative proof that, under specific conditions, their models still remain worth using.

In *chapter V*, using inductive analysis, I reframe the collected information within a complex paradigm, that, certainly, takes elements from institutional and strategic approaches, but also introduces additional independent subjective and interpretative dimensions. In this chapter, I briefly introduce some alternative qualitative methods of interpretation that can potentially reframe the gathered information. Then I present different ideal-types of cultural changes, specific for each country, using complex multifactor models; I begin by showing seemingly stable trajectories where nevertheless EU integration can play an important role. Among these causal mechanisms that act on a symbolic level, I pay special attention to the subjective feeling of economic independence from local society, to the sense of spatial detachment from it, to social marginalization, and to the presence of specific social identifiers. Later on, I discuss how EU integration

has a potential of improving the quality of democratic political culture; it does so through the symbolic mechanisms of providing a better sense of temporal perspective, a better sense of security, an additional sense of human dignity, a sense of freedom and, last but not least, a new positive sense of teamwork. Still further, I discuss how EU integration has a potential of eliminating elements of democratic political culture based on the symbolic mechanisms of economic independence, through increasing the sense of fate and life without alternatives, through withdrawing some people from political life, through increasing disillusionment with some traditional social identifiers, and through increasing fear of ethnic minorities. Each of these trajectories and mechanisms within each trajectory represent particular bits and pieces of the big picture of cultural change under asymmetrical power relation. Last, I discuss how within the range of possible cultural trajectories some discourses become dominant. Bulgaria and Macedonia are, in this respect, quite different. In the former, the interaction between different cultural outcomes gives discursive advantage to those individuals who justify their positions of being less politically involved, less competent and less inclined to collective action; in Macedonia, the findings point in the opposite direction. In addition, in Bulgaria, those who still maintain their pro-active political position as a result of the EU's asymmetric influence, confronted with opposite positions, may express views that contradict the democratic norms of equal political representation.

The role of European integration vis-à-vis post-communist democratization, therefore, takes different directions and shapes; their interaction within different national contexts may give birth to yet more diversified outcomes.

I. Main research question and literature review

The following chapter presents the main research question, namely the role of European integration in the transformation of political culture as part of post-communist democratization. This question grew up from a previous evaluation of theories accounting for political regime diversity in Central and Eastern Europe and in the post-Soviet Union in the period between 1989 and 2007. The current research is a particular way of answering some old questions whose scope have gone far beyond my previous field research and thus have been left unanswered.

This chapter will also present and draw the lines between the main theoretical approaches and schools regarding the research question. I propose an entire rainbow of possible answers without making claims of completeness. The main idea here is not to present as many authors as possible who touch upon this problem; even with an issue as relatively small as this research question this task would be quite big without necessarily achieving bigger results as far as the advancement of knowledge is concerned. Instead, I propose this review in order to set up the different types of approach, both theoretical and methodological. Repetitive arguments therefore will be omitted for the sake of economy. On the contrary, some arguments that are part of the literature, but do not necessarily look mainly on the same causal factor, European integration, but which seek to explain the democratization of the same group of post-communist countries, constitute an integral part of this review. Thus I wish to avoid omitting important causal mechanisms that are relevant to my main question but that address a different research question. Within the broad scope of the literature review, I nevertheless put a strict limitation on the

temptation to present also a review of similar causal mechanisms that act in different historic and geographic contexts, e.g. the role of other international organizations in democratization elsewhere or the role of foreign actors, in general, in imposing different forms of political regimes in the wake of military occupation (Ethier 2006; 2008). The goal of this literature review is to provide me with solid enough foundation to help orient myself in the research question, not to replace the need of an original research. The review is an important link between reading and writing any dissertation; it should help achieve the latter and not become a goal per se.

Once the circle of possible answers given in the literature is clearly drawn, I discuss the main findings within the literature. I draw a tentative conclusion that these answers, not wrong in terms of intellectual integrity, represent only a group of possible conclusions because they are based on particular assumptions regarding political democracy as a particular form of regime. Therefore, the answers that I find in the review may be “objective” or objectively valid in Max Weber’s sense (1904), but only in as much as one shows the assumptions on which they are based; scientific truth therefore derives from the coherence of the relation between theoretical assumptions and empirical findings, neither the theories nor the findings are true in themselves.

Without anticipating my findings, I can already say that these assumptions in the literature include the dominant procedural definition of the democracy and the macro-level ontological approach toward the question of political influence. This means that in order to measure European integration’s influence on post-communist democratization most authors look for the presence of a real possibility of power shifts within the political

executive and do not look “all the way down” for possible cultural transformations reaching the general population.

In order not to fall into the trap of repeating these other theoretical models in the present research, which would inevitably make me repeat their basic conclusions I will end this chapter by throwing a bridge to an alternative understanding of the main question, outlined in the next chapter, an understanding based on an interpretatively enlarged definition of democracy as a political regime, including the already present institutional and procedural elements, but also adding cultural ones.

I.1. Presentation of the research question

The process of political changes in the post-communist countries of Eastern and Central Europe and in the former Soviet Union had already reserved its own place in the literature on democratization since the fall of the Berlin Wall. My Master’s thesis (Mitropolitski 2007) had the goal of evaluating the main theoretical approaches and schools in the literature regarding the possibility of political democratization, both for the entire group of the post-communist nations and for some difficult individual cases; difficult in the sense of being harder for theoretical explanation. The method I used, suggested by Kitschelt (2003), aiming to put an order in the highly heterodox literature on the subject, divided the existing theories into four main groups, following the dominant independent variable that caused democratization, or its quality, or its absence: the pre-communist and communist legacies (social, cultural, political and economic); the institutional (mainly constitutional) choice after the fall of communism; the dominant

strategy and ideology of top political decision-makers; and, finally, the role of some external factors.

I evaluated these four groups of approaches and schools on dissimilar cases. I chose Belarus as a country that best represented the move toward authoritarianism; Romania as a best example of a country moving toward democracy, and Macedonia to represent the group of countries stuck in the intermediary position throughout the entire post-communist period. The presence of one or another post-communist country in one of these three main groups, namely authoritarian (“not free”), democratic (“free”) and intermediary (“partly free”), were taken from the annual reports of the *Freedom House* (2008) for the entire post-communist period.

The thesis concluded that: 1) There was not a SINGLE theoretical model that could embrace all possible post-communist political trajectories for the entire period after 1989-1991 up to 2007; 2) Some elements from the “institutional choice” group, e.g. the choice of electoral system for parliament, correlated very well with the extreme polar trajectories (Belarus and Romania) even if they had difficulties predicting the intermediary position of countries like Macedonia; 3) Some other elements from the “legacy” group, such as the presence of a national sentiment unifying governments and general populations, and also the relative autonomy of the state vis-à-vis society, could allow for an easy understanding of the intermediary trajectory (Macedonia) although they had problems accounting for the two polar cases (Belarus and Romania); 4) *There was a lack of clarity surrounding the external factors of democratization, in general, and the role of European integration, in particular.* The answers that were given in the literature, as we would see in the review of the literature, were suspiciously frequently exclusive to

each other; political conditionality became a precondition and a nemesis of political democratization in Central and Southeastern Europe in general, and with regard to some countries, in particular. If one thing was sure in the literature that put this particular factor of democratization, European integration, at the center of analysis, that was the lack of consensus among the authors regarding the direction of change. The field for asking a new question was set up. Understanding the role of European integration in post-communist democratization became an unavoidable research question.

I.2. Literature review

I.2.a. EU integration as causal factor for post-communist democratization

The literature review that I present hereafter is not just an overview of what others have already written on the same or on similar subjects. It is not a mechanical prelude attached to this research; it is not just also setting up of straw men. I intend to create an intellectual “otherness”, a privileged set of interlocutors with whom I intend to maintain a virtual dialogue regarding the appropriateness of my theoretical and methodological choices. The review, therefore, strictly speaking, is not limited to one chapter but continues throughout the dissertation. When finished, I do not intend to verify this literature but to show that my interpretation may also be relevant.

Traditionally, democratization studies inside and outside the post-communist context focused primarily on domestic factors, such as the socioeconomic profile of the country, or the strategic choice of a few key actors, in order to explain democratization, its genesis, speed, and consolidation perspectives. Gradually scholars had also begun to examine the link between some external factors, the EU and its integration process

among the others, also inside or outside the context of post-communist democratization, e.g. in Spain, Portugal and Greece. My own research was part of these latter studies; therefore I started the literature review with the main positions regarding the debate, to use the term recently coined by Tim Haughton (2011), over the role of EU integration in post-communist democratization.

European integration as a process was a key element within the group of external factors that claimed to influence political regime development in the post-communist political context. This external factor could be situated anywhere on the structure-agency continuum; this influence might imply or not strategic choices of domestic decision-makers. This factor could also be situated within fairly large chronological borders, the starting point of which could be situated either in the early 1990s when some key domestic actors identified EU membership as a desirable goal, or in the mid-1990s when the EU itself made clear its intentions to enlarge eastward after the Copenhagen criteria were made public; or at the end of the 1990s when the first set of invitation letters to begin accession negotiations were sent, or well into the 2000s when many post-communist states and East Central Europe became members and EU legislation came into effect with or without transition periods. This external approach arrived last within the post-communist democratization literature long after domestic explanations entered the scene; its main concepts emerged approximately ten years after the start of the political transition, i.e. at the end of the 1990s, which roughly corresponded to the time when first rounds of accession negotiations took place.

I.2.a.a. European integration contributes to democratization

I begin with these authors who establish without any doubt a positive correlation between external factors, including the EU, and post-communist democratization.

For Vachudova (2005), the EU entered the game after post-communist regimes had established a relative stability, being either liberal (Poland and Hungary), illiberal (Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia) or hybrid (Czech Republic); the criterion for defining a country as liberal or illiberal was the presence or absence of a competitive democratic political system that was measured by the real chances of the opposition's coming to power using constitutional means. The EU integration prerequisite was therefore an unequal starting position across the post-communist world as far as the nature of the political regime was concerned. According to this author, by the mere fact of its existence, the EU changed the rational calculations of political elites in East and Central Europe; after the fall of communism each post-communist country needed new external markets and the EU, if not for anything else, was the largest regional market with hundreds of millions wealthy consumers. This objective economic dependency on the EU made the post-communist countries, which counted on rapprochement with the Union, also dependent on its political influence, an influence that included, among other things, the nature and the perspectives of change of the political regime. Therefore some rapprochement between the Union and these countries increased the chances of liberal democratization, if the regime was still illiberal or hybrid, or helped consolidate the liberal democratic regime, where liberal democracy was already present.

According to this argument, the EU was always a positive, i.e. a pro-democratic factor. When it acted to push ahead with integration, democracy outside its borders grew. The EU, however, could act at times as passive or as active leverage regarding post-communist democratization. The term “passive leverage” meant that the simple fact of the opportunity of joining the Union, a market of hundreds of millions wealthy consumers, could change the rational calculations of the national political elite in any country that contemplated the possibility of EU membership and had credible expectations that such membership would be possible in the observable future. Vachudova admitted, in agreement with Kubicek (2005a), that such passive leverage could only reinforce the domestic strategies of regime liberalization, but it was insufficient in itself to make an illiberal regime liberal, to break with its basic logic that eliminated the very possibility of pro-liberal regime change. It was only the EU’s “active leverage” that helped to create more competitive political system in illiberal states, helping them turn into liberal regimes. This term meant that the Union, beyond changes in rational calculations, could also directly change certain political institutions and policies, thus introducing elements of more political competition as part of the Copenhagen criteria and other conditionalities for membership. The EU’s active leverage worked objectively in unison with democratic opposition, or with grassroots civil society actors (Kubicek 2005b), to help democratize the regime; the EU acted also as an honest broker in helping opposition leaders to overcome their collective action problem. In addition to this, the EU could also offer rewards for political parties that supported political and economic reform agenda that facilitated EU membership (2005, 162). The

author gave evidence supporting this model with examples of illiberal regimes' transformations in Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia.

To summarize some important points of Vachudova's argument, an argument that had many common points with other authors that shared the same positive expectations regarding European Union integration and its role on democratization, at the very beginning of the post-communist political transition, the role of EU was rather small and conceptually negligible. It could help democratization, but it could not alone do it unless the post-communist country under question had not itself decided to work in the same direction. With chances of EU membership increasing, however, the role of the Union also grew; it might become even the most important among the other, usually domestic, causal factors when its active leverage period entered the scene. Historically, the Union from a passive leverage of democratization at the beginning of the 1990s turned into an active leverage when the Copenhagen criteria were set and especially when the accession negotiations started. The bottom line of Vachudova's argument was that the Union always acted positively vis-à-vis post-communist democratization; with the credible promise of membership in the observable future, the chances of democratization and better democratic quality increased significantly, first under the influence of passive but especially later, under the influence of active leverages¹.

With some important nuances, Pridham (2001; 2005) shared this optimistic EU-facilitates-democratization vision despite his concerns about possible bureaucratization of

¹ Vachudova in another group project (Ekiert, Kubik and Vachudova, 2007) made nuances to these high expectations regarding the role of EU in post-communist democratization. EU continued to play a positive pro-democratic role, but the external factors, including EU, became less important among other factors within a multivariable model that tried to explain the post-communist democratization. Internal factors, such as the pre-communist and communist legacy, the institutional choice, the political competition, the politicians' ideology, and the political culture as set of static perceptions toward the state and politics, became conceptually more important than the external factors.

the relations with Brussels (2005, 226); bureaucratization for this author meant the presence of institutional factors, usually in the post-communist countries, that in order to protect their specific positions might become obstacles for transfers of new western norms and practices. According to this author, when he wrote about the positive influence of the Union on post-communist democratization, it had to be limited to the period of “active” integration, i.e. to the period that followed the formal invitation to begin accession negotiations. It was only during this period that the EU made local political elites learn the art of pluralist political bargaining (2005, 115); once this art was sufficiently learned, the local elite would replicate it in its domestic actions. Learning was a process that did not require mobilization of strategic choices as far as the domestic actors’ behavior was concerned. These actors became European by socializing with Europeans, not by making calculations of the costs and the benefits of being European. In a similar vein, emphasizing the same logic of learning, Spirova and Budd (2008) showed an increased sensitivity in the post-communist world to respect European conditionality in the domain of protecting the rights of the Roma minority.

During this “active” period of influence, Pridham (2007) noted some limitations of political conditionality, no matter how willing the domestic political elite was to go along with the demands of Brussels. The reason for such lack of automatism might be the conflict of bureaucratic interests between the governments and the ruling parties during the accession process. Another factor that hindered political conditionality’s application might come from the fact that the Union was, on the one hand, not a completely unified decision-making actor; the European Commission managed the enlargement and the national governments within the Union did not always have the same goals and the same

perceptions regarding democratic consolidation and the criteria of evaluation of this consolidation in the candidate countries. On the other hand, the state of the candidate country was also a complex structure with different institutional players. As a result, this complex configuration allowed for some space for maneuvering by the domestic political elites; it also allowed for the opportunity of synchronization of the interests between actors on both levels, national and supranational. For Pridham, therefore, although the general statement that the EU-candidate country relations were asymmetrical and top-down was true, the domestic specificity of each candidate country had also to be taken into account. The conclusion we may draw from this author is that the learning process, although without alternatives, may encounter certain difficulties before post-communist countries become completely Europeanized.

Levitsky and Way (2005a; 2005b; 2007), as well as Coricelli (2007) and Schimmelfennig (2007) considered EU influence as a pro-democratic force within the framework of the more general western influence after the end of the Cold War. For Levitsky and Way, the West, as a political, economic, financial and military center, did not have serious alternatives as a model for many post-communist countries. Within their structural model, the capacity of the West to influence post-communist nations toward more democratic and liberal societies depended mainly on two set of factors: the western “leverages” (there was no distinction as in Vachudova between “passive” and “active” leverages) that determine the level of possible pressure, and the western “links”, e.g. commercial links, that determined the level of acceptance of this pressure (2005a, 21). Within the logic of this model, EU conditionality or active political involvement in particular region would be considered as a form of leverage; the economic and financial

dependence on EU markets would represent a form of strong links. For any post-communist country these two sets of factors represented either particular set of legacies, e.g. Polish communist-era dependence on western financial aid and Hungarian dependence on EU markets, or represented the activity of a foreign agency, e.g. the EU decision to invite a particular group of post-communist countries to begin accession negotiations, to set additional conditionality for one country or group of countries before negotiations begin. In either case the role of domestic political agency was greatly reduced. As in other structural models, the rational choice of the domestic political elite could not change the structural matrix.

According to Levitsky and Way, only the simultaneous presence of high leverages and high links, e.g. East Central Europe, led or contributed to more democracy within the group of post-communist countries. High leverage and low linkage, i.e. high foreign pressure and low domestic acceptance, e.g. Georgia and Moldova, led to political instability but rarely to democratization; and low leverage and low linkage in most cases led to authoritarian political outcomes, e.g. Russia and Belarus (2005a, 27-31). Everything else being equal, only higher linkage allowed for external factors, if they wished so, to play critical role in the post-communist political development. Higher linkage, a legacy factor, with the West, was therefore always positively correlated with post-communist democratization.

For Vachudova as well as for Levitsky and Way, EU integration might affect positively the post-communist democratization, but once the positive effect was attained, there was no turning back to lower democratic quality or to alternative form of political regime; these authors did not even consider interesting enough to discuss such negative

options once liberal democracies were established. For others, such as Rose-Ackerman (2007), such warning questions remained always pertinent despite the positive effect of EU integration on post-communist democratization. For this author, a post-communist country after being admitted to the EU did not automatically solve all its problems; it could still backslide toward a less liberal form of political regime after the western pressure, through the mechanisms of political conditionality, was alleviated; that was the reason why this author suggested to keep western pressure up even after the moment of formal joining of the EU. Becoming European therefore was rather a mechanical point of equilibrium among forces that pulled the country in different directions. There was no quick learning process of irreversible cultural change in the post-communist countries. Change was only a matter of enough external pressure.

Accepting in general the positive influence of EU integration on post-communist democratization through incentives, certain authors introduce additional types of qualifications in order to explain the uneven results of democratization in these countries. Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2005) create a model of successful EU political conditionality that requires low political compliance costs of the target government. Such low costs, Schimmelfennig states (2008, 918; also in Schimmelfennig, Engert, Knobel 2006), do not threaten the survival of the regime or the government; without such guarantees, he continues, even credible membership incentives prove ineffective. Furthermore, the dynamic of domestic social and political forces should also be put on the weighing scale. In this respect Schimmelfennig (2005) singles out in particular what he calls different types of party constellations. According to him, an antiliberal party constellation, or when the major parties base their legitimacy claims and programs on nationalism, communism, populism, and/or authoritarianism, the political costs of adaptation to liberal norms will be high. In

general, in the social context, persuasion and socialization may represent a bigger part of the story of reasons why post-communist countries differ in their compliance to EU political conditionality (Epstein and Sedelmeier 2008).

Occasionally, the positive link between the EU and post-communist democratization might place the candidate state instead of the EU as more important causal factor. Within this inverse paradigm, it was not the dominant party, the EU, that imposed pro-democratic changes on the subordinated candidate; it was rather the willingness of the subordinated party to consolidate its democracy and to defend its pro-democratic commitment that increased the chances to look for solutions by joining an international organization, such as the EU, that made the presence of democracy part of its political conditionality. Mansfield and Pevehouse (2006) argued that democratizing countries were therefore likely to ask for admission and to enter organizations such as the EU if the domestic leaders had difficulty in making credible commitments toward their domestic constituencies to sustain liberal reforms and to consolidate democracy. According to this argument, chief executives often had an incentive to solidify their positions during democratic transition by rolling back political liberalization. Therefore, entering an organization like EU could help these leaders credibly commit to carry out democratic reforms despite objective expectations.

To finish with the group of authors that saw external factors as pro-democratic forces, alongside the EU, Barany (2004) looked at the role of other Western organizations, namely the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), as equally supportive for post-communist democratization. This organization did this by creating an encouraging international environment for securing national sovereignty for the post-

communist countries; the assumption here, following the paradigm of transitology (Rustow 1970), was that national sovereignty was the only structural prerequisite for any possible democratization; once national sovereignty was a *fait accompli*, democratization itself was a result only of strategic decisions made within the political elite. NATO, in addition to securing national sovereignty, also promoted democracy by establishing civil-military relations that guaranteed civilian leadership, and also by making military budgets more transparent (Barany 2004, 74-75).

I.2.a.b. European integration that opposes democratization

Within the literature, there was a group of authors that directly linked the influence of EU over the post-communist countries with some erosion of the democratic quality in the latter. Kristi Raik (2004), as part of this group of authors, argued that EU enlargement contributed to democratic erosion in the post-communist countries without mentioning any limitations in the timing of this negative influence. According to her, the sentiment of inevitability of the EU membership was not consistent with democratic principles; taking the prospects of membership outside the political equation in the post-communist countries eliminated an important element within the party electoral manifesto, namely the foreign polity orientation and priorities. The accelerated speed of EU integration also contradicted a more elaborated and slower process of domestic democratic bargaining; the speed of EU integration was unilaterally imposed from Brussels according to the EU criteria of whether a prospective candidate or a candidate country respected the political and other conditionality. According to this author, the effectiveness of EU accession negotiations measured with the speed and the level of

unconditional acceptance and enforcement of the European *acquis communautaires* was always negatively correlated to the level of democratic consolidation; this process gave an unfair power bonus to local executives and to the unelected bureaucracy at the cost of diminishing power of elected parliaments. The latter became a mere rubber stamp of political decisions made elsewhere. Last but not least, the expert elite-driven negotiation process created a widening gap between domestic political elites and their electorates; the establishment of transnational coalitions between the domestic and European actors made unnecessary for the former to court domestic social groups, which was the bread and butter of democratic political process; political legitimacy partly came from respecting the European conditionality and enforcing the *acquis communautaires* and they were by definition taken outside the domestic political bargaining. Thus, the logic of Europeanisation, a top-down administrative domination, was that it destroyed the foundations of the national sovereignty, promoted fatalistic, bureaucratic, executive-dominated policymaking and left little room for democratic politics in applicant countries (2004, 591). Under the influence of the EU, post-communist countries that had little or no democratic experience found themselves in a new foreign straitjacket. According to the author, the erosion of democratic quality was a process that might ultimately turn into erosion of democracy as a political regime. Bickerton (2009) echoes the idea of EU integration as a process of limiting nation-state sovereignty. He establishes parallels between Brezhnev's doctrine of "limited sovereignty" and the new post-accession international institutional environment. Unlike Brezhnev's doctrine, the new concept of "limited sovereignty" occurred at an historic moment coinciding with the post-Cold War revision of the concept of sovereignty itself. Eastern Europe now, unlike in 1968, can no

longer find a sympathetic ear to complain to about this situation, because continued limitations upon their sovereignty are celebrated as the realization of the essence of sovereignty itself.

In a similar vein, Bideleux (2001) claimed that post-communist countries found themselves under foreign administrative control. More specifically, he separated the logic of economic liberalization from that of political democratization; the economic liberalization that was generated and controlled from outside destroyed democratic bargaining and norms in countries that did not have a consolidated democratic system, a circumstance which applied to all post-communist countries; it made the domestic political elite dependent more on foreign-based criteria of effectiveness and evaluation than on their traditional domestic constituencies. In agreement with Raik, Bideleux pointed to EU integration as a process of transferring enormous power to local governments at the expense of elected parliaments. Therefore, if there was a correlation between democratization and European integration, it was always a negative one. Especially when the process of integration deepened with the start of the accession negotiations, post-communist countries became more and more ruled by laws, procedures, norms and decisions made and remade in Brussels and not in these countries following local democratic procedures (2001, 27); for Bideleux as well as for Raik, Brussels epitomized a bureaucratic and unelected foreign power, detached from the candidate country, and not a community of elected democratic governments, a community that the post-communist countries joined on terms of sovereign equality.

EU integration not only put candidate countries in submissive position; it also directly manipulated domestic political process in the post-communist country in order to

make sure that this power relation was kept without change. This direct manipulation included suggesting in public which local party or parties were pro- or anti-European with the consequences following from their election or non-election on the prospects of EU integration. Gallagher (2005a; 2005b), by providing examples from Romania, argued that when its interests were at stake, the EU could give false democratic legitimacy to communist successor parties and leaders that had history of obstructing democratization. Once the EU had given a green light to start the accession negotiations, this invitation automatically equaled confirming the existence of a procedural democratic regime based on the Copenhagen criteria; this formal invitation also eliminated to a large degree the question of the political behavior of certain political leaders who embarked on the “European” train. In the Romanian case, the political U-turn of president Iliescu who sent the miners to disperse the opposition in the early 1990s, events locally known as *mineriadas*, but accepted to concede his electoral defeat in 1996 and became active pro-European politician in the early 2000s was very indicative of how such a shift could facilitate the future political career and could put a cross over some doubts related to his political past.

According to Grosse (2010), the combination of the quick transfer of new norms and the fact that these norms are not subject to subsequent change by local actors leads to a negative impact on social dialogue in new EU member states. As a result, this can have a negative impact on effectiveness and legitimacy of public policies in general, not only to those related to transferred EU norms. Building on similar arguments, Kutter and Trappmann (2010) make claims about the negative impacts of EU integration on civil societies in general. It is however important to qualify these arguments. Neither for

Grosse, nor for Kutter and Trappmann is the process of EU integration the main causal factor for these problems within civil society; the main causes are communist and pre-communist legacies, such as the presence of an administrative state as opposed to a network state, which corresponds more to Western European standards of democracy.

I.2.a.c. Intermediary positions regarding the EU-democratization question

Between these two polar positions of authors who considered EU integration respectively either as a pro- or as an anti-democratic force there were some important shades of gray, intermediary positions regarding the role of EU integration on post-communist democratization. Kolarska-Bobinska (2003) saw the EU as a factor that could facilitate or hinder the democratization depending on the timing. In the short-term, before the country joined the Union, EU integration acted negatively toward democratization, but in the long run, or in the years that followed the formal membership, as the author hoped, the process could change direction. In the short-term the integration led to significant neglect of important questions such as political stability and institutional protection. Other questions became much more important, such as acceleration of the process of EU integration; here the author partly agreed with some of the arguments that Raik and Bideleux presented. Once EU membership was attained, however, the author hoped that the West-East transfer of knowledge would have a positive effect on the democratic consolidation (2003, 97); here the author followed Pridham and the idea of becoming European as a learning process. It would be important to note that the author made this encouraging prediction before the first wave of post-communist EU

enlargement took place in 2004; therefore this prediction remained largely a matter of speculation. Grzymala-Busse and Innes (2003) shared this ambivalent vision that conceptually distinguished the EU influence on democratic quality before and after EU membership; it would be important to note that these authors also made their predictions before the first wave of post-communist EU enlargement in 2004.

Dimitrova (2002) also divided the direction of EU influence on the post-communist democratization in two periods, before and after the EU accession. She, however, made a very different case than Kolarska-Bobinska and Grzymala-Busse and Innes; for her, it was before formal accession that the EU was in a much stronger position and pro-democratic institutional transfer and democratic learning was more probable to occur. For her, after formal accession, in agreement with the model of Streeck and Thelen (2005), the newly transferred institutions might change nature against their initial logic because of the strengthening of domestic veto points.

The following section offers an overview of some findings from this part of the literature review. Ontologically, most authors use formal institutions and procedures as preferred units of analysis. The preferred theoretical mechanisms of integration are institutional or learning, and strategic or instrumental; the new EU states may change because they learn how to do it or because they make calculations about the costs and the benefits of changing. Therefore the major difference between the two models is that the first eliminates the specific role of the key domestic actors; they are just pupils who must learn their new roles. The second model, on the contrary, puts an emphasis on the strategic choice of the domestic actors; they are power maximizers who pursue EU

integration in order to keep, if not to increase, their political positions. These two main models of integration are found in each polar group that makes either pro- or anti-democratic predictions as far as the EU influence is concerned.

These two models or mechanics are ideal-types in the Weberian sense that I impose on the literature as a possible interpretation; neither author within the review has explicitly tried to purify his model by unilaterally emphasizing or eliminating the role of the domestic strategic actions. These ideal-types, as artificial tools of understanding, are however important in order to establish conceptually coherent and comparable hypotheses, instead of having a multitude of incomparable hypotheses. These hypotheses may be used later in more positivist or more interpretative way in order to understand the post-communist experience.

All authors accept the objective asymmetrical power relations between EU and post-communist candidate countries; the role of subordinated party here is attributed to those who have to make more efforts to adapt to the changes within the system of relations. A frequently heard statement “off the record” in Brussels maintains that it is the candidate country that wants to join the Union and not the other way around. It summarizes the spirit of this power asymmetry. The level of asymmetry, however, is not the same for the different authors. Those who use the institutional or learning model attribute less autonomy to the domestic actors who have no other option but to adapt to the requirements set up by the dominant party. Those who use the strategic or instrumental model start from the point that candidate countries have sufficient space for maneuvering, e.g. in terms of whether to join the Union; such political choice that the

domestic political elite has is enough to make the Union less strict on some points and more ready to bargain.

Epistemologically, most authors work within the realm of positivism; methodologically, in what Schatz and Schatz (2003) call methodological excess, they use either quantitative data or non-interpretative qualitative methods. Among them none looks at EU integration as a process of cultural interaction. The learning process implies passivity and gradual adaptation on the recipient end of the relation. The local cultural legacy may influence only the speed of learning but it does not change its initial direction. Unless it is rooted in instrumental rationality, the local cultural legacy has to give way to new imported institutions. A missing point in the literature is therefore analyzing EU integration as cultural and emotionally charged interaction that does not predetermine the course of integration. Such alternative analysis could neither start from the formal ends of integration nor from the strategic rationality of the local elite because they must still be confirmed. Instead of using the logic of deductive and normative research, this new logic will use inductive and descriptive demonstration. Instead of measuring democratization by what should have been achieved, it will describe what has already been achieved. Instead of interpreting the findings from the position of foreign observers, such as the EU itself or *Freedom house*, sources that claim objectivity and impartiality, this new research will use intersubjective interpretations that the local society creates in order to grasp with the new reality, EU integration.

I.2.b. Some other causal factors for post-communist democratization

The literature on EU integration, including its influence on post-communist democratization, was but one stream among many groups of factors that could affect the same dependent variable. The other groups of factors were the pre-communist and communist legacies, either material or cultural, the institutional choice after the end of communism, and the role of political leadership during the post-communist transition. I present here briefly these different approaches in order to use later some of their theoretical arguments while refining the causal mechanisms of political change between EU and post-communist nations.

I.2.b.a. Legacy

Chronologically, the oldest school of post-communist studies focused on communist and pre-communist legacies. According to this approach, the individual past of each country mostly determined contemporary political trajectory. This school, inspired by the historical institutionalism, looked at politically relevant events and processes, either political, social, economic, or religious practices and norms, that occurred in the past, pre-communist and/or communist period, and that still made their influence felt. Compared to other approaches, this one was the deepest in terms of causality, following Kitschelt's (2003) classification. He made a distinction between "deep" and "shallow" explanations, the first type establishing clear temporal priority of

the cause vis-à-vis the consequence, and independence of the cause from its effect; the latter being less precise on both issues; a good example of such shallow explanation would be found in circular systemic models. The trade-off was that it was far more difficult for the “deep” explanations to convince that there was a real cause-effect relation and not just a positive correlation between variables that might stand apart several decades or even several centuries.

The legacy factor might allow for different interpretations, sometimes mutually exclusive. Some authors saw these factors as always acting against the logic of democratization (Jowitt 1992); others saw certain elements of the legacy, e.g. the presence of rational bureaucracy, as factors that might even facilitate democratization (Kitschelt, Mansfeldova, Markowski, and Toka 1999).

Jowitt stated that the communist and pre-communist legacy imposed a reinforced dichotomy between public and private domains, a very low level of political participation, an absence of shared civic identity, a social atomization of individuals, and a presence of semi-autarchic economic structures (Jowitt 1992, 287-289). In brief, according to this author, all these factors, by reinforcing each other, acted against the post-communist democratization. Therefore, it would be demagogues, priests, and colonels more than democrats and capitalists who would shape the post-communist countries’ general institutional identity (Jowitt 1992, 300). As a better alternative to religious, ethnic, militant nationalist, even to fascist regimes, he suggested a form of liberal authoritarianism akin to nineteenth-century Western Europe (Jowitt 1992, 303).

Schöpflin (1993) shared Jowitt’s view that legacy mattered most regarding the post-communist political development. He also shared the Jowitt’s view that this legacy was a

burden for post-communist democratization, and that instead it favored the development of authoritarian regimes. His model enlarged the time framework of the legacy approach by including pre-communist political legacy which became as much if not even more important than communism; the social atomization and low level of political participation was a phenomenon that had deeper roots in East Central Europe. Communism as political and social system was not built on a virgin soil; it integrated several elements of the national legacy.

Schöpflin looked at pre-communist administrative and religious practices as a cause for present-day political developments (1993, 5-6). State-society relations where the state dictated the social life, the relative dependence of the church within the Orthodox Christianity model, the high level of the state centralization, these all were factors that determined the subsequent political development. These all were learned practices for East Central European nations; being incapable to conceive alternative social and political images, these countries were condemned to reproduce old practices without major changes. The post-communist world offered two different legacy models, concentrated in East Central Europe and in Russia, slightly different from one another, but both different from the West European ideal-type of development, where democracy was made possible only as a result of cumulative effect of centuries-old legacies (1993, 11). This slight difference between Russia as a clear example of a complete state domination vis-à-vis society and the church, and East Central Europe, where these forces were more evenly balanced depending on the individual country case, apparently left some chances for democratization for the latter region, at least for some lucky countries.

Hanson (1995; 1997) “untied the package” of communist legacy, making a clear distinction between ideological, cultural, political and economic legacy. He accepted the Jowitt’s and Schöpflin’s argument that they all ultimately had a negative impact on post-communist democratization. However, he emphasized the fact that the speed with which they could be overcome was different; it would be easier to get rid of the ideological and political legacy, and more difficult to eliminate the economic and cultural legacy.

The reason why Hanson “untied the package” of communist legacy was that he tried to find an answer for post-communist diversity without abandoning the realm of legacy as a basic paradigm and also without putting too much emphasis on the pre-communist legacy explanation as Schöpflin did. Hanson argued that communist legacy represented a multilevel structure instead of an amorphous concept; different communist countries therefore were trapped in this legacy to a different degree, each degree representing the unique constellation of legacy factors. Democratization proceeded at different speed; in Russia, for example, this process would be slower than in Central and Eastern Europe (1997, 249-250). He explained this with the fact that communism in Russia was a homegrown social phenomenon and that large social groups still felt attached to different types of communist legacy; therefore the ideological legacy of communism, which was relatively easy to overcome in many countries in East Central Europe was an additional burden in Russia and in many other post-Soviet republics.

Volgyes (1995) disagreed with the authors who looked at the communist legacy as univocally negative factors regarding post-communist democratization. He argued that some fundamental elements of the communist system could also be counted as positive and necessary prerequisites for democratization. Thus he divided the communist legacy

into two large groups that either facilitated or impeded democratization. The first group included the level of industrialization and urbanization, the centralized welfare system, the level of education, the women rights, and to a degree the sense of social equality. The second group included the psychological need of a strong political leadership and the administrative hyper centralization. All these factors, both positive and negative, were central, not secondary, for the good functioning of communism; therefore they had to be found in all communist countries without exception. Political regime diversity and the different speed of democratization therefore were byproducts of the cumulative impact of these socio-economic factors. Thus, the countries in Central and Eastern Europe had better chances of democratization than the republics in Central Asia because the first group showed higher presence of positive factors; the level of industrialization, urbanization and education, and lower incidence of negative factors.

Brzezinski (2002), in a similar vein with Volgyes, looked for legacy elements that facilitated post-communist democratization; unlike him, Brzezinski found such legacy factors in the pre-communist era. These factors could be so strong that they did not allow communism to take deep roots in nominally “communist” societies. They withstood the assault of the totalitarian regime and later helped the post-communist society democratize by eliminating the negative effects of the communist legacy. Speaking about the pre-communist legacy, the author was mainly interested in the traditions of state decentralization, in the more symmetrical relations between state and church, as well as in the institutionalization of private property (2002, 196-197). Brzezinski argued that the pre-communist world showed great variety in the presence of these factors; therefore post-communist democratization was not a happy historic coincidence; some countries in

East Central Europe had real chances of developing as democratic political regimes. In a similar vein with Brzezinski, also heavily inspired by Weberian historic sociology, Mot (2002) made a clear distinction between countries such as Poland that epitomized democratic success and countries such as Romania that symbolized a painful transition toward less consolidated democracy. Post-communist political trajectories were results of the cumulative action of different social and economic factors that developed throughout the centuries producing sustainable effect of path dependency for the future generations.

Ekiert (2003) looked also for communist legacy that facilitated post-communist democratic trajectory. Among those he mentioned the late communist period economic liberalization, the pragmatism of the ruling elite, the birth of a strong political opposition, as well as the development of strong and ever growing economic and financial links with the West (2003, 115). Ekiert argued that the existence of such facilitating legacies, e.g. in Central and Eastern Europe, accounted for the faster post-communist political regime democratization. Even if these legacy factors were not central to the good functioning of the communism, on the contrary, they technically fell within the communist era legacy. When it came to western links as a facilitating factor, Ekiert theoretically moved very close to Levitsky and Way (2005a; 2005b; 2007); the high links that accounted for post-communist democratization found their historic origin in the late communist era.

I.2.b.b. Institutional choice

Another approach within the post-communist democratization literature explained the political regime and democratic quality diversity with institutional choices after the

end of the communist regime in 1989-1991. This school of thought was in a sense an intellectual reaction against the rather pessimistic path dependency determinism that used many legacy factors, most of which having negative consequences on post-communist democratization (Ackerman 1992). As we would see later, the optimism that streamed out from part of post-communist studies came mainly from authors who shared this theoretical vision. Another reason to mention this approach within a study that dealt with the influence of one external factor, the EU, was the fact that EU officially used this institutional paradigm to justify the positive effects of enlargement on post-communist nations; according to it, the European Union represented an institutionalized community of values among which democracy came first; European enlargement therefore was a process in which a candidate country adopted European high standards (European Commission 2003). The purely material interests of the enlargement were not forgotten, of course, but they came second to the institutionalized community of values.

The institutional choice approach within the literature, however, was not as unequivocally optimistic regarding post-communist democratization as the official European Union statements were; partly this came from the fact that some new post-communist institutions were built outside the framework of European integration. Within this school of thought, some authors shared the fears of Linz (1990) on the menaces that came along with the post-communist institutionalization of a strong president whose legitimacy came from popular vote (Fish 2001; Frye 2002).

Ackerman (1992) looked at 1989-1991 political events in the communist bloc as a potential trigger for a new democratic revolution. According to him, there was, as during any other revolution, a small window of opportunity, a “constitutional moment” (1992, 3)

when setting up new institutions could successfully eliminate the longtime legacy impact. New institutions here meant basically new constitutional arrangements between different branches of government, i.e. some form of separation of powers and provisions for directly electing parliament. If these liberal democratic institutions were set up during this short period of opportunity, they would then set in motion political processes independent from both legacy and from key political actors' preferences. According to Ackerman, the burden of legacy affected present political life through formal and informal institutions (1992, 46). Once these institutions were replaced with new liberal ones the legacy negative impact would quickly disappear.

Ackerman's model was potentially very optimistic regarding the chances of democratization. It was also generous to most post-communist countries, Russia as well as any Central European country had its constitutional moment, when the legacy burden might be eliminated (1992, 57). In a sense, this was as if the pessimist path dependency approach took a complete U-turn; instead of all post-communist countries falling into the trap of their own past, they all could break from it and build successful democratic political regimes. The important thing was not to miss their constitutional moment.

Elster, Offe, and Preuss (1998) offered an even more optimistic view within the institutional choice approach than Ackerman. This additional dose of optimism came from the fact that the extremely crucial "constitutional moment" disappeared from the explanatory model. New democratic institutional arrangements still did matter for democratization, but the timing of their initial set up became irrelevant; this elimination of the "constitutional moment" would allow for other factors, including the EU, to have a later say in setting up new pro-democratic and pro-liberal institutions. Legacies therefore

had no substantial impact on post-communist political development, because no former institutions survived transition, which began from “tabula rasa” (1998, 18-19). The time to choose between different institutional options was never up. It was rather a choice between specific institutions that ultimately facilitated or obstructed the development of democratic regimes. Institutions that facilitated democratization and democratic consolidation were a liberal constitution, an executive power responsible to parliament, and the placing of political parties at the center of the political action (1998, 109-111).

I.2.b.c. Political leadership

A third theoretical approach on post-communist democratization put an accent on the role of domestic political actors and their strategic choice. It assumed that despite the legacy and the institutional restraints, key politicians still had plenty of freedom to change the final picture according to their worldviews or preferences. Legacies and different types of institutions were not ignored however. They might still act as possible intervening variables. The politicians were power maximizers; they influenced political trajectories and political regime quality (Roeder 1994). These actors could, without renouncing to their interpretative framework as *homines economici*, dominate the political scene in a world that better corresponded to their ideological visions, or to move the world according to their ideological preferences. McFaul (2002) who was part of this approach asserted that what mattered most for the different post-communist political trajectories was the political ideology of the top politicians. For McFaul, therefore, countries such as the Czech Republic and Hungary, ruled by democrats, went democratic; countries such as Belarus and Kazakhstan, ruled by dictators, moved toward

authoritarianism; and countries such as Albania and Moldova, where different ideological factions were on the balance, finally became intermediate or unstable regimes (2002, 227). Other more institutional and determinist factors like state capacity, western influence, cultural legacy, within this model might play but only a secondary role. If there were a balance of power between democrats and dictators the outcome would be an intermediate or an unstable regime. A key element in the McFaul's model, second only to elite's worldview, was the distribution of power between the main political factions. What made his approach consistent more with political leadership instead of legacy or institutional choice was that specific legacies and institutions did not cause this distribution of power; it was also a result of strategic actions unrestricted by institutional factors. These more structural factors had intervening significance only through human actions (2002, 214). Real causality for McFaul flowed from human agency toward the political institutions and not the other way around.

Another author to mention here would be Nodia (2002) who put at the center of his analysis the politicians and their perception of the relative strength of the democratic and authoritarian ideas in the international context; therefore strategic choice was somehow contextualized; politicians could become more or less democratic because of their perceptions of the direction the world moves.

Some authors used complex models, a combination of both institutional and strategic approaches (Vachudova 2005; Tomescu-Hatto 2008). For them what was important was the particular alignment between objective economic rationality and the diffusion of values and norms from EU toward post-communist candidate countries. In its most simple version, this model implied that EU strategically linked diffusion of norms

with chances of membership. The EU, by linking membership with promises of financial and other assistance, emitted signals to the local political elite to change their rational calculations more in favor of this particular institutional diffusion. The local political decision makers were both rational and unitary actors, exactly as in the realist theories within international relations; these local governments could not refuse such a generous offer to join the EU not because they believed strongly in European values, but because the better offer changed their calculations. Once these interests between external expectations and internal rationality were perfectly aligned, it became possible, as in supply-demand equilibrium, to make an easy diffusion of democratic and liberal norms from the European Union to the candidate country.

I.2.b.d. Post-communist political culture

To close this brief overview of other theoretical approaches to post-communist democratization, I should mention authors who, following Putnam (1994), established a strong correlation between the predominant political culture and the nature and quality of political regime (Inglehart 1997; Newton 1999). The level of mutual trust among the people, which was quantifiable according to Putnam, and participation within different social associations, also quantifiable, increased the level of social capital within society. According to Inglehart (1997) the culture of trust and tolerance provided increased levels of contacts and information flows among people. In sum, the high level of social capital had always a positive correlation to the good functioning of democratic institutions. If there was no such high level of trust and if associational participation was low, as in the post-communist countries, democracy might be fragile or even severally endangered.

According to Putnam (1994) in his famous statement on the Russian post-communist political development, to understand its course, we needed to look at Palermo and not at Paris and London.

This rather static cultural approach under the name of social capital, however, was frequently attacked in the literature. Margaret Levi (1996) termed “unsocial capital” the fact that some social groupings could harm the larger society; Chambers and Kopstein (2001) termed the same phenomenon “bad civil society”. Stolle and Hooghe (2005) questioned the whole concept as potentially inaccurate, exceptional, one-sided and irrelevant. Later on, none else than Putnam partly revised his theory of social capital, admitting that social capital could be directed toward malevolent, antisocial purposes and negative manifestations (Putnam 2000). Letki and Evans (2005) showed, using as illustration the level of trust in the post-communist context that this concept did not correlate positively with democracy; on the contrary, democracy affected negatively the level of trust. Valkov (2009, 1; 2010) refused to accept the existence of general correlation between the two variables - the level of association and democratization, for the group of the post-communist countries. For him, the associational activity in these countries resembled the image of the non-authoritarian countries in Latin America, where the level of associations’ membership was relatively low compared to Western Europe and North America.

This dissertation, looking at cultural dimensions of EU integration influence on post-communist democratization, takes different ontological and methodological approaches from that of Putnam and Inglehart. To better show this difference, I will use the taxonomy of research approaches of Phillips and Hardy (2002, 7-8). They take, as an

example, the study of globalization, to show the difference between quantitative studies, qualitative studies and discourse analysis. A typical quantitative study, on the one hand, will collect statistics on foreign investments, on the number of strategic alliances with overseas companies, on the transfer of technologies in developing countries, and on the trade flows. This study will take for granted the key concepts: globalization, investments, transfers, and trade. A qualitative study, on the other hand, will focus on the meaning of key phenomenon on a target population. Using different techniques, e.g. ethnography, researchers will observe how these people make sense of foreign investments and investors, of working for foreign companies, of new technologies and new products. Although the qualitative studies are interested in the meaning of globalization, rather than quantifiable elements, or facts of globalization, the study still takes the globalization as given. Discourse analysis, the third possible approach, is interested in how the concept of globalization comes about, why it has a different meaning today than in the past, how globalization discourse affects other discourses such as free trade, and how it is constructed through diverse texts, from academic articles to CNN newscasts.

Returning to the topic of post-communist democratization, the approach inspired by Putnam and Inglehart falls clearly within quantitative studies. It takes for granted EU integration as a process and democracy as a political regime. It looks for quantifiable social facts, such as trust or membership in social organizations to establish significant correlations between key variables. A quantitative study would be the best type of research on condition that all social phenomena were quantifiable and there would be consensus on their definition, including their meaning for all social actors. My dissertation starts from the general assumption that this is not the case with EU

integration. It falls squarely within the qualitative spectrum of research, according to Phillips and Hardy (2002) because it focuses on the meaning on EU integration as a key factor in understanding its influence on post-communist democratization. Yet, my research takes EU integration mostly as given; for this reason it is not part of discourse analysis. I do not ask research questions regarding the genesis of EU integration as a specific discourse. This, however, does not preclude that answering my main question of the meaning of EU integration I cannot touch upon answers regarding more fundamental question of how this discourse comes about. Nevertheless, I try to remain firm within the qualitative spectrum of research.

I.3. Discussing the literature

A review of these other theoretical approaches of the possible causes of post-communist democratization gives the impression of *déjà vu*; it is just a larger picture of what has been found in terms of the structure-agency continuum in the review of the external factors, mainly the European Union. The explicative factors at the center of research are obviously different but the impression is that the literature on post-communist democratization is focused less on democratization itself than on the larger theoretical change-continuity debate. The two ideal-types of models explain either transformation with institutional factors, material or symbolic, factors that make actors learn their roles, or take the actors as strategic players who act only as far as their interests, political or economic, are sufficiently stimulated. The first approach puts the emphasis on continuity; the key institutions and events that have happened in the past

may produce strong path dependent trajectories that we still feel in the present; the second approach, on the contrary, by putting an emphasis on the strategic players and their choices, creates an opportunity for quick radical changes irrespectively of path dependency. Politically speaking, the second approach creates more space for change and thus for political action than the first. Knowing, especially when it is based on science, that a particular country has a strong path dependency to develop a particular type of political regime can have immediate repercussions on the possibility for political action, militating either for or against this path dependency. On the contrary, conceptually accepting that all options are possible makes the actors much more active in order to produce the desired political outcomes. The political science regarding post-communist democratization, by emphasizing on path dependency or on political action free from the burden of legacy, is therefore clearly not a neutral science regarding its object; the object changes by the mere fact of being observed through the lenses of different theoretical assumptions.

In this sense, the enlarged literature review which is but an inflated picture of the review of the role of European integration in post-communist democratization suffers from the same lapses; it looks only at positive quantifiable or quasi-quantifiable social facts that represent key elements in the explicative models. The cultural dimension is absent, even in the part of the literature that focuses on the social capital; culture there is just another name for describing the presence of certain social institutions, levels of association, and material interests. This stream of the literature tries to embrace elements of both learning and strategic models without going outside the continuum structure-agency.

After the literature review is taken into account, at least three different avenues are open in order to answer the main research question:

First, I can remain within one or another ideal-type paradigm that already exists in the literature. I can take and remain within, for example, the strategic model and describe how the presence of new European institutions changes the rational calculation in post-communist countries. In order to advance knowledge I can assume that the authors who have used the same perspective are methodologically coherent in reporting their findings. Therefore, I will not repeat exactly their research designs and will rather focus on actions, events, facts that are not already accounted for. As a result, I will answer the question why the literature offers mutually exclusive answers with the fact that the authors very possibly have overlooked some important sources of information.

Second, I can still remain within one of these two ideal-type paradigms. The research design this time will be to reproduce as faithfully as possible this design and to look for possible discrepancies in the findings. The advancement of knowledge will then be to make better where the others have done less or have failed. At the end, given the opposite opinions within the literature on the main question, this research will consist of attributing the intellectual victory to one of them.

Third, which I personally prefer, I can possibly go outside the main dichotomy between structure and agency, or transferring institutions through learning as opposed to transferring norms through instrumental interests. Such a third alternative approach could be constructivist and interpretative; it will put an emphasis on culture, where culture is no longer just a set of institutions or interests, but an intersubjective and dynamic reality,

which includes but is not limited to instrumental interests and learning. Within this reality other elements on an irrational level, e.g. emotions and feelings, or different non-instrumental types of rationality, all deeply embedded in existing social groups and practices, may present alternative driving forces as powerful if not at times more powerful than instrumental rationality and the dominance-driven learning. This research will present a net *advancement* of knowledge without eliminating what has been already done in the field. It will not cancel out the relative value of the previous research but will rather put it into its proper, meaning relative, context.

II. An alternative way of looking at the question

The literature review, the way that I present it, shows that the main theoretical discussion surrounding my research question occurs alongside the scale that opposes structural and agency approaches, or, to say it otherwise, learning and strategic way of adopting new institutions. Accepting that this ideal-type dichotomy is natural and the only one possible would mean advancing further this research by putting on the same ontological and methodological lenses with some minor corrections. Another way of moving ahead with the same research question is to put on different lenses that can see this dichotomy in the context of larger processes. With these new lenses social world becomes deeper in terms of the possibility of applying multiple interpretations. Methodologically, the focus shifts from counting the relevant and already discovered facts towards making discoveries that have the potential of pointing at another, completely new direction. In this chapter I will identify an alternative theoretical model that may shed light at the process of political regime change under asymmetrical power relations; I will present its main theoretical premises and concepts, and I will defend my main methodological choices that I will later use throughout this dissertation. The chapter will end with a short theoretical clarification using a classic Russian literature piece.

II.1. Toward an alternative theoretical model

The new lenses I am putting on look at culture as constitutive of social reality, not purely reflective. Following the research of McFalls (2002) I look for alternatives to both

rational choice and structural-functionalism as only two possible paradigmatic explanatory models; such an alternative, which has never been completely eliminated from the discipline although has never been given central stage, is associated with the influence of the anthropologist Clifford Geertz, who is in turn inspired by Max Weber's comprehensive sociology. For the latter, interpretation is not a method of understanding in a process of looking for the "true" or the "absolute" nature of an act; it is not a fancy addition to essentialism; interpretation is mainly the way every human being employs in order to be in this world, at the same time physical *and* symbolic. McFalls (2002, 84) claims that we can reconstruct the cultural dynamic of any given society and any given time by observing social structure and its inherent organization and relations of domination and subordination, on the one hand, and the individual expressions of subjectivity, on the other. He points to Gramsci's model of cultural hegemony as a good starting point for explaining the potential for cultural shift despite the parallel influence of structurally dominant class. This class directs or guides but does not command subordinate classes by proposing but not imposing a new interpretation of social reality. By articulating its opposition in terms of the dominant class's proposition, the subordinate class subjectively (re)produces its subordination even if and even as it contests its subordination. Indeed, as McFalls continues, the ruse of cultural hegemony is that it simultaneously creates the subjective conditions for both objective social domination and resistance and thereby allows for both social reproduction and change.

The alternative model upon which this dissertation is built takes European integration as a form of asymmetrical power relations; the relation between an international organization, European Union, and a candidate country is conceptually

similar to the Gramsci's model of intrastate class-based cultural hegemony. The European Union, as objectively representing the dominant side, makes proposals as to the expected change the prospective member must take in order to satisfy political and other conditionality. The prospective member state enters this objectively unequal dialogue that is both material and symbolic; the apparent free will of entering such asymmetrical relation does not make its nature qualitatively different from the nature of intrastate class-based hegemony relation. Two among possible outcomes are that candidate country follows automatically EU conditionality or the structural-functional approach, or follows an alternative model of strategic accommodation to the foreign domination. These are only two among the possible outcomes. The asymmetric dialogue is open-ended, free to take different shapes and directions that escape these two main logics, socialization and rational choice, or any possible combination in between. This dialogue, as may happen with any social conversation, following the configurational theory of Norbert Elias (1939), may create another social reality that is not anticipated in advance by either of the main actors in the asymmetrical power relation; this will be a change that is different from either side's expectations of change, a change in the change that is however different from simply reproducing the status quo.

This research is not about testing existing theories on new findings. I emphasize what happens as opposed to what has to happen in relation to a particular hypothesis, which is part of inductive, not hypothetico-deductive, research. Therefore, I use references to particular theoretical models, institutional, strategic or constructivist, in an instrumental way, as a guide that helps me adjust to new information instead of using these models in a realist way, as true representation of reality in need of confirmation.

Having such theoretical references is not necessarily antithetic to an inductive research as long as the findings of this research do not remain straitjacketed to the preexisting models. The set of research methods should try to accommodate information that is potentially as diverse as possible, and not just look for facts that confirm or reject certain expectations. Generalizations, if any, must follow, and not precede the research. Yet, the following research is not positivist; it does not leave the facts to speak for themselves. The process of interpretation exists on different levels; it is part of the social reality that is an object of research, but it is also part of the research as an activity in itself. This interpretation stance requires that I hereafter answer the Max Weber's call to present explicitly my subjective choices, my premises, which are not neutral or even less natural, but subjectively imposed on reality.

One major subjective premise of this research is that the good functioning of democratic regimes requires not only the presence of formal institutions, such as rights, liberties, parties, elections, but also the presence, on the levels of both political elites and general population, of a particular political culture or ethic that helps the good functioning of these democratic institutions. "Ethic" here follows Weber's understanding that making sense of our own place within the world is a necessary part of the personal action within this world as a coherent system of significance. In this sense, the presence of formal institutions is a necessary but not always sufficient condition for the good functioning of democracy as a political regime.

Another major premise is that people use different symbolic avenues in order to adapt to the presence of new social and political institutions; they do not do this only automatically, as the theory of socialization argues, or only strategically, as rational

choice theory predicts. If that were that simple, then successful democracy would be either a matter of time or a matter of mathematic calculations. My alternative premise is that the symbolic world of social actors, a world that also includes political ethic, enjoys a relative autonomy in relation to formal institutions. These formal institutions and symbolic representations can find themselves in different phases of alignment. Their complete convergence into a stable democratic regime therefore becomes only an ideal-type, a theoretical possibility that does not need to be exactly replicated in the real world, but is useful in order to understand it.

The discovery of this potential and for most of the time real divergence between the formal institutions and the web of significance, between the material and symbolic, is rather old. It goes back in time at least for a half of century in the political theory literature; Almond and Verba in their seminal book *The Civic Culture* (1963) look at the degrees of congruence between political structures and political cultures. Being largely inspired by the mechanical logic of the theory of socialization, Almond and Verba call the difference between the subjective orientations toward the political system and its formal institutions, in particular toward liberal democratic institutions, a “cultural lag”. They reduce the problems that occur during democratization to the factors of resistance that the old norms, habits and attitudes play against the new institutions. It is a role of the formal education to eliminate gradually this resistance. Even if the research question in the present dissertation is close enough to that of Almond and Verba, namely the conditions of the possibility of emergence of “political culture” favorable to stabilize democratic regimes in post-authoritarian societies, I will not entirely adopt their vocabulary because of some of their theoretical assumptions and different, based on

quantitative methods, methodological design (Dittmer 1977); whenever I adopt their vocabulary I will define the concepts along more interpretative and constructivist lines.

In fact, the mechanical vision of the theory of socialization evacuates the role of agency as well as the possibility that symbolic representation may remain autonomous in relation to the formal institutions. Culture in this vision does not exist outside its past symbiosis with the old social and political institutions; the institutions, historically, change faster than culture, but the culture has to follow suit until they reach a new point of congruence, culture being a reflection of the formal institutions. In addition, faithful to their mechanical ontology, Almond and Verba, and their successors, particularly Ronald Inglehart (1997), use quantitative methods that help them better understand cultural transformations without being able to see either the very process of cultural transformation or the role of social actors as active players.

This research, on the contrary, emphasizes the possibility of using qualitative methods in order to observe the construction of a democratic ethic in the context of post-communist democratization under the influence of one particular factor, European integration. My assumption here is that this democratic ethic, as part of the larger political culture, may not be very present at the beginning of the democratic transition throughout society; when the old communist regime collapses, procedural democracy is far from being the only game in town. If it has been otherwise, if it would have been the only game in town, deeply internalized by everybody, there would be no need of discussing the possible pro-democratic role of European integration outside the context of formal institutional transfer; there would be no such symbolic pro-democratic role. If it had been the only game in town, a more pertinent question to ask would be why

communism as an antithesis to procedural democracy could have survived without corresponding political culture for so long or how could have been that communist institutions could have created such antithetical political culture, not only antithetical but surprisingly similar to that in the western liberal policies.

As far as the causal factor, European integration, is concerned, I made this choice purposefully. The democratization literature, as we see in the review, is contradictory as far as the effects of this factor on post-communist democratization are concerned. The authors have mutually exclusive expectations: from stable democracy through democratic erosion to authoritarian backlash. As a concept, European integration is a complex process that includes several different aspects; among them there are some quasi-mechanical and exclusively unilateral, such as institutional transfer and formal adoption of the *acquis communautaires*. There are, however, more voluntary and interactive elements; European integration is a project that exists also in the domain of symbolic representation. On this symbolic level there may be a certain fusion if not confusion between Europeanisation and EU-isation; people in post-communist countries may frequently amalgamate EU membership and civilizing project of “return to” or “the road to” Europe. This fusion should not be feared within framework of an interpretative research as opposed to positivist one; on the contrary, it represents new understanding of the process that comes out only within the framework of an interpretative research.

This symbolic representation of the EU integration process is an intentional construct of a new common social space, of a new “we” for the people that live in the post-communist countries that join or intend to join the EU. This new collective identity construct becomes possible within the framework of the asymmetrical power relations

between the EU and post-communist countries; this asymmetrical relation, however, does not automatically predetermine its features. It becomes possible at the junction of different factors; on the one hand, there are formal institutional transfers and norms of different kinds from EU toward accession countries; on the other hand, there is a reaction, not mechanical but creative, from the elites and ordinary citizens in the post-communist countries vis-à-vis this transfer. On certain levels, especially symbolic, the influence could potentially become mutual. Change could apply not only to the way a candidate country adopts the common identity, but also to the way this common identity feeds back upon its original source, thus changing the dominant actor himself.

I define European integration as a process broader than the simple act of joining European Union, although this is a key moment of this process. Integration is a dynamic process that takes several years that begin before the official membership, approximately with the identification of the integration as a realistic objective for the Union and for a potential candidate; this is a process that continues with formal negotiations on the conditionality of membership, and which ultimately ends after the formal membership, with the establishment of new supranational identity that supersedes the nation-state based identity in the candidate country. Without its subjective dimension this definition follows the conventional logic already present in the literature. The innovative element is adding an intersubjective dimension, elements of perception on individual and collective levels; these are the perceptions that local actors make of this process of European integration. Another innovative element is the possibility to change the source of this new identity, the European Union. Analyzing these perceptions requires penetrating the symbolic world of the actors, which is essential part of a research based on interpretation

of the actors' motivations. Here as well as in the definition of democracy, my position is not to put into question the existing definitions, but only to add interpretative and constructivist elements.

This research will therefore retrace the role of European integration in the construction of a new democratic ethic by observing the asymmetrical power relation between EU and political actors in some post-communist countries. The methodological design will necessarily be qualitative, with strong ethnographic tilting, because at the center of my research I put observing and interpreting an interactive process of constructing a symbolic representation of a new political community.

Ethnographic techniques are not the first choice in political analysis. A few words here are therefore necessary to justify such a choice. Ethnography is a social research based on the close-up, on-the-ground observation of people and institutions in real time and space, in which the investigator embeds himself near (or within) the phenomenon so as to detect how and why agents on the scene act, think and feel the way they do (Wacquant 2003, 5). Ethnography brings field workers into direct contact with processes instead of filtering that knowledge through other people's testimony, written records, and artifacts of interaction (Tilly, 2007). Ethnographic techniques vary from intrusive, such as in-depth interviews to unobtrusive, such as observations concerning residues and consequences of interaction (Ibid.). In general, however, ethnography is not a mainstream way of doing research in political science. Out of hundreds of articles that were published in *American Journal of Political Science* and *American Political Science Review* between 1996 and 2005, only one article relied on ethnographic techniques (Auyero and Joseph 2007, 1). Most "methods" courses at Ph.D.-granting institutions do not cover

ethnography (Bayard de Volo and Schatz 2004, 268). Most ethnographic research is done in other social disciplines than political science (Auyero and Joseph 2007). When done in political science, most authors are not trained in political science, but rather in anthropology and sociology. Yet, as a form of social research, it is well suited to an inductive form of research, a research that looks for answers on a micro level (Bayard de Volo and Schatz 2004, 268). These authors also state that such underutilization of ethnographic techniques is not warranted. In the hands of an interpretivist, ethnography is “the art and science of describing a group or culture,” the aim being the explication of meaning (Fetterman 1989, 11; Geertz 1973, 5). For a positivist, it is a tool to get the causal story right (Laitin 1998). Ethnography is readily employed to test hypotheses to determine whether and how well general theory applies to a specific case. For example, James Scott (1985) and Susan Stokes (1995) both use ethnography, combined with other methods, to “test” the Gramscian theory of hegemony (Bayard de Volo and Schatz 2004, 270).

Ethnography, unlike other methodological approaches, such as quantitative studies, is not very rigid as far as its design protocol is concerned. Some examples from ethnographic studies on the EU will show this; I will use them as a framework of theoretical and methodological options for situating my own research. Favell (2008) uses ethnographic techniques in order to make sense of the counterintuitive phenomenon of the almost complete absence of migrant populations in the EU from other EU countries despite significant institutional and strategic incentives. Free movement of people being one of cornerstones of EU integration, the authors is puzzled about why less than 2 percent (2008, X) of the EU population are such migrants and why most of them do not

integrate within new societies but instead return to their homelands. To answer this question he interviews 60 expatriates in three major EU cities: Amsterdam, London, and Brussels. The author follows the inductive method of demonstration, where particular types of answers, giving meaning to the research phenomenon, reach a level of saturation. The author does not triangulate his findings as a method of validation by using alternative techniques. The theoretical framing of his findings is as diverse as the social and ethnic background of his informants; in a bibliographic essay at the end of the study, Favell quotes works in sociology, history, political economy, nationalism, language, philosophy, migration studies, social mobility, globalization, EU studies, and urban studies. Without this theoretical framing, his study would be just an accumulation of facts.

Quite different from the previous study is the ethnographic study by Medrano (2010). He studies attitudes to European integration in three West European nations: Germany, Spain, and United Kingdom. The goal of his study is to confirm the hypothesis that different attitudes of ordinary people and members of the local elite toward European integration are shaped by the histories and cultures of the countries and regions in which they live. Unlike Favell, who uses inductive approach, Medrano works within a hypothetico-deductive framework. For this reason, the ethnographic interviews that Medrano makes (160 interviews in six cities, two for each country of study) are not identical to the interviews made by Favell. Both authors look at them as a technique to extract meanings. For Favell, within the inductive approach, the range of meanings is potentially limitless; in fact, the only limit is his intellectual background that makes him see the findings from a particular point of view. For Medrano, the meanings are pre-structured either as confirming or rejecting his working hypothesis. Therefore, Medrano

assures validity of his findings by using triangulation with other, independent techniques, such as content analysis of newspapers, novels, school textbooks, and head-of-state Christmas and New Year's addresses. Medrano's methodology is not limited to qualitative techniques, including ethnography. He also provides statistical validation of some of the trends in order to show social representation of some of the main findings; e.g., despite the fluctuations within each country, the attitudes that membership in EU is a good thing in Spain remain 6 to 13 times higher than in the United Kingdom (2010, 241). This validation is not per se enough to confirm the historic institutionalism hypothesis, but nevertheless is useful to show present-day differences in attitudes between case studies.

My methodology differs substantially from both Favell's and Medrano's. I follow, like Favell, an inductive path of demonstration, which opens several theoretical possibilities for framing findings. Nevertheless, like Medrano, I triangulate my findings as a form of validation. Unlike Medrano, my working hypotheses, drawn from literature reviews and alternative theoretical foundations, are not fixed and ready to be tested. I use them, more like the way Favell does, as orientation in identifying different meanings. I finish my dissertation, like Medrano does, with statistical validation. Working in an interpretative environment, however, I will not hesitate to point out the limitations of this statistical validation, which presupposes rigid positivist ontology and epistemology. This validation, therefore, will serve at the same time as confirmation of some of my findings and as a ground for discussing the advantages of an alternative interpretative research design.

The literature on EU influence on post-communist countries tilts toward the effects on institutional development and on strategic incentives that are limited to the national political elite, a phenomenon called by some authors “institutionalist turn” (Jacquot and Woll 2003, 1). This dissertation takes another approach, focusing not only on members of the political elite but also on ordinary citizens in countries newly admitted into the EU or hoping to become EU members. Such an approach has some pedigree in the literature (Jacquot and Woll 2003; Pasquier and Weisbein 2004; Georgakakis and Weisbein 2010; Woll and Sophie Jacquot 2010), which warrants being mentioned and briefly discussed. This is also another way to position this dissertation within the literature.

Pasquier and Weisbein, in their Manifesto for political sociology of integration (2004, 13), call for a new research program that will radically depart from the traditional approach based on functionalism of European construction. Instead of focusing only on institutional actors, the focus will be on the plurality of social actors. The authors claim that European topics may not always coincide with the institutional context of the EU. Instead of analyzing how EU politics are put in motion, therefore, the researchers should focus on how these politics are socially (re)constructed. Finally, they put an emphasis on the cognitive approach as a key causal mechanism of articulating the political process with social actors. On the basis of these premises, Woll and Sophie Jacquot (2010, 9) speak about “usages” of Europe, defined as social practices that seize the European Union as a set of opportunities, be they institutional, ideological, political or organizational. To draw the borders of this sociological approach, Georgakakis and

Weisbein (2010, 94), using the terminology of Pierre Bourdieu, speak about the need to understand social phenomena as an encounter between dispositions to act (*habitus*), and so-called relational contexts or fields.

The political sociology turn in studying Europe, embraces, on the one hand, post-Marxist sociology that keeps unequal distribution of social opportunities but negates the paramount role of economy in articulating social spheres. On the other hand, it incorporates post-structuralism that explains significance of acts and processes by their larger social context instead of any fixed relation between them and particular meaning acceptable for all actors. These two key elements are based on positivist, if not essentialist foundations, not on hermeneutical philosophical foundations. This is the reason why this new approach focuses with such energy on cognitive factors. My dissertation, on the contrary, uses different philosophical bases: hermeneutics. The interpretations of reality, therefore, are not the means to understand what the unique reality is, but are multiple ways of articulating a social context and an individual action through alternative ways of significance. To give an illustration for this difference of both approaches: when Jacquot and Woll (2003) speak about different “usages” of Europe, strategic, cognitive, and legitimizing, they speak about different levels of understanding that are not mutually incompatible, but may appear in different social contexts. They still think about Europe as one, with its meaning as universal. If the different “usages” were based on different meanings, and led to different behaviors, and ultimately to plurality of Europes, symbolically coinciding within one space and time, this would clearly be an hermeneutic way of studying Europe.

European integration will remain in this research largely confined to its influence on post-communist democratic culture. Although it presupposes the possibility of reversed influence, of a construction of a European Union on symbolic level that is different from the Union before the integration process, this provocative research will remain outside the current project. Despite its absence, I will always keep in mind that integration is a two-way highway.

The democratic regime, as any other form of political governance, has its institutional, formal and relatively easily observable side. To see it, it suffices to ask questions such as who governs, why, using which means, and following which procedures? Procedural, minimalist and anti-subjective definitions largely dominate the contemporary literature on this issue. This approach is associated with the work of Joseph Schumpeter (1975 (1942)). He identifies democracy as an institutional arrangement aiming to arrive at political decisions in which the individuals have the power to take decisions in the framework of competitive struggle for the popular vote. Huntington (1991) and Horowitz (1991) share this procedural vision. According to them, this more recent definition replaces the traditional vision that links this regime with the popular will or with common good. Following the logic of Robert Dahl (1961), Huntington and Horowitz declare a country democratic if there are universal-suffrage elections in addition to liberties of expression, of the press, and of political associations. Przeworski (1991, 10) also defines democracy as a system in which parties can lose elections and accept the electoral results without trying to change the nature of the regime. He also identifies democracy as a system of institutionalized uncertainty (1991, 14), or a regime where the rules are predictable, but not the electoral results.

On the basis of this procedural and minimalist definition, the indexes used most often, in order to determine the nature of a particular political regime, are those of the *Freedom House* and *Polity IV Project*. The institutional elements they look at to measure the regimes are the presence of formal political institutions, the rights, opportunities, and events that reveal unconstitutional political change. This accent on procedures leads toward a certain favoritism in presenting institutional explanations. This definition of democracy therefore completely eliminates the question of intersubjective perceptions of the regime by the local population.

For this reason, a new enlarged definition becomes necessary in order to give equal chance to alternative theoretical models, especially interpretative models. Providing a definition of democracy, which will not be short and elegant, akin Weber's definition of the state, but will also include interactional and cultural elements together with the institutional and rational elements, constitutes another small contribution of this research. Therefore, while defining democracy, I start from the premise that *it is an intermingled combination of material and cultural elements; as far as the cultural dimension is concerned, it requires that social actors construct and maintain a dominant intersubjective understanding of the nature of social relations based on reciprocity, to the point of possible reversing of the existing power relations*. By using the term "construct" I here acknowledge the theoretical contribution of Foucault's definition of political relations as an action aiming to change other actor's action.

In that sense, democracy is not a static political regime, but rather a dynamic process and an opportunity that at the same time tries to break the stable social relations and prevents the establishment of other, not reciprocal relations of domination; the

sudden death of some procedural democratic regimes comes out of the voting booths. In other words, democracy keeps the chance of reversing any social and political arrangement or decision but does not allow for permanent elimination of the opportunities to change the other actors' actions; it is not "one voter, one vote, only once".

This new enlarged definition of democracy does not contradict at all the conventional procedural definition of democracy. To the contrary, in a sense it gives a reason and a new sense to Przeworski's institutionalized uncertainty; this new definition enlarges the minimalist procedural and reductionist vision by adding an entirely new intersubjective dimension; in order for democracy to survive, political actors must accept and deeply interiorize the institutionalized uncertainty. If the minimalist definition looks exclusively at the political competition, the new definition explains how this competition becomes possible as a result of a particular political culture of the actors. Given that this new enlarged definition of democracy does not contradict the conventional definitions, this research does not make claims of developing a new democratic theory. It simply makes explicit the cultural dimension that underpins the procedural definition.

Following on the steps of Max Weber, I understand democracy not just as a mechanic; this mechanical dimension, although necessarily important, may or may not coexist with a democratic ethic. This "ethic" or life guiding represents a particular understanding of the social world that includes consequences for the actors' behavior that they consider as logically following upon this understanding. In a democratic world as an "ethic", exactly as in team sports, political victories are never definitive and the dominant actors can also find themselves among the vanquished. This is a world with its proper

norms, including taboos, a world in constant construction, born in specific circumstances; this world is not designed to last forever but only as long as its supporting “ethic” allows. European integration, therefore, can influence democracy in the post-communist countries by also influencing this “ethic”, this specific democratic culture.

The democratic regime, therefore, has also a cultural intersubjective side. I am therefore, in the framework of this research, not interested in the formal institutional side unless it is linked with the way people understand the political regime; my primary interests lie with the intersubjective aspects of democracy, with the possibility to construct democratic ethic that helps the good functioning of democratic institutions.

The democratic ethic, therefore, has to match logically this procedural understanding of democracy; this ethic must elevate as a norm a certain political behavior that respects this procedural stability and unpredictability of electoral outcomes. Furthermore, beyond the norms that respect the democratic procedures, a citizen must feel civically competent, a concept that recalls Almond and Verba’s vocabulary of *The Civic Culture* (1963). In other words, the democratic ethic requires that the citizens understand and, for lack of a better metaphor, domesticate the political life, that they feel powerful enough to act and to make a difference, but not powerful enough to eliminate the rights of the others to act and to make a difference. This feeling of being civically competent and sufficiently but not too powerful is directly linked to the possibility of constructing a new “we” that follows our social needs, in order to influence the world through collective political action. The democratic ethic, as we can see, is a complex phenomenon that assembles different relatively autonomous elements. I should add a third element on top of the respect for procedures and the feeling of being civically

competent. It is the possibility that a person can cooperate with another person in order to produce collective political action. An a priori symbolic elimination of people based on their race, ethnic origin, mother tongue, religion, or even level of education and social status, greatly reduces the possibility of constructing a viable democratic ethnic. Conceiving the possibility of any type of collective action is however not tantamount to democratic ethnic. The presence of vertical mafia-like associations may be a signal that not any type of collective action is beneficial to the good functioning of democratic institutions.

In brief, the democratic ethic, as an important element in the good functioning of the democratic regime, represents a complex of cultural norms that guide people toward respecting the institutional procedures, toward increased possibility of feeling civically competent within the national political life, and toward increased possibility of joining forces with other citizens for collective political action based on the principle of equal rights. Because of the complexity of this phenomenon, the democratic ethic, and its deep embedding in the symbolic representation of political elites, civil servants and ordinary citizens, its presence cannot be measured with discrete indicators; it can be filtered through the global interpretations of their acts and words using predominantly a set of ethnographic techniques that will be described in more detail in the following chapter.

II.2. On the choice of cases. Bulgaria and F.Y.R. of Macedonia

Regarding the choice of cases in the post-communist world under the influence of the EU, the literature (Vachudova 2005; Levitsky and Way 2005a; Bideleux 2001) shows

a certain trend to use predominantly illustrations based on the development of Central Europe (Poland, Hungary, the Czech republic, Slovakia). These illustrations, with the exception of Slovakia, were mainly of countries that were considered democratic already before the start of European integration; therefore it would be much more difficult to discern the exact role of EU among the other factors that influenced this political trend. This is a reason why I will be focusing on the Balkan region, a region in which democratization, especially in its enlarged definition, both institutional and interpretative, has been and still is slower and more painful. In this region the cases are not over-determined as in the region of Central Europe; over-determined meaning that too many theories can explain certain effects such as democratization.

Bulgaria is an interesting case as a principal field study; this country has gone through the entire process of European integration; it has entered the EU as a member in January 2007. In addition, this country defies the simplistic logic of institutional transfer from West to East. Even after its formal EU membership, Bulgaria continues to pose serious questions regarding its democratic quality. The Former Yugoslav Republic (F.Y.R.) of Macedonia, which is a candidate for EU membership, is still in the “waiting room” pending the official start of accession negotiations; for diachronic analytical purposes this latter country is therefore a good candidate for a secondary field study. The following sections offer brief portraits of these two countries in order to show their relevance for the study.

II.2.a. Bulgaria

Bulgaria as a state is a symbolic heir to the medieval kingdom bearing the same name. Regarding the territory and population, Bulgaria is a middle-sized Balkan country;

the population is approximately 7 million. It is located geographically between Romania on north, Serbia and Macedonia on west, Greece and Turkey on south. According to national statistics, the main ethnic group is Bulgarian (83.9%) and the main minority groups are composed of Turks (9.4%) and Roma (4.7%). The predominant religion is Orthodox Christianity (82.6%), followed by Islam (12.2%). The only official language is Bulgarian.

In the past, save for the periods of the medieval Bulgarian kingdom, the Bulgarian territory was part of multinational empires: Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman. The country became an independent principality in 1878 and an independent kingdom in 1908. During the two world wars, Bulgaria fought on the side of Germany, and, in consequence, lost the wars. During the Cold War Bulgaria was part of the Soviet Union-dominated Eastern bloc. The country was part of the Soviet Union dominated economic cooperation organizations CMEA and of the military Warsaw Pact. It took part in the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. The political regime between 1944 and 1989 followed the one-party model with a strong leader personality; this personality for most of the communist period was that of Todor Zhivkov, in power between 1954 and 1989.

After the forced political retirement of Todor Zhivkov in late 1989 and the dissolution of the CMEA and the Warsaw Pact in 1991, Bulgaria asked for admission in many western military and economic organizations. The country became member of the Council of Europe in 1992, of NATO in 2004, and of the European Union in 2007.

The very beginning of the post-communist transition was heavily marked by the political domination of the ideological heirs of the communist party; they won the first competitive election in 1990. The first political transition occurred in 1991 following a

parliament election. The parliament elections in 1994, 1997, 2001, 2005 and 2009 were won by parties in opposition to the incumbent governments. The president of the republic, elected by popular vote, was largely a ceremonial office; the presidential elections were won by incumbents (2007) as well as by challengers (1997 and 2002). Taking aside the first post-communist year of political transition, when the country was marked as an “intermediary” political regime, Bulgaria was always considered afterwards as a “free” political regime following the *Freedom House* annual assessments. Not only Bulgaria was considered to be “free”, the stability as a “free” regime was always remarkable.

The literature on the post-communist political development does not consider Bulgaria as a particularly interesting case. Such treatment of relative neglect applies with equal force to the entire group of countries of Southeastern Europe. The journal *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, which is among the mostly quoted in the field of post-communist transition, mentions only three times the name of this country in the titles between 1993 and 2009. In comparison, the same journal mentions the name of Romania 11 times, and that of Poland 57 times in the titles for the same time period. Bulgaria, when mentioned, appears most often in the literature as an illustration for certain phenomena and regional and sub-regional trends, such as Orthodox Christian countries, parliamentary regimes, multiethnic population, strong political parties, and strong ex-communist party presence. Bulgaria is however relatively rarely used as a main field study on post-communist political democratization.

The post-communist literature that focuses on the communist and pre-communist legacy, already analyzed in the literature review, neglects Bulgaria as a special case. Even

within the group of optimists (Huntington 1991; Brzezinski 2002) who link the democratization with some historic legacies, Bulgaria, together with the entire Balkan region, remains in the gray zone. Its predominant religious cult and its social values, both economic and political (Berend 2007) are considered as contradicting the logic of democratization. In general, this group of authors does not have high expectations regarding a possible post-communist democratization in Bulgaria.

Bulgaria as a post-communist country with some potential chances for democratization appears for the first time in the literature in the framework of institutional choice approach. This part of the literature (Petrovic 2008) rejects the premise according to which the legacy not only plays against the chances for democratization, but also determines the slowdown of the same process regarding the Balkan countries, in particular. What matters much more is the political system choice reflected in the post-communist constitutional arrangement (McGregor 1996). Regarding Bulgaria, however, this choice would have played an ambivalent role regarding democratization. This country has a popularly elected president; according to some authors (Linz 1990; Fish 2001; Frye 2002) such constitutional arrangement should present some dangers for democracy. On the other hand, however, Bulgaria has parliamentary political system; according to other authors (Ishiyama et Velten 1998) this fact should play in favor of democracy and offset the dangers of a popularly elected president. These predominantly good expectations regarding democratic development match well the excellent note given to Bulgaria by *Freedom House* as far as the democratic quality is concerned.

This excellent note is independently confirmed in the framework of euro-optimist literature that focuses mainly on the external factors. Noutcheva and Belchev (2008) speak about this country, in a tandem with Romania, as good examples of “successful laggards”. Following on the steps of the Vachudova model (2005), these authors declare to have confirmed the hypothesis that EU breaks the vicious circle of domestic political and economic interests that struggle against the political regime liberalization. Spirova (2008) attributes the democratic changes in Bulgaria partly to the EU influence over the ex-communist parties through the channels of the European socialist party. The confirmations made by Noutcheva and Belchev, and Spirova regarding the successful political transition in Bulgaria, however, rely only on the fact that the country has been successful in gaining EU membership. These authors assume that the EU has become an ultimate arbiter as far as democratic development is concerned, independently from the domestic popular understanding of the same phenomenon. Emerson (2005-6) observes this potential gap between the perceptions made in Brussels, on the one hand, and those of the post-communist country population, on the other hand. This author points out that this gap comes mainly from the presence of different definitions of democracy. The EU considers a particular country democratic if Brussels sees the presence of particular set of institutions that operate in this country. The citizens, on the other hand, attribute much more importance to questions like political participation and its effects on their well-being.

Even for the euro-optimist literature, which attributes largely positive role to European integration regarding democratization, Bulgaria shows some major challenges. Ganev (2001; 2006; 2007) shows how the state functions for most of the time only to

hide special economic interests. The elections look more like a commercial exchange in which the votes go toward those willing to pay more. Andreev (2006) adds that the political system methodically excludes minorities from the decision-making. If Bulgaria, and Romania were admitted to join EU, this was not done because they had satisfied all political criteria of membership (Bojkov 2004). On the contrary, this author suggests that EU continues to consider these countries as problematic, which is the main reason to put them in a different category from eight other countries of East-Central Europe allowed to join EU in 2004. For Bojkov, this is an intentional signal to the other Balkan countries, which are still waiting to begin with the accession negotiations, the signal is that the EU has the political will when necessary to make generous gifts or to punish the post-communist countries.

As far as Bulgarian political culture is concerned, some academic texts (Georgiev 2007; Blagoeva-Taneva 2002; Cemrek 2004) have certain key points in common. They use the analytical tools of Almond and Verba (1963) and look at culture as an aggregate quantitative result of individual attitudes toward the political system and its elements, such as democracy as a type of regime and key political institutions, such as the government, police, army, church, and also political parties. These texts also share the analytical premise of Bulgarian political culture as an obstacle for developing modern democratic institutions and political behavior. Georgiev (2007, 16) considers western democratic culture and Bulgarian political culture as fundamentally incompatible. Therefore, the process of political transformation includes elimination of inherited cultural traits, such as a sense of fatalism, lack of creativity and downplaying collective action. Blagoeva-Taneva (2002) has a more flexible vision of Bulgarian political culture,

which is not unequivocally incompatible with Western democratic norms. For her, post-communist transition is a ground where three different cultural trends are colliding: revival of pre-communist values, which are predominantly *parochial*, to use the vocabulary of Almond and Verba; establishment of new democratic values, which are *participant*; and relapse into totalitarian values, which are *subject*. According to this author, the relative weight of each of these trends will depend on institutional choices following communism; in that sense, EU integration will strengthen the participant trend within Bulgarian political culture. As long as EU integration enters the scene through imposing new institutions, all these authors share a prospective optimistic vision regarding development of democratic procedures and political culture, from mainly parochial and subject to more participant; this vision is prospective because the texts were first published before Bulgaria joined the EU.

As far as the political system is concerned, the EU continues to exercise pressure over Bulgaria to promote substantial reforms in domains that have direct or indirect effects on the political regime's quality: the judicial system, the fight against corruption, the fight against organized crime, money laundering, and financial control. EU used the lack of progress in these domains as a pretext to stop financing several projects in Bulgaria since 2008. This country that according to the institutional criteria should not pose any particular problem regarding the democratic quality, with the EU membership being proof that such quality is met, is indeed very problematic on this particular issue. This makes Bulgaria a good candidate to study the effects of European integration on the democratization; this study is to be done on the basis of an alternative theoretical

approach, an approach that does not identify democracy with only the presence of a set of formal institutions.

The choice of Bulgaria as a main field allows also using interpretative techniques that require the intimate knowledge of the local language; Bulgarian is my mother tongue. To eliminate the danger that some findings do not exceed the Bulgarian borders, i.e. to make an idiographic study instead of a comparative study, after determining the main trajectory of the EU influence in Bulgaria, I will present the results coming from a secondary field in Macedonia. This is a country whose spoken language is close to Bulgarian, which allows me to use the same set of qualitative and ethnographic techniques as in Bulgaria.

II.2.b. F.Y.R. of Macedonia

F.Y.R. of Macedonia, as the name rightly suggests, is a former Yugoslav republic, among the smallest as far as the territory and population is concerned; the population of the latter is approximately 2 million. Aside from the border with Greece on south, the F.Y.R. of Macedonia is geographically entirely surrounded by post-communist countries: Albania on the west, Serbia and Kosovo on the north, and Bulgaria on the east. According to the official statistic, the predominant ethnic group is Macedonian (64.2%) and the most important ethnic minority is Albanian (25.2%). The main religious faith is Orthodox Christianity (64.7%), followed by Islam (33.3%). The official languages are Macedonian and Albanian; the latter is official only in some regions. Other languages, the Turk, the Serb, and the Romani, are recognized officially in the municipalities in which they are spoken by at least 20% of the local population.

In the past, the territory of the country was part of multinational empires: Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman. The name “Macedon” was used for the first time by an ancient Greek kingdom. During the Balkan wars of 1912-1913 the Ottoman region of Macedonia was divided among Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia. The current territory of Macedonia was occupied by Serbia and subsequently became part of Yugoslavia. During the Second World War, Yugoslavia was occupied by the Axis powers; the current territory of Macedonia was divided between Bulgaria and Albania; the latter was under Italian occupation at that time. After the war, Macedonia was returned back to Yugoslavia as a constituent republic. In 1963, the Yugoslav federation and the republic replaced the middle names “peoples” for “socialist”. The political regime between 1945 and 1991 followed the one-party communist model. Up to 1980 the strong personal leader Tito dominated the political regime. After his death in 1980, the regimes in both Yugoslavia and the republic were transformed into collective presidencies.

It was the only former Yugoslav republic to separate peacefully from the federation in 1991 following a referendum; this republic, however, kept open the option to renew the federal links with the other Yugoslav republics; this option was part of the referendum question wording. The country did not take part in any war on the territory of the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s. From the early 1990s, a special United Nations military force was stationed in Macedonia to monitor and protect its territorial integrity.

From the beginning of the post-communist period up to the end of the 1990s, Kiro Gligorov, a former high-ranking communist official, as a president of the republic, dominated the political executive. The first political transition occurred in 1998 and 1999; a large political coalition, led by Ljubco Georgievski, won both the parliament and the

presidential election. Political transitions occurred also after the parliament elections in 2002 and 2006, and after the presidential election in 2004 and 2009.

The country became a Council of Europe member in 1995. The republic was also a member of the NATO Council for Euro-Atlantic partnership and the Partnership for Peace. The country had applied to join NATO and took part in the alliance's Action plan for the candidate countries. The relations between NATO and the country were good despite the rejections of the application for membership due to the unsolved name issue with Greece. The republic had also applied for EU membership in 2004. In 2005 it was officially identified as a candidate country. Up to now (August 2011), Macedonia had not begun accession negotiations with the EU despite the European Commission's recommendations to begin such negotiations in 2009 (*European Commission* 2010b). During the post-communist period, *Freedom House* considered Macedonia as an intermediary political regime; the country, according to *Freedom House*, showed significant level of stability between the two poles of democracy and authoritarianism.

As far as the presence of the country in the post-communist literature is concerned, this country is even less visible than Bulgaria. The journal *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, between 1993 and 2009, did not mention even once this country in its articles' titles. Some authors even describe this country as a semi-protectorate of the great powers and the international organizations (Agh, 1999).

A comparison between Bulgaria and the F.Y.R. of Macedonia will allow a diachronic analysis given that these two countries are objectively located at two different stages of European integration; Bulgaria is a EU member and F.Y.R. of Macedonia is still a candidate. Bulgaria has passed through formal procedures that would generally

resemble the procedures applied to the F.Y.R. of Macedonia before the country becomes a EU member.

II.3. Other methodological issues

This research looks at retracing the changes in the political ethics in Bulgaria and the F.Y.R. of Macedonia and at the construction of a new democratic ethic under the influence of one well defined factor, European integration. That is why the techniques I use focus on the symbolic world of people that may potentially express such a democratic ethic. Retracing the change refers to identification of discursive processes, debates, narratives, symbolic identities that may eventually take part in the creation of a democratic ethic in the context of questioning the old identities and policies, a process that can be ultimately retraced to the influence of European integration. It should be clear by now that I am not looking to find and measure correlations within the framework of quantitative or quasi-quantitative study; I am exploring a symbolic world undergoing change, which directions and goals may or may not follow any official agenda, neither EU nor domestic.

The proposed study is ethnographic and inductive. I start from the holist premise that any society represents an interrelated system, including both material and symbolic elements, and that the symptoms of existence of different influences, as far as they really exist, can be retraced in different sub-systems, from the relations between the ordinary citizens to the official statements of the head of state. A study that is ethnographic and inductive at the same time is always potentially infinite. It is always possible that a new key element found in a remote domain completely changes the way I interpret the already

collected information. Even with such significant methodological problem, the findings, as impermanent as they might be, represent a gain to knowledge, especially when a point of saturation is reached between the information collected using different techniques and different sources: the point of saturation is reached when the level of understanding does not increase with the accumulation of new information. As an ethnographic approach adopts the holist ontological social vision, the different techniques to collect information increase the possibility to reach such point of saturation, when the information gathered, using different sources, converge toward a coherent interpretation. This possibility explains my personal preference toward a set of techniques that look at information in different domains instead of focusing only in one particular area.

The research techniques, which will be presented in greater detail in the following chapter, vary according to the level of analysis: political personalities, civil servants, and ordinary citizens. As far as the political leaders are concerned, I put the accent on the qualitative political discourse analysis triangulated with their political behavior and some interviews that contain biographical elements. Given that the sources ready to reveal the significance of European integration are always in flux in any country and are virtually unlimited in number, I will focus mostly on events and discourses of recent years that I consider particularly revealing regarding the evolution of the democratic ethic. As far as civil servants and ordinary citizens are concerned, biographical interviews represent the main research technique. The goal is to follow the life narratives with European integration being always at the background as a constant point of individual reference. Within semi-structured interviews people narrate freely as much as possible, but also in response to orienting questions, their personal lives and professional evolution. Following

their life narratives I extract the main infrastructure of their political culture and the possible presence of democratic ethic before and after the beginning of European integration; these two periods are separated by the subjective perception of the persons interviewed. I try to understand the way people understand this integration. In the Bulgarian case this subjective evaluation of European integration and its effects is done retrospectively; this particularity requires another case, which for this study is the F.Y.R. of Macedonia, in order to compare diachronically the same process, this time prospectively.

As part of an ethnographic study, I use also techniques that add information to that extracted from the interviews. The goal is to put in broader context or to triangulate, the statements made in the interviews. Among such contexts, I choose visual representations that show the beginning and the development of the feeling of European integration as a new identity-shaping factor. Last but not least, a non-participant observation will help immersing in the particular cultural environment. This observation will help asking additional questions that are specific for each country and will be a necessary, although not only, way of triangulating the information accumulated through other techniques.

II.4. On the hypotheses

Although the design of this dissertation is more interpretative than explicative, and inductive rather than hypothetico-deductive, for the sake of parsimony the complex relation between European integration and the eventual construction of a democratic ethic

may be articulated under the form of causal hypotheses inspired by different theoretical perspectives. These hypotheses will not be mechanically tested in the framework of the positivist paradigm; they will rather orient the interpretative approach. The hypotheses presented here are but a few examples showing the logic of each theoretical perspective. These hypotheses will summarize the alternative model described in the first section; the evaluation of the conventional models in the literature, institutionalism and elite strategic action, will be measured in the findings accumulated through my field observations and interviews. Hypothesis H1 will also serve for evaluating the usefulness of the conventional cultural model or the model of cultural prerequisites for democracy; hypothesis H2 will allow for evaluation of the aptness of the model of strategic action regarding not only the elites' actions, but also the ordinary people's actions in their acceptance of the democratic norms and behavior.

H1: According to the socialization theory, the democratic ethic will vary as a function of the time and intensity of experience that the political actors have with the democratic norms and institutions introduced following the progress of the European Union integration process. More particularly, the expectations are that:

H1a: The older people, more particularly communist party members and the old regime civil servants will be less inclined to articulate norms and values that corroborate with the democratic ethic, than young people, socialized under more democratic regime, or longstanding dissidents to the communist regime.

H1b: People having been exposed to contacts, through their political and professional responsibilities or through living abroad, to the institutions and norms of the European

union will be more susceptible to articulate norms and values that correspond to the democratic ethic than those exclusively integrated in the local social and professional environment.

H1c: Bulgarians on all levels, political figures, civil servants, and ordinary citizens will be more susceptible to articulate norms and values that correspond to the democratic ethic than their Macedonian homologues; the latter being less advanced in the process of European integration.

H2: According to the instrumental logic of the theory of rational choice, the expectations are that the democratic ethic varies as a function of the calculated political interest expressed by different categories of top politicians, civil servants and ordinary citizens. More specifically, the expectations are that:

H2a: The politicians and the ordinary citizens who perceive European integration as compatible with their political interests, taking and keeping the power, will be more susceptible to articulate norms and values that correspond to the democratic ethic than those who find European integration incompatible with their political interests.

H2b: In case of a conflict of interests between the European Union and the post-communist country, politicians and ordinary citizens who side with the EU will be more susceptible to articulate norms and values that correspond to the democratic ethic than those who keep identifying exclusively with their native country for strategic reasons.

H2c: Bulgarians on all levels, political figures, civil servants, and ordinary citizens will be more susceptible to articulate norms and values that correspond to the democratic ethic than their Macedonian homologues; the latter will be less interested to articulate

similar norms and values given the uncertainties related to the process of European integration.

H3: According to the constructivist approach to political culture transformation, the expectations are that a democratic ethic could emerge as a result of rearticulating normative values and identities in response to a dominant interlocutor, the European Union and its representatives, which implies, but is not limited to, rearticulating and redirecting socially constructible emotions such as fears, inferiority complex, shame and self-justification. More specifically, the expectations will be that:

H3a: Those politicians and ordinary citizens that rearticulate their collective identity, by creating a new « we », following intensive self-questioning, by including pan-European elements, will be more susceptible to articulate norms and values that correspond to the democratic ethic than those who continue their principal identification to their native country and do not experience self-questioning of this identity.

H3b: People who experience collective shame or guilt and the need to justify their decision borrowing from dominant discourses that are originally not theirs, as a result of the EU critique against their native country, will be more susceptible to articulate norms and values that correspond to the democratic ethic than those that emotionally distance themselves from the EU.

H3c: People who find the EU and its discourse on European integration a prototype for better understanding and a guideline for resolving their social problems will be more susceptible to articulate norms and values that correspond to the democratic ethic than those who see the EU as a factor that makes this understanding even more difficult.

H3d: Given the possible different sets of cultural dialogues between the dominant authority, the European Union, and the two candidate countries, Bulgaria and the F.R.Y. of Macedonia, the results in the latter will not be a simple replica of the earlier Bulgarian development; by the same token, the development in Bulgaria will not be the future image of the F.Y.R. of Macedonia. Instead of diachronism, European integration in these two countries may look more like a parallelism. On this point the alternative model radically parts from the conventional models, institutional and strategic, which consider Bulgaria as a more or less advanced version of Macedonia on the unique European track.

II.5. Exempla: Gogol's comedy *The Governmental Inspector (Revizor)*

The alternative model's expectations, relational, interpretative and constructivist, is based on a premise that the system of significance, not only of the main actors, but also of those below them, the ordinary people, are contributing toward the observed political behavior through construction of new social norms; in other words, the democratic quality in the post-communist countries influenced by European integration should include also perceptions of this process in the symbolic world at both levels, the political elite and the general population. This perception, not as a static set of psychological attitudes, but as a dynamic process of identity change, does not take the ordinary actors as simple learners or as simple *homines economici*. The symbolic world, being relatively autonomous and self-sustained, acts as an intervening factor in the framework of institutional diffusion, changing its timing, shapes and direction.

For the purpose of theoretical clarification I present here a short analysis of the comedy by a classic of Russian literature, Nikolaj Gogol, *The Governmental Inspector*

(*Revizor*). This analysis follows the medieval and more recent genre of *exempla*, a method that uses stories that include obvious moral and other practical teachings. The main reason to use this comedy as an *exempla* is that it shows particularly well how an external factor, including the perception of this factor, can influence the behavior and probably also the identity in a system of social relations, and how this influence can be interpreted following different theoretical approaches, some conventional and some alternative, that, surprisingly, look similar to the main approaches in this research.

Russia, 1836. A calm and rather boring city in a provincial backwater, where corruption reigns in all sizes, forms and shapes, is under shock. The local administration, beginning with the governor, is making preparations to meet the governmental inspector coming from the capital Saint Petersburg on a special mission to their city. To add to the confusion, the governmental inspector is believed to be staying in the city without revealing his true identity. There is only one step between shock and blindness, and everybody believes to have identified the dreadful inspector in the person of a young and careless debauchee who has just arrived at a local hotel.

The first reaction of the administration, including that of the local governor and his entourage: the judge, the director of the schools and hospitals, and the postal chief, is to make a common front in order to prevent that revelations of irregularities come out during the undetermined time of inspection. Once his identity is supposed to have been revealed, everybody passionately competes to gain his favors, even if this could ultimately betray the front of solidarity within the administration. The young debauchee, who at the beginning does not properly grasp the situation, does not wait long before

taking full profit from it. Gifts, sumptuous parties, money flow from all sides. Those who have suffered enough from the local administration and its arbitrariness, from the simple citizens and the shopkeepers, also profit from the inspector's presence to ask for justice and personality changes. These demands too are lubricated with lots of money. To remain competitive, the local governor raises the ante by offering his daughter as a fiancé to the inspector. The young man officially accepts the generous offer that represents a hard blow to all those desiring profound changes in the local status quo. The young debauchee takes all that is offered on, or under, the table until the moment in which, fearing that his real identity is about to be revealed, he leaves the city precipitously under the noble pretext to announce his future marriage to his family in person. At that precise moment the city learns, thanks to the postal chief who opens and reads all suspected mail, that the supposed inspector is an imposter. Everybody laughs at the news until the moment when a clerk announces an invitation to appear before the true inspector who has just arrived in the city. Everybody literally freezes in shock and awe. The curtain falls.

How can we understand the main flow of events using different theoretical approaches, both traditional and alternative?

There are many mutually contradicting but equally possible ways to answer questions such as how the inspector's arrival changes the behavior of the main subjects and in which direction, and why they act and react rather uniformly at the beginning of the comedy before separating into warring factions. First, the main logic of answer can focus on the personality of the inspector as embodiment of a formal institution and of his intentions to influence the behavior of the local people, administration and citizens alike. To bridge the gap with the current research, this approach makes the same assumptions as

the theory of socialization, one of the two main conventional ways of looking at subordinated actors' behavior in asymmetrical power relations. Within this theoretical approach, close to traditional institutionalism, if there is a substantial difference in the subordinated actors' behavior, it comes mainly from the different way of treating them within the asymmetrical power relation. In this sense, the love toward the governor's daughter, as a feeling, is qualitatively different from the way of treating local administration, a way based on strict administrative domination. If this approach is taken in order to build the main explanatory model, then the following key question remains open: why within the administration do the servants opt for different strategies in order to maintain functional dialogue with the dominant institution?

Second, the explanatory model can focus on the strategic interests of the local actors. Following this logic, there should be a difference in the actors' behavior and this difference could follow their different contextual rational choices, contextual in the sense of being influenced by their different positions within society and administration. This model is more flexible as far as the real behavior is concerned and it is not surprising why it is currently a dominant approach within the political literature. This approach can answer questions such as why the members of administration as a close group opt for cooperation in order to maintain collective action, following the predictions of Mancur Olson (1965), but in direct relation to the inspector prefer to free ride and to stop cooperating with one another. This approach can also answer questions such as why the first reaction of the administration is to hide the real situation in the city and why those who have had enough of the situation decide to complain against the administration using the inspector as a tool for reversing the entire structure. This approach, however, would

have some difficulties of answering questions such as why different rational actors within similar institutional contexts change their rationally based behavior several times by 180 degree?

Third, another possible way of answering these same questions, just to be theoretically exhaustive, would be to look for answers in the world of culture; the culture here would be rather a fixed social reality, a set of prefabricated attitudes, a static way of looking at the world. A fixed once-and-for-all culture of domination, nothing surprising when the events take place in Russia, shared by both dominant and subordinate actors, is a good starting point in understanding why the administration accepts the inspector's personality as an ultimate arbiter, in the first place. This approach, however, does not answer a key question why some actors try to influence back the inspector, and doing so, to change the asymmetrical power relations within the city or between the inspector and the administration. The events constantly challenge this approach and make it highly unconvincing to give account to the complex development that unfolds.

Fourth, an alternative approach, both relational and interpretative, builds on the strong sides of the other approaches but also adds new elements that eliminate their weak points and provide tentative answers for the unanswered questions. Within this approach, the institutions and norms of behavior are not automatically transferable because they are rich in terms of multiple interpretations; they could be transferred but only in the interpretative and relational framework. Rational choice, just like any other interpretative process that accounts for behavior, is not a priori put in the heads of the actors, like "thinking statues", to use the Norbert Elias' metaphor (1998); the actors in the process of interaction, based on their interpretations of the situation, which are multiple by default,

produce and reproduce the world in which certain behavioral acts make sense, here and now. As the context changes constantly, so does the feeling of significance; therefore the actors' behavior that makes sense can change too without the actor appearing less rational because of this change, quite substantial at times. For the postal chief, opening the mail of the inspector, an important decision for the event's denouement, makes sense in a particular context, after the engagement between the inspector and the governor's daughter. This decision, to open the mail, is not predetermined by the institutional relations between the inspector and the administration, on the contrary, nor even less by the predominant culture of domination, nor by the rational choice per se which does not provide answer to the question of the timing. To quote his own words, the postal chief opens the mail after heavy emotional turmoil; he is pulled away by two opposing feelings, his curiosity and his fear, two feelings that cannot be reduced to a simple rational calculation of costs and benefits.

The decision of the postal chief to open the mail of the inspector is but one of the key moments in order to understand the events beginning to unfold from a particular moment on. This decision would have been meaningless at the beginning of the comedy, but becomes a possible, but of course not necessary, option, coupled with an emotional dilemma, only after the engagement of the inspector and the governor's daughter. This latter event triggers opening the mail only because an alternative marriage between the postal chief and the governor's daughter would have opened the door for his administrative promotion and, who knows, perhaps one day to the position of local governor itself. Gogol's comedy, like the life itself, is full of such moments that require multiple interpretations. These are moments that are easily forgotten in the framework of

institutional or strategic approaches. The alternative relational and interpretative approach opens the door to understand how political behavior, behavior that tries to change the other's behavior in order to produce new stable social relations or to keep intact the old relations that are on the edge of being changed by others' political actions, is played in real time (McFalls et al., 2006). How does this alternative approach account for the main events in the comedy? How exactly does the arrival of the inspector change the personal behavior and in which direction, and why do the main personages act or react with more or less uniformity to this arrival? These are the questions that went unanswered by the conventional theoretical approaches. Would an alternative approach add some more understanding?

In brief, in a world where arbitrary administrative domination is part of the social common sense, in which everybody is attributed his or her own place in the hierarchy of positions, the provisional arrival of a new actor with potentially enormous administrative resources, or at least perceived as enormous, puts in danger the already established social relations. Those, who are on the top, fear for their positions and even for their personal liberty. Those who are on the bottom, those who have enough of the administrative arbitrariness, aspire for radical changes, not for democracy to be sure but perhaps for legal justice or rule of law. The arrival of the governmental inspector is rich in interpretations. The lack of proper information as far as his power and intentions are concerned, may lead to different strategies, from revealing the true situation in the city to hiding as much as possible from it. Old practices in dealing with corrupt servants sent from Saint Petersburg may suggest whether or not bribes could bend the inspector's integrity. For the local administration, dealing with the new problem, the arrival of the

governmental inspector, therefore, presupposes the existence of at least one interpretative matrix. In this situation, the local administration finds a common denominator interest in preserving the status quo; its members officially decide to cooperate in a good example of collective action to keep intact their positions and privileges even if for a moment that could mean more responsibility in managing the local affairs and even more if that could lead to sharing part of the illegal incomes with the inspector in exchange for his benevolence. Appeasing the inspector by making false appearances of good management of the local affairs remains just appearance; the administration has no intention to enforce legality under any form. On the contrary, the administration intends to put under censorship all flows of information between the city and the inspector. The administration cannot force the inspector, despite all bribes, to write a good report on the city; it can, however, make it appear as if the city is in better shape than it really is, a city that lives by the laws, in order to change the mind of the inspector in the desired direction.

To complicate the task of hiding the real situation in the city, the administration servants fear the presence of a collective action breaker within the administration who would try to put down the other members of the team for the sake of his own administrative promotion; they all are convinced that such a mole exists because they all act following the same logic of free riders; they all try to preserve their personal positions and assets, just in case, because nobody knows what will turn out to be in the inspector's mind. Everybody rivals everybody in order to keep and increase his stand vis-à-vis the inspector. Everybody tries to get closer to the inspector and gain his favors in order to increase his own positions vis-à-vis the governor within local administration. This is a

real blackmail regarding the governor; the police officers who are supposed to keep the inspector cut from the city affairs do not stop the plaintiffs from presenting their complaints in person. The plaintiffs, on the other hand, get closer to the inspector in order to increase their standing vis-à-vis the local governor and to force him to act more within the legal framework. The governor himself, betrayed by his administration and denounced by the population, ups the ante and offers his daughter to the inspector. Once this mission accomplished, he makes sure that everybody knows about the stability of his position. On the surface, his administrative resource remains largely the same throughout the comedy; in reality, however, his true political capacity increases vis-à-vis the administration and population alike. The inspector not only does not change the local power relations, he makes them even clearer so everybody knows who is in power.

By offering his daughter to the inspector, the governor puts a break on the careerist zeal of the postal chief; the latter, with no other alternatives than simply watching the situation unfold, decides to blackmail the inspector and automatically to increase again his standing within the administration; he then decides to open the inspector's mail. His discovery that the inspector is an impostor running away from the city contradicts his plans to blackmail him. The control over information is sufficient to regain his position by announcing it in public, without any doubt to break the engagement and to keep open his own chances for administrative promotion through marriage to the governor's daughter.

From the starting moment of the comedy, the rumors about the incoming inspector's visit, up until the final words of the comedy, which is the arrival of the true inspector, nobody among the key personages change their relative formal positions within

the system of social and political relations. The traditional theoretical approaches will not see any change worth noticing between these two moments in time. At the beginning and at the end alike, a governor rules the city, followed by his administration, followed at great distance by the local shopkeepers and general population. During the comedy, however, everything is moving and a radical change is within grasp. The local governor sees his position gradually eroding before a sudden about-face in which he becomes stronger than ever. The postal chief also sees his position, for a different reason, erode, bordering total marginalization before returning to his previous level at the very end of the comedy. The general population, on the contrary, sees its forces gradually increase before being smashed near the end to a level even below the starting level.

When dealing with an example of an asymmetrical power relation, taken from classic literature, the relational and interpretative approach is clearly a better way of understanding the situation *in movement*. It accounts for the dynamic without exclusively attributing its logic to the parsimonious impact of the institutional dominant actor or to the strategic calculations of the subordinate actors, but to the dialogue between the two levels. This dialogue is potentially open-ended; not only it assumes that subordinated actors could act differently, but also assumes that the dominant actor could become subordinated. What if the imposter had not been an imposter but a real inspector? Would it not be a political revolution to put him under control of the local governor by offering him to become a member of his family when he, the governor, is the head?

There is no factor, institutional or strategic, that alone predetermines the flow of events and the main actors' behavior. At any moment, any actor can make some interpretative choice, not only rational but also highly emotional; the circle of choices

depends on the understandings of this actor in this moment; doing nothing is also result of having a choice. The interpretative choice, once done, however, creates and influences the understandings in this moment of other actors, emotionally and intellectually related to the first actor, and so on. The governor, at the beginning, could not even imagine making an engagement offer to the inspector. Such no option is based on his (wrong) understanding of the absolute power of the person sent from Saint Petersburg; the governor considers himself to be too low to make the inspector part of his family. The postal chief, at the beginning, for similar reasons, could not even imagine opening the inspector's mail. At a particular moment, however, the moment when they see that the inspector accepts bribes, these two actors begin changing radically their behavior; they do not change it earlier even if as a father the governor could always choose to offer his daughter, and the postal chief could always use his administrative resource to read any mail. These changes are not governed by rational calculations alone, although the rational choice may seek to integrate them as purely rational; the governor and the postal chief make decisions that are also emotionally charged. These rational-emotional complexes require an alternative interpretative approach; the fear, as we will see in chapter V, may push people to or pull them away from action.

Neither the asymmetric relation between the inspector and the city's administration, nor the rational choice, nor the fixed culture of domination, could have predetermined that at a particular moment these two key actors would behave in this particular way; neither traditional model takes into account the subjective status of the actors, which shifts as they, interpretatively, try to make sense to their situation at any

given moment. Yet, without this key behavioral change, the denouement of events will remain a mystery.

An inductive, relational and interpretative approach therefore may offer more comprehensive understanding than parsimonious hypothetico-deductive approaches, based on positivist paradigms, institutional or strategic or in any combination of both. This preliminary conclusion looks convincing in this short analysis of the Gogol's *Governmental Inspector*. But would this alternative approach be so convincing in the case of the role of European integration in post-communist democratization?

III. Field-work findings and other pertinent information

This chapter summarizes the findings that emerge from three field trips to Bulgaria in June-July 2009, June-August 2010, and in May-June 2011, and one field trip to the F.Y.R. of Macedonia in June-July 2010. It consecutively presents findings gathered through four different techniques: interviews, observations, text and text-analogue analyses; the texts focus mainly on local political leaders' statements, the text-analogues focus on visual representations, most notably on political cartoons. Each technique is presented with short methodological introduction followed by some key findings for each country, followed by comparative notes for both countries. Additional layers of analysis will be presented in the following chapters.

The different techniques are intended to triangulate each other. Triangulation is a research validation strategy by which a researcher compensates for the inherent bias of each of the techniques. This strategy also allows verifying the stability of the findings. Appealing to triangulation describes a particular spirit of the researcher who tends actively to support and corroborate the findings (Mucchielli 2004). The term triangulation is borrowed from topography; sailors, military and engineers use it to find their exact location. In the social sciences, this concept supposes that the bigger the methodological difference of the techniques, the richer will be the interpretation that follows and the higher the confidence regarding the results will be (Ibid.). The following research uses techniques that fall into three separate and relatively independent from one another groups. The interviews are a direct way of approaching the interpretative level of reality; this reality at the beginning is assumed to have a significance that escapes our understanding. The inherent bias and relative disadvantage of this technique is the

reliance on the honesty of the interviewees. To compensate for this and for other inherent biases, other techniques are added. Non-participant observation makes the observer invisible for the research objects and therefore they become less afraid of his or her presence and more likely to speak and behave without self-imposed restrictions. An inherent bias of this technique, however, is its focus on the present reality; unlike interviews and text analyses, the observer sees the world as it is now, not even a day earlier. To dig deeper back in time, I use interviews as well as texts and text-analogues; the latter are most reliable as sources of information regarding past events, but offer rather small bits of information compared to the flows of information that spring from some interviews. To understand the present and the recent past, a methodological design that uses triangulation of these different kinds of techniques is a good starting point.

Internal validation through triangulation does not seek to replicate all major findings within the framework of each technique; such replication is possible but not necessary within a qualitative research design. This full replication will not be possible for the simple reason that each technique looks at a particular element of social and temporal reality. Within an ethnographic mode of reasoning, which takes society as an intermingled system of relations, each new added technique may increase the sense of stability regarding the interpretation of one particular phenomenon, being it either a subjective reminiscence, object of observation, political statement or political cartoon visualization. For example, the presence of Macedonian flags on high masts on public squares and highways may have varied significance, such as a show of force toward ethnic minorities, neighbor states or the European Union. The triangulation with interviews eliminates the first two options and puts emphasis on relations between the EU

and Macedonia. Within these bilateral relations, the informants interpret these flags as a symbol of national sovereignty and refusal to accept asymmetrical relations, a key element in the EU integration process. Using political cartoons and politicians' statements can triangulate this specific interpretation by showing the social limits and dynamics of this discourse.

The following paragraphs relate to the research design of each technique both in terms of its theoretical usefulness and in terms of particularities within this research.

Semi-structured interviews, presented in Chapter III.1, are based on the principle of empathy from the interviewer to the interviewee, or the informant. For this reason they are particularly well adapted to help reveal subjective meaning. The semi-structured aspect of the interview allows some freedom in answering particular question or addressing particular topic. The methodological guides advice that interviewers abstain from making explicit to informants what is the preferred type of answer or even whether answering a particular question is preferable over declining to answer (Mucchielli 2004, 129). A semi-structured interview is not a mundane talk between people who happen to know each other or just meet for the first time. It is a planned talk where the interviewer determines the scope of topics to be discussed and is prepared to make significant changes that accommodate different participants (Lindlof and Taylor 2002, 195). In Appendix 5, I present in brief the main structure of the interviews.

My interviews occurred during three field trips to Bulgaria in June-July 2009, in June-August 2010 and in May-June 2011, and one field trip to the F.Y.R. of Macedonia in June-July 2010. In total, there were 84 semi-structured interviews in both countries (60 in Bulgaria and 24 in F.Y.R. of Macedonia). The interviews did not follow closed

questionnaires; there were however some invariable topics, which were common to each subject, such as free associations and attitudes toward the European Union, or common within each country, such as the impact of the Schengen visa restrictions before 2001 for Bulgaria and before 2010 for the F.Y.R. of Macedonia, or the constitutional name issue for the latter. Each interview took approximately one to two hours. Follow-up interviews in June-August 2010, which were mostly face-to-face, with a few using Internet between the summer of 2009 and the summer of 2010, took place with approximately a third of the interviewees in Bulgaria. Additional set of interviews in Bulgaria in 2011 helped to discern internal dynamic of political discourses made possible as a result of EU influence.

The full list of all interviewees can be found in an annex at the end of the dissertation. The first 40 cases, from "Alex" to "Iakim", were interviewed in June and July 2009 during the first field trip to Bulgaria. Approximately half of them plus the remaining informants of the Bulgarian part of the list were interviewed during the second field trip in the country in June-August 2010. These follow-up interviews were generally shorter; they intended to confirm some main points of the interviewees, to clarify some uncertainties, and possibly to detect any substantial change in their views between 2009 and 2010. Most Macedonian interviewees were met during the second field trip in 2010. A few of them were first interviewed through the Internet in 2009 and in early 2010, with extensive follow-up face-to-face interviews in the republic taking place in the summer of 2010.

Each interview was centered on the personality of the interviewee as a logically coherent and relatively independent cultural unit. It included biographic elements such as family history, formal education and general worldviews; the critical point in each

interview was the subjective understanding of the moment of first “meetings” with European Union under all its forms, both material and symbolic. Whenever it was possible, the informants were given the opportunity to comment on the biographical counterfactuals without any limitations: “what if there was no...” followed by the key moment of each personal experience involving European Union, such as the first trip to Europe, first foreign scholarship, first foreign employer, or first EU accession membership talks.

A special attention was given to the capacity of each interviewee to build upon the “European” topics on his or her own, to provide his or her own examples and personal experience, once the general line of conversation was set up. Overall, every informant had the liberty to wrap up the “European” topic(s) within his or her own personal agenda, to put them among the other personal priorities, and in some cases, to refuse altogether to embark on such “European” journey; in the latter case the interview had to focus on the personal reasons for this refusal. The locations of the interviews were meant to accommodate emotionally the informants as much as possible. Generally, the interviewees themselves decided where and when to meet me (at home, at work (in the office or at the lobby), in a park, in a cafeteria. At the start of each interview I repeated where my research interests lied; my research goals were clearly stated when the interviews were originally set up. I reiterated that the interviewees were in full control over the interview duration and I assured them that their identity under all circumstances would remain confidential.

Regarding the choice of informants the main strategy in both countries was to find governmental officials, private companies’, non-governmental organizations’, media and

university staff who were supposed, by the nature of their jobs, to have some firsthand personal knowledge of the European Union and its overall influence in their respective country. Once the initial contacts were established, these informants provided additional contacts to enlarge the number of interviewees in an effect of snowballing.

As far as the general population was concerned, I followed three separate avenues in order to select potential interviewees. First, I contacted friends and former colleagues (schoolmates, journalists, NGO officials); second, I met with newspaper readers from the Internet newspaper discussion clubs who looked interested to discuss the issues I was interested in; third, I used casual meetings with previously unknown persons during my trips within Bulgaria and between Bulgaria and Macedonia. The preference within the group of state civil servants, current and former, NGO officials and media and university staff was to meet those with extensive links and knowledge of the EU matters. The opposite criterion applied while choosing among the ordinary people; the goal was to see how far EU influence, if any, could be traced among those whose lives did not require any particular knowledge or personal business relations with the EU.

The spoken language that I used in all interviews except three (with the European Union representatives in Skopje where the languages were French and English) was Bulgarian. The Bulgarian and the Macedonian informants spoke Bulgarian and Macedonian respectively. All Macedonian interviewees felt comfortable with such an arrangement; none of them demanded shifting to a “neutral” third language, such as English or French, although such a possibility was clearly stated at the beginning of each interview, nor demanded services of a Bulgarian-Macedonian translator.

Observations, the results of which are presented in Chapter III.2, are a technique that examines people's behavior in natural settings or in naturally occurring situations. Some authors make distinction between participant and non-participant observations; the former combines participation in the lives of the people being studied with maintenance of a professional distance that allows adequate observation and recording of information (Fetterman 1998, 34-35); the latter, on the contrary, requires as limited as possible interaction with those observed. Where the dividing line between these two forms of observation lies is not a question this dissertation seeks to answer. The extreme cases as ideal-types, however, are easy to be distinguished. Joining an underground group in order to observe its members' behavior clearly falls within participant observation; in this case participation in the group's activity is a condition for making any observation. It is not so clear whether the knowledge of a rare language that facilitates observation makes it a participant. I am inclined to think that as far as the observer does not interfere directly with the observed peoples' activity, it is still a non-participant observation, despite social and cultural requisites that make this observation possible. For this reason I consider my observations as non-participant. They are ethnographic as far as I do not limit my observations to a particular field in order to discern the role of EU integration on political culture; everything can become part of my field notes. I share the ethnographic assumption that a society represents an interrelated and interdependent system; therefore any causal factor may find its way to all social sub-systems.

The observations took place during two field trips to Bulgaria in June-July 2009 and in June-August 2010 and during one field trip to Macedonia in June-July 2010. I checked the gathered information against previous observations made in both countries;

these previous observations took place before 2002, in the case of Bulgaria, and before 1998, in the case of Macedonia. I used this technique: 1. To collect, through an independent source, information regarding the research question; 2. To corroborate through triangulation the information gathered with the help of some other techniques, such as interviews, text and text-analogue analyses; 3. To ask additional questions whose answers can be found using other techniques. Some findings made available through observations were later discussed with some of the interviewees. This has helped me not only to corroborate some of the statements in the interviews, but also to corroborate the exactness and the relevance of my observations.

In the observations, as mentioned, I gave priority to non-participant techniques, where the observer did not interfere directly with the object of observation and his behavior; the non-interference was the goal here. The fact that I was born in the region was certainly of great help in order not to be considered as a foreign intruder and thus to make people change their behavior as a result of feeling being observed, or the Hawthorn effect. Some observations are illustrated with photos in Appendix 4.

The scope of observation was focused but not limited to topics that naturally followed the research question, such as the material and symbolic presence of the EU in the region. Following the logic of ethnographic holism, I included all sorts of observations in my notebook pending additional analysis and selection of those more relevant to one or another element of the research topic. Therefore, my observations dealt with any potentially interesting human behavior and also with some consequences of human behavior. In order not to appear as an intruder and make people feel observed, the

notes that I took were written down afterwards, usually when I was alone, usually twice a day, at lunch and in the evening.

Regarding the accumulation of observable information, my best period of seeing “with new eyes”, “like a foreigner” in the case of Bulgaria and Macedonia was usually limited to 2-3 weeks after arrival in the field, which roughly corresponded to the time attributed to the each individual field study, two trips to Bulgaria in 2009 and 2010 and one to Macedonia in 2010. Observation, in my case, after this 2-3 week period, reached a point of saturation; the point of saturation was the moment when adding new information through observation did not add any new information or new questions. Instead of puzzles, at that moment as an observer I saw predominantly normality similar to my normal social environment; my natural psychological ability to adapt and adjust had made me a part of the new normality and I therefore stopped asking myself questions like a foreigner, such as “what is the meaning of this?” or “why they do it this way?”

Text-analogue analysis, in Chapter III.3, is part of discursive analysis that deals with objects other than texts that are analyzed using semiotic techniques. Unlike linguistics, discourse analysis aims at revealing socio-psychological characteristics of a person or persons rather than text structure (Blommaert 2005; Brown and Yule 1983). Such an analysis will cover politicians’ statements in the section III.4. The discursive analysis here deals with text-analogues. This is an approach that uses discursive techniques applied to social artifacts that are not originally produced as part of the language, written or spoken. Analyzing political cartoons may provide useful information as to the general mood and directions in a particular society regarding specific topic. For this dissertation I use it as an independent technique because of its good credentials in

showing the formation of a new national identity (Colley 2009); such a new identity, if any, could be one of the main tangible effects of EU integration.

This section accounts for the information gathered in Bulgaria and Macedonia through collection of visual representations, more precisely through political cartoons, and the follow up discussions face-to-face or over the Internet with some of their authors. These conversations are not part of the interviews already reported in section 1. The collection of political cartoons dealing with European and European integration matters started in 2008; given the nature of this technique, it is open-ended and does not require my physical presence in any of these countries.

As with the other techniques used to collect relevant information, the collection of visual representations is at the same time an independent source of information regarding the research question and a way to corroborate, through triangulation, the information gathered through other techniques, such as biographical interviews, non-participant observations, and political discourse analysis. Some cartoons include texts in either Bulgarian or Macedonian; the fact that Bulgarian is my mother tongue and Macedonian is very close to Bulgarian is of certain help to understand the message on the semantic level. To increase the level of certainty regarding some messages, when the semantic level was not sufficient to make unequivocal interpretation, I met with some of the authors to discuss their cartoons.

The last section in this chapter, III.4, accounts for the information gathered for and in Bulgaria and Macedonia through the collection of different statements that are part of third-party interviews, media reports, official party sites, and statements that are attributed to top politicians. It also narrates political events that are part of these top

politicians' biographies. As with the other techniques used to collect relevant information, the collection of political statements is at the same time an independent source of information regarding the research question and a way to corroborate through triangulation the findings gathered through other techniques, such as the interviews, non-participant observations, and visual representations. These statements were published for the most part in Bulgarian and Macedonian; the fact that Bulgarian was my mother tongue and Macedonian was very close to Bulgarian was of help to understand the messages on a semantic level; on a pragmatic level, the interviews that I made with Bulgarians and Macedonians, reported earlier in this chapter, were helpful to further interpret the political message in a particular social context.

Regarding the choice of politicians, seven for Bulgaria and four for Macedonia, at first, I decided to follow the ideological evolution of those who represented only authoritarian positions, former communist or populist. It made sense because if EU influence had to be found, these politicians would be the ideal group of initially reluctant but afterward accepting new European norms of behavior. Later on, after the first set of interviews in Bulgaria in 2009, I came to the conclusion that this approach of sample building was incomplete; it could not identify the opposite trend, politicians who became less democratic and more authoritarian, or more populist, alongside or despite or maybe because of the process of European integration. This desire not to miss and to account for as many as possible political culture trajectories explained why I included politicians for both Bulgaria and Macedonia who entered and remained in the politics representing, at least initially, democratic and pro-European positions.

The choice of the politicians had to meet certain criteria. They had to be as long as possible within active politics throughout the entire post-communist period (1989-2011). They had to occupy key decision-making positions, such as heads of state, heads of government, or “gray cardinals”. They had to enjoy significant popular support for at least part of the post-communist period. Some very interesting politicians from both countries were eliminated from the sample because their sudden death made difficult if not impossible for me to speculate on their possible political trajectories if they had survived until 2011; thus I eliminated the former Bulgarian Prime minister Andrej Lukanov, a key figure in Bulgarian post-communist political transition, who was killed in 1996 and the Macedonian president Boris Trajkovski who died in a plane crash in 2004. Another potentially interesting politician from Macedonia, Ali Ahmeti, the leader of the ethnic Albanian party *The Democratic Union for Integration*, was eliminated from the sample because he represented a confirmed case of schizophrenia; in this case I could not filter out the influence of the EU from his mental condition.

Regarding section III.4, I need to confine the expectations within reasonable limits. These brief biographical narratives do not intend to mirror all findings produced with alternative techniques, such as interviews. Triangulation does not mean complete replication of findings with other means, although such replication would, obviously, be a plus for the research. The goal here is to produce findings from an independent source, a source that is analytically separate from interviews, observations and cartoons. In addition, the choice of politicians in the sample is not a sign that they all must contribute to methodological triangulation. Within an inductive research such conclusions may come only at the end, not at the beginning of study. Therefore, despite their modest value

as research techniques, the biographical narratives play a positive role in internal validation of some key findings.

III.1. Interviews

The findings that follow are grouped for Bulgaria and for Macedonia. Additional comparative analysis is provided between the two countries. The first step is to provide some general information for the informants of each country. The second step is to establish some correlations between the socio-economic status of the interviewees and their political attitudes; the third step is to establish different cultural trajectories regardless of socio-economic status. In the comparative section, I present briefly the cultural trajectories in each country that appear to occur under the influence of European integration.

The interviews, as all other qualitative techniques in this research, do not mechanically test elements of hypotheses, presented for the sake of parsimony in Chapter II.4. These hypotheses act as guides to orient an interpretative and inductive research, not to impose strict frameworks for what is deemed as relevant regarding the research question. For this reason, I do not speak anywhere about hypotheses testing in a positivist sense, but rather of different models of evaluation; instead of judging on whether these statements are true or false, I try to establish the conditions under which these statements may be true as part of an interpretative social interaction.

III.1.a. Bulgaria

60 interviews occurred in Bulgaria, notwithstanding brief talks with other persons who provided useful bits of information regarding the research question. 34 interviewees were male and 26 female. The generational distribution is presented in the following table:

Age	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+
No. of informants	10	19	19	6	3	3

Most interviewees, approximately 2/3, were aged 30 to 49, which also corresponded to the age group of people actively involved in EU integration within the state civil service and the NGOs. Approximately 1/3 of all interviewees belonged to the first group of respondents: current and former civil servants, NGOs', media and university staff with strong personal business relations to the EU under all its forms. It was hard to make a clear sub-categorization within this group, e.g. separating the civil servants as opposed to the NGOs' staff, as some respondents occupied different positions throughout the past years within the same group, e.g. a former civil servant who shifted to an NGO or vice versa; a civil servant or a journalist who taught lectures that included EU matters at university level at the same time. 36 out of 60 Bulgarian respondents claimed to possess higher education diploma; no written proof was required to substantiate these claims. Nevertheless, it seemed that these claims were not overstated given that 20 out of 60 respondents were working for the government, or for an NGO or university. Therefore by default they were required to have some higher education. Regarding personal

finances, most interviewed Bulgarians declared that they had hardly made ends meet; this applied to all working for the governments, for NGOs and for universities alike. A handful, no more than five, claimed to have enough to cover all their material needs; also a handful, no more than three, boasted to be able to buy everything and to travel around the world without limitations. With some additional observation and triangulation checks, I could affirm that although many claims of poverty seemed objective given local income levels, they also reflected local cultural acceptance of making such claims rather than the opposite claims; in other words, people claimed to have less than they really had; there were clear discrepancies between their official incomes and some consumer goals, e.g. new rented cars or long summer vacations abroad. Regarding their political attitudes, approximately half either did not vote in general elections, or had decided not to vote; the last assertion was particularly interesting given the fact that most of the interviews in Bulgaria were made just before the general parliamentary election in 2009. Those who voted and those who disclosed their party preferences, current and past, reflected the major party divide in Bulgaria between “reds” and “blues”, those who voted for the Bulgarian Socialist Party, former Bulgarian Communist Party or the “reds”, and the parties that legitimized their political *raison d’être* mainly in opposition to this party.

The main goal in using the interview as a research technique was to discern the presence of elements of democratic political culture; these elements were, first, making positive sense of the formal democratic procedures such as voting or making sense of the act of voting; second, making a sense of civic competence that enabled the citizens to be “political animals” or to feel important enough to change the status quo through political actions, and, third, having the possibility to contemplate joining forces regardless of the

ethnic, religious and other cultural obstacles. Each of these three elements was examined in relation to European Union integration as a material and/or symbolic factor. What follows summarizes the findings that deal with reports on the actual behavior that goes hand in hand with European integration and its subjective perceptions as far as the construction, or deconstruction, of a democratic political culture is concerned.

III.1.a.1. Voting behavior

In both countries, Bulgaria and Macedonia, discussing the act of voting was part of each interview; the questions about voting behavior was asked directly (“Do you vote? How often? Which are your preferred parties or candidates?”); the honesty of the answers to these questions was checked throughout the entire corpus of answers of each interviewee; it happened that some interviewees, e.g. “Andrew”, declared being complete voting absentees, but answering other questions they revealed to have voted to a particular party. The correlation between age and voting behavior was as follows: the entire young generation aged 18 to 29, with one exception, “Darina”, traditionally did not vote and did not intend to vote in the future; the entire group aged 50 and over, again with one exception, “Konstantin”, traditionally did vote and intended to vote in the future. The two exceptions in these two groups could be explained by looking at their professional status; “Darina” was a state civil servant and strongly supported the current government; her impression was that her job depended entirely on the fact that her party was in power; “Konstantin” was financially independent business owner who stayed away from the politics despite the strong pressure from within his family to be politically more active and to support a particular party. The other informants aged 50 and over, those who

traditionally voted, did not change their voting preferences over time; voting for a particular party, either “reds” or “blues”, was more a matter of personal and family identification than a result of a material interest properly understood; when confronted with the link between their voting preferences and their material interests most informants from this group became confused or began to mix up policies and parties. Within the groups aged 30 to 39 and 40 to 49 there were different types of people regarding the voting behavior: people who traditionally did vote and still intended to vote; people who did vote but had some serious doubts about voting in the future; people who had recently stopped voting; and people who never voted. To no surprise, within this large intermediate age group the voting intentions increased toward the ceiling of those who were 49 y.o. and the lowest intentions were found toward the floor of those who were 30 y.o. The line between those who intended to identify with a particular party and to vote might be situated around 42-43 years. It would be useful to remember that people who were 42-43 y.o. in 2009-2011, when the field trips in Bulgaria took place, were 21-23 y.o. at the start of the Bulgarian post-communist transition. Those below this line of 42-43 years in 2009-2011 and who still voted were either financially interested in having one or another party in office or, as very few cases showed, expressed their traditional family orientation rather than a personal choice. Those above the line of 42-43 y.o. and up to the 49 y.o. who had strong and constant voting behavior and party commitment usually combined material interests and emotional attachments; talking about parties and elections made them emotionally agitated; sometimes such agitation was so strong that it became difficult, if not impossible at all, to switch the conversation to another topic.

When I had impression that I was interviewing an overemotional person, I moved the hot topic of political preferences toward the end of the interview.

As far as the educational divide high school – higher education was concerned, those with high school only were much less politically active, 6 out of 24, than those with some higher education, 26 out of 36. The young age of some of the subjects without higher education explained partly this political indifference; however, the lowest age of more active electoral behavior for this group started above 40 y.o.

As far as personal incomes were considered, the group of self-declared rich and financially independent Bulgarians did not show any particular pattern; half of them tended to vote regularly, the other half had stopped or had never voted. Here too, age seemed to explain the major divide; the older self-declared rich people were more inclined to go to the voting booth than the younger rich people. Two cases: “Julia” and “Radoi”, showed some correlation between fast post-communist material accumulation and the political disengagement. In both cases, we had interviewees who achieved financial independence at least partly thanks to European integration and they were aware of that link. They worked respectively in a financial audit and a law company that served the interests of foreign, mainly European, companies operating in Bulgaria.

Was there any difference between the two major groups regarding EU integration, i.e. those directly linked to the integration under all its forms, and the ordinary people? Within the first group, which represented approximately 1/3 of all Bulgarian interviewees, most of them did vote and intended to keep voting; among these, at first glance none seemed to have made this decision under the influence of the EU in any of its forms; more interesting were the exceptions to the rule, those who did not vote or had

stopped voting recently. Among the following three cases EU integration had at least partly contributed to this decision: “Fani” looked at her job at the state civil service mostly as a transitional moment and a point toward emigration to France with eventual marriage to a local citizen and settling down away from public life; for her EU equaled freedom of movement; “Mika” had engaged her energy in an NGO that acted mainly on the European level; for her EU equaled supranational institutions and the capacity to overrule Bulgarian institutions; “Fidanka” had lost hope in the fast social and personal financial improvement after the EU enlargement and had plans of emigration with his family; for her, ironically, the EU also equaled freedom of movement. Within the second major group, which represented the ordinary people outside any direct relation to the EU, the level of political activity was much lower, approximately only a third voted and intended to keep voting; these were largely older people and those who voted for the Turkish ethnic party, the Movement of Rights and Freedoms, irrespectively of age. Among them none seemed involved in politics under the influence of the EU, although for some people there were clear indications that it might affect their decision to stay within the active electorate. The rest of this group of ordinary people was either composed of people who never voted, namely the youngest, and those who stopped voting at some point or doubted whether they should vote. Within this subgroup some interviewees linked elements of European integration with their decisions: “Luba” and “Tosho” thought that the EU, by allowing Bulgaria to join, had legitimized the financial and political oligarchy and there was no point to rebel against this seemingly permanent situation; for them the EU equaled the supranational institutions that dominated local political life; “Radoi” enjoyed high income, independent from internal sources, and did

not feel any need to interact with “lesser mortals”; for him the EU equaled freedom of capitals and business opportunities; “Chris” would stay in Bulgaria only until the last restrictions for work were lifted by 2013 before moving to *any* EU country; for him EU equaled freedom of movement. On the other hand, some ordinary people who did not vote or had stopped voting expressed the possibility of returning to the voting booths under the influence of EU: “Boris”, “Iren”, “Lazar” and “Paulina” saw this as a moral reaction to a possible conflict between EU and Bulgaria over important issues, such as the right to have dual citizenship, the right to maintain informal relationships; all these informants were ready to take the EU stand, which they believed to be more liberal and tolerant, against their own country.

III.1.a.2. Civic competence

Regarding civic competence, the questions that asked about the presence of this element were not as direct as the questions on voting behavior. Instead of asking people “Are you competent?” on one or another issue in order to have a general picture of a particular informant, I guided the conversation toward political and economic issues of general interest to the point where informants themselves would either keep conversation going or declare being incompetent on this particular subject matter by switching to another topic or would start using official clichés in order to place the personal experience within the acceptable general social and political picture. Of course, classifying people as civically competent or incompetent could be a gross oversimplification. Someone could be highly competent on one particular issue and completely incompetent on another. To avoid this trap, I was interested mostly in the

people's willingness to understand the political world around and then to use this understanding as a guiding force for their personal behavior. Beyond the simple technical competence in one or another subject matter, it seemed that I had found two opposing ideal-types: one willing to understand despite the objective obstacles and another willing to keep away from understanding despite the institutional supports, e.g. "Diana" and "Tonka" who worked in EU info centers in Sofia and Skopje; these self-declared incompetent interviewees on EU matters used too many times answers like "I do not know"; "I do not *want* to know"; "It is not *my* business"; "I do not care"; "There are other people, people out there, to think about it". This lack of willingness, real or fake, to understand might be a reflection of an emotional cut off from a particular sensitive topic; people might, for different reasons, e.g. "Alex", "Balkan", "Stasi" and "Tosho", struggle emotionally in order to keep as far as possible away from politics. These interviews showed that such an emotional cut off was not always a result of rational calculation; it might have been also a result of a culturally embedded fear of being identified with particular social reality and to feel responsible about it. People whose work was socially perceived as linked to EU, e.g. EU info centers, would therefore prefer not to discuss any matter related to it, if the widespread social discourse of EU integration contradicted their personal expectations.

Regarding the second element of the democratic culture, the sense of civic competence, to enter and to remain within the political realm, I again observed the same generational difference; those 50 y.o. and older predominantly considered themselves competent to influence politics; among those there were few exceptions, among them especially interesting was "Andrew" who subjectively became "less competent" because

of the European factor and the feeling that the political game was already decided elsewhere and his political participation would insult his “above ordinary intelligence”; in this case the cut off from political participation was linked to the fear of appearing unintelligent and easily manipulated. Among the youngest subgroup, of those who were 29 y.o. or less, most did not shy from declaring themselves not competent to understand the logic of politics, and thus they considered themselves not to be able to enter the game in the first place; for them, however, politics was far from the top priority within their generational subculture; therefore their declared incompetence did not bear any particular cultural stigma. Among them there were also few exceptions, most interesting being “Darina”, for whom the sense of civic competence was linked to involvement within state structures where this informant was strongly influenced by European ideas of personal and gender empowerment. Within the intermediate age group of 30 to 49 y.o., the distribution between those declaring themselves being competent or not-competent was fairly equal.

As far as the professional distribution was concerned, the division being between those with strong professional links to EU and ordinary people, the first group was composed of people that were generally competent with some minor exceptions such as “Fani”, a young woman working in the state civil service who wanted to go to France to marry a local person and live a quiet life away from the politics. Within the second group, those composed of ordinary people, most people felt incompetent, with the exception of the older informants who seemed to feel competent because of their strong party affiliation. For them the capacity of influencing social reality passed by the way of electoral victories and the feeling of being with the strongest party. When correlated with

the level of education, those with high school diploma only declared themselves to be less competent to understand society and the politics; this correlation remained less pronounced if considered that all state civil servants were required to have a higher education diploma; it seemed the level of education alone could not explain the subjective sense of civic competence. And finally, when personal incomes were correlated, the small group of rich persons was split in equal.

III.1.a.3. Collective action

The questions on collective action and especially on collective action that overcame ethnic and religious boundaries, which were of course specific in each particular country, were both direct and indirect. People were asked whether they could contemplate joining forces with representatives of different ethnic or religious groups, the groups were mentioned by names, if at stake were their, again specific for each informant, professional and other well-being? Many people also touched upon this sensitive question even before being asked, usually when providing personal examples on one or another subject.

Regarding the third element of democratic culture, the capacity to overcome ethnic and religious boundaries, most Bulgarian subjects showed no signs of change from their traditional ethnocentric values based on their ethnic only understanding of their nationhood. This value was so entrenched that even after living abroad for many years most Bulgarians still limited their social networks to their ethnic co-nationals. Most Bulgarian informants in Bulgaria did not shy away from making hateful statements against representatives of one or another minority in the country (Turks, Roma): “Alex”

said that only dirty people such as gypsies were voting; “Christine” said that the gypsies would be to blame if EU expelled Bulgaria for whatever reason; “Anette” said that the gypsies and Turks were mentally retarded; “Rumi” wanted her children to live and marry abroad so they could not marry gypsies in Bulgaria; the list of complains and hateful speeches against these minorities was quite too long to reproduce it in full.

Nevertheless, there were some potential exceptions that warranted my attention. I said potential because none of them, unless explicitly asked, took the Roma and the Turks as part of the national normality; these exceptions were usually some interviewees within the state civil service and within NGOs that did not make explicit distinction based on ethnicity and religion. Being part of the group strongly influenced by European integration, it was possible that this factor, among others, had played some role in this moderation. Outside this group of EU-influenced professionals, only the cases representing ethnic minorities or mixed ethnic background showed such readiness, real or potential, to overcome the narrow ethnic and religious boundaries.

III.1.a.4. Beyond the socio-economic prerequisites

How do these elements of the political culture relate to each other regardless of the socio-economic status of the respondents? Almost half of all informants neither voted nor felt civically competent and at the same time did not expect or desire to overcome their narrow ethnic boundaries for collective action. It would be important to note that not all of them had been in such a rejecting mode as far as they could remember; many had gone voting in the past at least once but had stopped voting since then for different personal reasons: financial independence from the state, high expectations of imminent

emigration, complete disillusionment that their political participation mattered, or feeling smart enough to be symbolically above the political dirt. As far as I could evaluate, most people who stopped voting had already been not very active in the national politics in the first place; in their cases the effect of EU integration had created the opportunity to imagine a new larger spatial framework where they could live and work in a parochial way, at the margins of the domestic environment. These were the people who either contemplated the opportunity to emigrate permanently, or the opportunity to see their children emigrate permanently.

For others within this group, another possible EU integration outcome was a detachment from political life with the subjective acknowledgement that Brussels legitimized the political and economic status quo; within this subgroup there were strong complaints about the EU as legitimizing factor regarding what they called the political and economic oligarchy; the EU was an easy and defenseless symbolic target in order to justify for their own political inactivity. These two significances of EU integration: as an opportunity for emigration, internal or external, and as oligarchy legitimization might comfortably coexist within the symbolic world of some informants.

On the other pole, I could see about a quarter of all respondents going to vote regularly in a quasi religious way, feeling civically competent and ready, at least potentially, to overcome their ethnic boundaries when collective action requires so. EU integration had some role to play here, especially when it came to strengthening the subjective perception of civic competence, by creating better understanding of social and political life, by proposing better and easier to understand rules, by helping people to have clear visions about what was about to happen. Being the stronger party within the

asymmetrical power relation, the EU here was perceived as always making credible commitments; therefore its conditionality was always related to natural consequences.

About a third of all interviewees did not fall within these two extreme groups; for them some elements within the political culture change were positive, others negative. Within this intermediate heterogeneous group there were people who still voted almost automatically without considering themselves civically competent or ready to undertake any sort of collective action. These people could also see EU integration as an opportunity for emigration and/or EU as an oligarchy legitimizer; this put them very close to the group that had recently stopped voting. Another combination that revealed a particular trajectory was non-voting behavior coupled with a high and increasing level of civic competence and capacity of collective action. This rather paradoxical combination actually revealed the informants who already felt more European than Bulgarian, a direct result of EU integration. Another subgroup was composed of people who regularly voted, felt competent enough, but did not contemplate any collective action beyond their ethnic group.

III.1.a.5. Some preliminary conclusions

To sum up the major political culture trajectories and the role of European integration: on a positive note, the EU can create better understanding of social and political life and thus help increase the level of civic competence or the willingness to know, to care to and to be able to act; based on that, some informants find additional sense in taking part in political life and may, at least potentially, contemplate the opportunity of collective action that transcends narrow ethnic boundaries. On a negative

note, the EU enlarges the spatial environment of people, their new habitat, by creating opportunities for living and working abroad unknown in the past; some take these opportunities in order to stop taking part in the national elections or being interested in large social projects. Another way the EU may affect negatively the political culture is by contributing to the feeling that it legitimizes a political and economic oligarchy and therefore by creating the impression that taking part in political life is only a waste of time. A mixed outcome of EU integration is the trajectory where some people stop taking part in the national political life and switch their increased sense of political competence and collective action, as well as their collective identity, to a supranational European level.

This mixed result trajectory and the positive trajectory have one point in common: EU integration increases the sense of civic competence. The people within these two trajectories, however, move in opposite directions as far as the national identity is concerned; for the “national” positive trajectory the sense of being Bulgarian remains stable although enlarged by including civic elements on top of the ethnic elements; for the “supranational” trajectory the sense of being Bulgarian recedes as irremediably ethnic, flawed and backward. Last but not least, a certain number of interviewees do not show any substantial change in their political culture under the influence of EU integration. For them EU integration, both material and symbolic, is a non-event or a non-process. They feel and behave as if EU integration has never taken place.

III.1.b. Macedonia

24 comprehensive interviews took place in Macedonia, again notwithstanding other brief chats, in and outside the country, with Macedonian nationals, using different means of communication. 13 interviewees were male and 11 female. The generational distribution is presented in the following table:

Age	18-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
No. of informants	5	7	7	4	1

Although not so accentuated as in the case of Bulgaria, most interviews were again made with persons aged 30 to 49. Approximately a half of all interviewees belonged to the group of respondents of current and former civil servants, NGO staff, media and university staff with strong professional relations to the EU in all its forms. Regarding formal education, 15 out of 24 claimed to possess some diploma of higher education, which should not be regarded as an overstatement given the professional profile that most of them possessed. As far as personal finances were concerned, only a small minority, no more than four, claimed to have enough money to cover all material needs; the remaining claimed barely having the ends met or not being able to cover some basic needs. Even more than in Bulgaria, in Macedonia there was significant discrepancy between the generalized claims of poverty and the stated consumer goals, e.g. going on long, 1-2 months, summer vacations in Greece. In Macedonia, however, I must add, there

had been no significant improvement in the living standard from the 1990s, making the local people look at their incomes as comparatively lower than the increasing incomes in some other countries in the region. Regarding their voting behavior, approximately two thirds did vote regularly; among those who voted, with some exceptions representing the local ethnic minority, the votes went to the two major political blocs, the ruling rightwing nationalist VMRO-DPMNE and the main opposition Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (the Macedonian branch of the former League of the Communists of Yugoslavia).

III.1.b.1. Voting behavior

As far as the correlation between age and voting behavior was concerned, the results were the following: of no surprise and in harmony with the results in Bulgaria, the older informants, who were aged 50 and more, tended to vote more frequently than those aged 29 y.o. and less. The exceptions within these age groups could easily be explained with biographical peculiarities: the old but financially independent “Pavka” was losing interests in politics; the younger “Velko”, “Dobrina” and “Tonka” were politically active because either their job, current or expected, depended upon the goodwill of the current government or upon the goodwill of the future government, now in opposition. Other exceptions were the informants who belonged to some ethnic minorities and traditionally were politically very active. As far as the educational divide high school – higher education was concerned, there was no substantial difference between these two groups regarding voting behavior. The sample was not representative to the general population; in order to collect as many different opinions as possible the sample included young

professionals and ethnic minority members that usually, again in harmony with Bulgaria, tended to be politically much more active than their ethnic majority counterparts.

As far as personal incomes were considered, the group of rich and financially independent Macedonians did not show any particular pattern; half of them tended to vote regularly, the other half had stopped or had never voted. Here too, age seemed to explain the major divide; older rich people were more inclined to go to the voting booth than younger people. Two cases: “Pavka” and “Mara”, showed some correlation between the fast material improvement and political disengagement. In both cases, these informants had achieved financial independence at least partly thanks to European integration and they were aware of this link.

Was there any difference between the two major subgroups regarding EU integration: first, composed of those directly linked to integration under all its forms, and second, the ordinary people? Within the first subgroup, which represented approximately one third of all Macedonian informants, all but two of them voted regularly and intended to keep voting; they had strong party affiliations, either VMRO-DPMNE or SDUM; these two exceptions, “Pavka” and “Mara”, fell within the financial subgroup of rich persons; the former preferred the power of money over the power of the vote, and the latter tried to stay away from domestic politics also for reasons of professional ethics being, among other activities, also a honorable consul of a foreign government. For the rest, the act of voting had nothing to do with possible EU integration.

The second subgroup, composed of ordinary people, was fairly equally divided between those voting and those not voting. As far as the people who voted were concerned, none voted thinking of any particular element of European integration; among

those not voting, however, this integration could be mentioned among the other causal factors; some informants would like to profit from the freedom of movement and get temporary or permanently away from their country in order to study, work and eventually settle down abroad, e.g. “Tinka”, “Branko”; for them voting was a highly rational behavior and they just did not think it was worth doing.

III.1.b.2. Civic competence

Regarding the second element of the democratic culture, the sense of civic competence to enter and remain within the political realm, I could again observe, as in the case of Bulgaria, a clear generational difference; those 50 y.o. and older predominantly considered themselves competent to influence politics; an interesting case that only confirmed this trend was “Risto”, an ethnic Serb, who did not consider civic competence as an individual but rather as a collective capacity. Among the older subjects there was none who felt the influence of European integration as causal factor for his or her sense of civic competence.

Among the youngest age subgroup of 29 y.o. and less, most, again in harmony with their Bulgarian generational counterparts, did not shy from declaring themselves not competent to understand the logic of the politics and thus they considered themselves not competent enough to enter a game whose rules they did not understand. Among them there were few exceptions, most interesting being “Velko” and “Dobrina”, whose sense of civic competence was directly linked to the involvement within NGOs and EU-financed projects; these two informants hoped for a future civil service job; they were strongly influenced by European ideas of individual empowerment: “In Europe you have

strong citizens, not strong states”. Within the large intermediate age group of 30 to 49 y.o., the distribution between those declaring themselves competent or not competent resembled the distribution within the older age subgroup of 50 y.o. and older. Within this age group the Macedonians clearly declared being civically more competent than the Bulgarians.

As far as the professional distribution was concerned, between those with strong professional links to EU and ordinary people, the first group was composed of people who declared themselves civically competent with some minor exceptions such as “Tonka” who was a young woman working at EU info center in Skopje who seemed to have only two possible answers to just about any question: “I don’t know” and “There are people out there to think and to make decisions for us”. Within the second group, the ordinary people, they were fairly equally divided between declaring themselves competent and incompetent. When correlated with the level of education, I could discern an almost perfect match between those with high school education who fell into the group of incompetent and those with a higher education diploma who declared themselves competent to understand politics and their own place within it. In Bulgaria, there was no such strong correlation between the level of education and the subjective feeling of civic competence. The small subgroup of rich persons unequivocally declared itself competent; this again was in full contrast to Bulgaria where the subgroup of rich persons was split equally on this subject matter.

III.1.b.3. Collective action

Regarding the third key element of the democratic culture, the capacity to overcome ethnic and religious obstacles in the name of collective political action, most ethnic Macedonians, like most ethnic Bulgarians, showed no sign of rejecting their traditional ethnocentric values based on the ethnic only understanding of nationhood. Most ethnic Macedonians, again like most ethnic Bulgarians in Bulgaria, did not shy away from making hate statements against representatives of the main ethnic minority, which in the case of Macedonia was Albanian: e.g. “Kiro” and “Petko” complained about the higher Albanian fertility rates, using coarse and sexually colored language.

There were, however, some informants still with strong Yugoslav identity, e.g. “Ana” and “Borko”, who had no problems on a symbolic level of contemplating collective actions that transcended narrow ethnic and religious borders. These were also informants who, within the Macedonian ethnic majority, expressed the most pro-European attitudes. It was hard to say whether and to what extent for them the European idea could be detached from the symbolic heritage of the old Yugoslav federation. In other words, it was possible, and subject to further research, that the European idea represented only a politically correct substitute for reconstructing the old Yugoslav economic and social ties.

III.1.b.4. Beyond the socio-economic prerequisites

At the one extremity, in Macedonia, there was a small number of informants who neither voted nor felt civically competent and at the same time did not expect to overcome their narrow ethnic boundaries for collective action; in Bulgaria this group represented approximately half of all respondents. As in the case of Bulgaria, possible

reasons for such complete detachment from political life were either financial independence from the state or high expectations of imminent emigration. Unlike Bulgarians, Macedonians did not give reasons such as complete disillusionment that their political participation mattered as well as feeling smart enough to be above the political dirt. Also nobody gave as a viable reason for political detachment the role of potential EU integration, although the prospects of imminent emigration were strongly linked to the EU, which physically and symbolically equaled freedom of movement; unlike in Bulgaria, in Macedonia nobody linked the EU with the nature of the political regime at home; if there were any links, they referred only to the future when the EU could, eventually, threaten national and territorial unity by giving too much power to the Albanian minority.

At the other extremity, I could observe about a quarter of all respondents going to vote regularly, feeling civically competent and ready, at least potentially, to overcome their ethnic boundaries when collective action requires so; the relative share of this group was the same as in Bulgaria. Unlike in Bulgaria, where EU integration acted by strengthening the subjective perception of civic competence, in Macedonia it seemed that the main avenue of EU influence passed through strengthening the capacity of collective action beyond the ethnic and religious boundaries. The open question remained whether this influence was real or just another form of symbolically and materially reconstituting the old Yugoslavia.

In between, there were about a half of all informants who did not fall within any of these two extreme groups; for them some elements were positive, others negative; for comparison, this group accounted for about a third of the informants in Bulgaria. Within

this intermediate heterogeneous group there were people who still voted almost automatically without considering themselves civically competent or ready to undergo any sort of collective action. These people's demographic profiles tilted heavily toward the group of the ethnic minorities. For them EU integration was just an opportunity for reconstructing the lost national unity across borders, Albanians with Albania and Kosovo; Serbians with Serbia.

Another combination that revealed a particular trajectory was not-voting behavior coupled with a high level of civic competence regardless of the capacity for collective action. This rather paradoxical combination, as in Bulgaria, actually revealed the subjects who already felt more European, or perhaps still more Yugoslavian, than Macedonian; in some cases, at least potentially, this might have been a direct result of EU integration. Another subgroup was composed of people who regularly voted, felt competent enough, but did not contemplate any collective action beyond their ethnic group.

III.1.b.5. Some preliminary conclusions

To sum up the major political culture trajectories in Macedonia and trace the possible role of European integration: on a positive note, the EU can create expectations that some collective action going beyond narrow ethnic and religious boundaries is desirable, and thus help increase the level of political participation and diversify its forms. Within the ethnic minority groups, integration is a way of solving their national questions without resorting to physical violence and without redrawing international borders.

On a negative side, the EU, even before the start of negotiation talks, enlarges the spatial social environment by creating bigger opportunities for living and working abroad; some subjects take these opportunities and stop taking part in the national elections; this phenomenon applies equally to the ethnic majority and to the ethnic minorities. Another way the EU may affect negatively the political culture, this time within the ethnic majority only, is by contributing to the feeling that it threatens national and territorial unity and thus it may add to ethnic tensions and, as a result, to postpone integration itself.

A mixed outcome of EU integration is the trajectory where some people may stop taking part in the national political life and may switch their increased sense of political competence and collective action on a supranational level. Although not as present as in Bulgaria, this trajectory is already in the making in Macedonia too, as witness “Velichka” and ”Tinka” in their life plans. Last but not least, a certain number of interviewees, arguably fewer in Macedonia than in Bulgaria, do not show any substantial change in their political culture under the influence or under the expectations of EU integration. For them EU integration is non-event.

III.1.c. Comparing Bulgaria and Macedonia

Bulgaria and Macedonia are situated at two different points in time regarding EU integration. At the time of the field trips, Bulgaria was already a EU member state; Macedonia was still only an official candidate pending the start of the accession talks. Bulgarian citizens could travel to all and work in some EU member states pending the

full freedom of movement expected to occur by the end of 2013; the Macedonians at the time of the field trip in 2010 had barely been taken out of the Schengen entry visa list of countries; they could travel to Schengen states without visa as long as they possessed new biometric passports; the procedure to have such a passport usually took more than a year. If for the Bulgarians the EU influence was located both in material and symbolic areas, for most Macedonians the EU was just a matter of expectations, more or less real.

In comparative perspective, the preliminary conclusions are that EU integration affects both countries in both positive and negative ways as far as democratic political culture is concerned. On a positive note, in Bulgaria, where most EU directives are supposed to be already administratively enforced, the EU creates some better understanding of social and political life, and thus helps increasing the level of civic competence; in Macedonia, where the integration is still a matter of expectations and speculations, the EU influences mainly the capacity for collective action that goes beyond the narrow ethnic and religious boundaries.

On a negative side, ironically, the EU creates new larger spatial dimensions for individual development; in both countries people with strong pro-emigration sentiments may find these opportunities, still more real in Bulgaria than in Macedonia, a sufficient condition for not participating in the national political life pending their final farewell to the homeland. Another way EU integration may affect political culture negatively is by contributing to the feeling that it legitimizes and gives democratic allure to an oligarchic political regime, as is the case in Bulgaria, or by contributing to the feeling that it threatens the nation-state and its exclusive ethnic nature; this latter feeling is much more present in Macedonia and also present but much weaker in Bulgaria.

Another trajectory, neither positive nor negative, much stronger in Bulgaria, but already in the making in Macedonia, is the switching of the main level of personal reference from national to supranational level. Last but not least, a certain number of interviewees did not show any substantial change in their political culture, all elements combined, under the influence of EU integration; the obvious paradox here was that this absence of influence was found more easily in Bulgaria among the older generations than in Macedonia, where the symbolic presence of Yugoslavia was still powerful enough to put together in a cohesive way personal freedom, socialist ideal and presence of supranational structures.

III.2. Ethnographic observations

Making observations in two countries instead of one was certainly of help. Some observable information was more concentrated in one or another country. I must acknowledge that without this more accentuated presence some information could have been missed out in one or another country. The rest of this section divides the observed information into two subsections, one for each country, followed by a comparative analysis. The observations that are reported are chosen among those that either produce independent, from other sources, information or just corroborate with some of the statements made during the interviews. Each observation includes raw facts followed by first-hand reflections that explain the reason why it has become problematic within this research as well as some possible interpretations. Some additional analysis on the observed facts will be provided in the following chapters.

III.2.a. Bulgaria

For this country, I specify whether the observations are made during the first or the second field trip, in 2009 or 2010, and also whether they remain unchanged between the two trips.

1. I made this observation in 2009; the observed artifacts had disappeared in 2010.

The place was the Sofia airport's new terminal, the hall of arrivals and departures; a gallery of big posters sponsored by the Bulgarian ministry of foreign affairs, more exactly by the Minister Mrs. Gergana Passi, by the way in electoral

- campaign at that very time. Each poster, their exact number was 14, was divided into two parts, each representing both European and Bulgarian classical and modern paintings and/or sculptures. The name of the temporary gallery was “European images”. All names of the painters and their works were in English. My first reaction to this gallery was that it showed the inferiority complex of the Bulgarian government vis-à-vis the European union; it used art in order to elevate Bulgaria up to the European level; this explained also the use of English, hardly understood by the majority in Bulgaria, but understood by international travelers. Most interviewees to whom I had shown some of the images of the gallery, however, did not agree with my interpretation. They exclusively pointed out the electoral context of the exhibition. In 2010, when the gallery was already closed, another independent interpretation partly confirmed my conjectures; according to it Bulgaria had always been a European state, the art was proof. These two interpretations were not mutually exclusive. They confirmed a dynamic within one of the trajectories, represented by a civil servant “Jivka”, already discussed in the previous section; these individuals were constructing an imaginary national past where Bulgaria was part of Europe with the practical consequence that Europe had no superior moral authority to ask behavioral changes from Bulgaria. Some Bulgarian politicians and their immediate entourage also would offer this interpretation, see the profile of Alexander Lilov in section 4.
2. I made this observation in 2009; the observed artifacts still remained intact in 2010. Sofia city center; numerous graffiti with racist, anti-minorities, homophobic and anti-province slogans, such as: “Kill Dogan (the leader of the Turkish ethnic

minority party) become a hero!"; "All Turks in common tomb"; "Turks out"; "The pederasts under the knife"; "Pederasts under humans" (in Bulgaria designation "pederasts" is generalized to all homosexuals, not just to pedophile homosexuals); "Adolf Hitler" (this latest is written as appears here, not in Cyrillic letters); "Sofia for Sofians". "B.Borisov (the name of the new Prime minister with the Star of David right to his name)". My first reaction to these graffiti was that the society in general was either highly intolerant toward the minorities of all sorts, or very tolerant toward the expression of such radical anti-minority views, or both. The interviewees largely confirmed both assumptions. The small number of people, such as those feeling more European than Bulgarian, or people that contemplated common actions with minority representatives, for different reasons would not react against such graffiti; the "Europeans", such as informant "Mika", would consider themselves to be "above" such domestic matters; the "Liberals", such as "George", would consider the matter as representing private opinions, i.e. free to be expressed in a free society.

3. I made this observation in 2009; the observed artifacts still remained intact in 2010. This observations dealt with some office spaces in Sofia that should have been used for "European" purposes, mainly as information points where citizens could get information and other materials about the EU, their rights as European citizens, some programs of general interest, e.g. universities and scholarships for students. I observed that some of these spaces were either emptied or turned into alternative use, such as cafes, newspaper kiosks, a cinema that showed largely American movies. My first reaction and interpretation to this was that these

spaces were intended to show the EU officials the interest in Bulgaria up to the date of joining the Union; with the growing understanding in Bulgaria that the EU had very limited and diminishing leverage over Bulgaria after the membership in January 2007, these spaces like “Potyomkin’s villages” were left without financial support and thus abandoned from their intended principle use. This impression confirmed some of the statements made in the interviews: e.g. “Darina” says “The code word before 2006 was to get into the EU and then we would see”. Indirectly, this impression that the EU symbolic power over Bulgaria was diminishing was supported also by the fact that citizens were not really interested in European matters as they were before 2007 and immediately after. To be sure of that, I observed for several hours a European info center in Sofia that still worked for its intended purpose; the center was not visited by anyone, except me; the clerk was not friendly and was incompetent to provide technical assistance; the books in the library could not be accessed directly by the public, thus conveying the wrong message that EU intentionally made all information inaccessible just like the Bulgarian government. Despite the fact that this Info center had in its name “European”, the organization of the service looked very much like a Bulgarian local library, where access to information was also traditionally restricted.

4. I made this observation in 2009; the facts were still present in 2010. The observation dealt with the musical environment in the streets of the capital city of Sofia and in the second largest city of Plovdiv. It contrasted with the environment of the 1990s and the early 2000s on some important points: 1. The volumes were lower; the impression was that people were more inclined to respect the right of

- the other citizens not to feel attacked by music they do not like; 2. The genre of music had changed from largely local mixture of folklore, gypsy music and popular music, locally known as “chalga”, to western pop and rock music. A separate observation that later turned out to be inspired by the same motives, was the disappearance of the pornographic journals that were put on display in Sofia and also of the pornographic pages in many daily newspapers. This disappearance meant the pedestrians and the readers, children included, could not see it and that the local pornographic journals had given up to the large western brand names such as “Playboy”. I could trace the understanding of these phenomena, the change in music and the disappearance of pornography from direct display, to the direct references to the European, and more generally western, cultural environment. The Bulgarians had given up on being different with regard to esthetic values. Additional analysis made me think that it had less to do with “giving up” than with intentionally trying to change appearances. The new business and political elite wanted to be associated with western “high” culture instead of local endogenous popular culture. After many years of neglect, the theaters were again crowded with people. The local media, printed and electronic, followed this change oriented on Western cultural models.
5. I made this observation in 2009 and in 2010. The observation itself dealt with the presence of European symbols such as EU flags or the logo “Euro” associated with different organizations and activities, not necessarily governmental or associated directly with the EU and its presence in the country. Compared to 2009, in 2010 governmental buildings had observably fewer European flags; as a

contrast, some private interests, such as banks or even restaurants, had begun or had kept displaying European symbols. The reason why the government was less enthusiastic could be linked to the general understanding that European influence was decreasing, see observation #3, or perhaps to the understanding that the European symbols did not increase anymore the political legitimacy of the government. As far as private enthusiasm was concerned, the use of “Euro” logos had to convey the idea of security either to Bulgarians or to foreigners living and working in the country. Putting the logo associated with European Union on the banks was the way of convincing the Bulgarians that they could keep their money there without risks; the need of this additional symbolic “security policy” could be explained with the long history of financial crises in the country during the 1990s which were still present in the popular memory, especially for the people aged 35-40 and over. Putting European logos on restaurants targeted mainly foreign clients; in a country notorious for its low food standards this was another way of claiming that the food served there met unspecified higher “European” standards of quality.

6. This observation dealt with acts of respect for law and order. In Bulgaria, traditionally, law and order was a foggy concept and most people looked at it through the prism of their personal interests only, behaving frequently as free riders. However, they gradually were becoming aware through media, travel, immigration, of the European, and more generally western, norms of behavior that reflected a very different culture of law and order. My observations included numerous cases of smoking in prohibited areas, not wearing seatbelts in cars,

- drinking alcohol in public and other legally prohibited acts. The interviews largely confirmed that Bulgarians were still not respecting the laws. To reconcile these behaviors with the new European identity some Bulgarians, as also revealed through interviews, e.g. “George” and “Nako”, had developed the original concepts of “Southern Europe” vs. “Northern Europe”. According to this new symbolic division, Bulgaria had actually been integrated more precisely into “Southern Europe”, together with countries such as Greece, Italy, and Portugal, where not respecting the laws, many Bulgarians really believed in this, was not such a big problem as in the northern parts of the continent. The conclusion was that the Bulgarians, at least some of them, had found an easy cultural way of taking a “detour” from the need to apply the rules, including European directives, which did not comply with their personal interests and yet still considered themselves being Europeans. Such a “detour” allowed eliminating the otherwise negative consequences on the consciousness like the feelings of guilt or shame.
7. This observation logically followed from the previous; it dealt with behavior that was at the border between legality and illegality. Private security forces protected many residences and office buildings in Bulgaria. Some Bulgarians felt forced to secure their valuables because they did not trust the national police, considered protecting mainly the state and the most economically powerful interests, not the ordinary citizens. The observation showed that the national police could also offer paid security services as if it was a private company. These observations, confirmed in interviews, e.g. “Konstantin”, showed that the ordinary Bulgarians, when in trouble, were more likely to be disposed to appeal for help to these

private enforcers instead of going through legal and even less through political channels.

8. This final observation for the country dealt with some acts of new collective action that transcended the individual atomization, which was still largely dominant in Bulgaria. After the collapse of communism, the government on national and local levels abdicated from its responsibilities on many common projects, such as maintaining roads and parks. The economy was largely privatized. The public domain, however, that technically could not be privatized, like the streets, parks, and zoos, went financially and organizationally abandoned. For many years it was the law of the strongest that was applied to these public areas; e.g. private cars were parked on the sidewalks or in the kids' playgrounds. In the recent years, the trend was for the public authorities, both the state and the municipalities, to reclaim their authority. In Bulgaria such reclamation, however, did not directly confront private interests, but tried instead to coordinate private interests for the common purpose. As a result, some parks had already been reclaimed for their original recreational purposes; in exchange, putting their names on display as commercials from their business had promoted the private interests. Some public civil servants spoke, e.g. "George" and "Kamen", openly in the interviews about their new roles as honest brokers between private interests thus confirming the increased recurrence of these practices; on the basis of being honest brokers some even fantasized about having become more "public" than "state" servants, e.g. "George".

III.2.b. Macedonia

1. The observation dealt with the presence of huge national flags on very tall masts on display in the capital city of Skopje and in other locations. The Macedonian flag itself showed a stylised version of the ancient Macedonian Vergina Sun. The flags were usually not accompanied by other flags, either European or municipal; they could have been situated near governmental offices, at the border control, or on public squares and alongside main boulevards in the capital city. They usually flew far above the surrounding buildings, at approximately 30 meters. Such display of national symbolic to my memory, later confirmed by archived photos and interviews, was not present during the 1990s. My first impression was that the flags reflected increased nationalist sensitivity and a feeling of insecurity. This could look like a normal display of insecurity given the young age of the modern Macedonian state, which was less than 20 years old. What made this interpretation not quite plausible or at least not sufficient was that the sense of national insecurity appeared actually to be increasing, instead of decreasing, with the passing of the time; as if in 2010 the Macedonian government and the public alike felt the need for more nationalist symbols than in the early 1990s in order to feel more comfortable. Could it be that European integration was a factor in this increased sense of insecurity? Some of the interviewees suggested that the EU might be a factor in this display of national symbolic. Some interviewees, such as “Petko”, “Pavka” and “Jordan”, to mention a few, even pointed out, in a similar

vein, at the new Skopje urban development plan, or Skopje-2014, that reflected the same feeling of uncertainty. A new interpretation was that the display of flags which began approximately 2 years ago under the current government and the project Skopje-2014 were intended, by showing the unity between Macedonian government and majority of population, to influence foreign governments about the right of Macedonia to claim the ancient Macedonian political and cultural heritage, including the name of the republic; another intention was to convince, this time, public opinion about the capacity of Macedonia to deal on an equal footing with growing European political pressure.

2. This observation was a comparative follow-up on the observation with regard to the music and other esthetic changes in Bulgaria. Regarding music, in Macedonia, as in a time machine, I had the impression that I was still in Bulgaria of the 1990s; the musical genres were much more heterogeneous, yet with clear predominance of the locally produced “chalga”; the music itself made much more noise than in Bulgaria nowadays but it was as noisy as in Bulgaria in the 1990s. I could not stop thinking that the political battles over European integration in Macedonia, and its relative advantages and disadvantages, found distant analogy in the musical street environment. The fact that the society still struggled over the hegemonic musical genre, national songs expressed in local language vs. international songs that were mainly in English, could explain the higher noise volumes in Macedonia. In Bulgaria, where the battle had already been settled in favor of “international” rhythms and lyrics, the volumes were significantly lower. This interpretation was indirectly confirmed by other observations: TV and radio

- channels in Macedonia still predominantly broadcast “chalga” songs, as were the case in Bulgaria up to the early 2000s.
3. This observation dealt with the public display of “Euro” logos and symbolic, including flags, associated with different governmental, non-governmental and private organizations; European flags were usually relegated to secondary position compared to Macedonian flags. In Bulgaria, on the contrary, the government had appropriated European flags and put them on equal standing with the Bulgarian flags even before the official start of the accession negotiations. As far as I could remember, it happened as early as 1992 when Bulgaria became a Council of Europe member; EU flag and the Council of Europe flag were identical. In Macedonia, the different branches of the government either completely ignored EU flags, this concerned the parliament building and the presidential residency, or put them on much lower standing and in much fewer numbers than the Macedonian flags; e.g. the governmental building in Skopje. Regarding the NGO sector, there was an interesting correlation between the political orientation of some of these organizations and the use of EU flags alongside the Macedonian flags in front of their headquarters. The European symbolic was much more common to organizations whose members expressed sympathy toward the current opposition and former communist party. On the contrary, those who predominantly sympathized with the current nationalist government did not show any EU symbols. As far as private interests were concerned, there was a huge variety in EU logo use, from some banks and financial corporations to pharmacies and a street shoe polisher. Unlike Bulgaria,

- the private use of “Euro” logos as a symbol was hardly related to claims of higher standards of quality. According to some interviewees that tilted politically toward the current government, e.g. “Petko”, “Pavka” and “Jordan”, these private utilizations of “Euro” logos were in fact the modern version of the old “Yugo” logos linked to the old communist nomenklatura. Unlike Bulgaria, where the “Euro” logos had never been used for narrow partisan purposes, in Macedonia they seemed to be an important part of current political struggles.
4. This observation dealt with acts of respect for law and order, and was largely inspired by parallel observations in Bulgaria. Under observation fell the same acts of behavior as in Bulgaria: wearing car seatbelts, smoking in prohibited areas, drinking alcohol in public, and some other acts. The contrast between the two countries was very much in view. In Macedonia people generally respected the rules, written as well as unwritten. All interviewees confirmed that the people were also aware of their respect for the rules; the European Union representatives in Skopje also confirmed these flattering observations. Unlike in Bulgaria, in Macedonia the individuals felt proud of being able to contribute to the common good by their individual acts. This pride had nothing to do with foreign authorities; people respected a law because it was a law, not because they wanted to please outside observers with how civilized they were.
 5. This observation dealt with the use of parallel security forces; it was inspired by some parallel observations in Bulgaria. In Macedonia, on the contrary, there were no signs of private enforcers, such as “This object is protected by...” followed by the name of a private company; there was not even any mention of such

suspicious activity in the interviews either. The citizens largely looked to the police and, this was rather specific for Macedonia, to their kin for help in case of trouble; the ethnic minorities were much more likely to turn to kin solidarity; the ethnic majority was fairly equally divided on this issue between kin solidarity and the national police.

6. This observation dealt with displays of graffiti with political connotations. It was inspired by the presence of graffiti with anti-minority and homophobic texts found in Bulgaria. After extensive search for such type of graffiti in Macedonia I did find but only few (e.g. “Adolf” in Cyrillic). This looked surprising given that in the interviews people often mentioned ethnic and religious tensions, mainly regarding the biggest ethnic minority, the Albanians. My preliminary conclusion was that the presence of a real ethnic problem in Macedonia, and Skopje had significant Albanian neighborhoods, made people very cautious regarding such open expressions of hatred as graffiti. In Sofia, Bulgaria, which was ethnically homogenous despite ethnic guest workers, and far away from ethnic regions, such hatred could pass unnoticed and without fear of negative social and political consequences. As far as the political graffiti in Skopje were concerned, the type I found dealt mainly with appeals for political action: “Gotce return” (Gotce Delchev is a national hero); “Tito – president”; “Tito – SDSM” (SDSM is the Macedonian abbreviation for the successor organization of the communist party). The respect paid to dead political leaders in Macedonia was something quite unusual for Bulgaria where people stopped idealizing politicians almost immediately after they were elected and took office.

III.2.c. Comparing Bulgaria and Macedonia

The observations showed that feelings about the EU influence vary significantly in these two countries: in Bulgaria the impression was that EU as a key factor was gradually diminishing; in Macedonia, on the contrary, the impression was that EU was increasing its pressure by virtue of increased reaction to it. As far as the national, mainly ethnic, identity was concerned, in Bulgaria there were no feelings about any real and present danger coming from Brussels. “European” and “Bulgarian” were rarely put in opposition, save from those who looked for more arguments to justify their proper denationalization. The sense that Bulgaria belonged to “Southern Europe” might help prevent such opposition in the future. In Macedonia, where Europe was viewed still as a homogenous entity, and nobody spoke of Northern vs. Southern Europe, some parts of society saw it as a threat to national identity. In addition, in Macedonia, unlike in Bulgaria, the European project had profoundly divided the political and intellectual elite into supporters and skeptics.

In Bulgaria, European integration as a result of an asymmetrical power relation was largely seen as being without alternatives from its very beginning; in Macedonia, there were apparently political alternatives, such as symbolically making these relations more symmetrical. Regarding attitudes toward the ethnic and other minorities, Bulgarian xenophobes found surprisingly in “Europe” an ally instead of a strict disciplinarian. In Bulgaria, being a hardliner toward the Turks and the Roma had never been and was still not considered shameful; on the contrary, it became a part of a new European normality.

Surprisingly, the Macedonian nationalists, whom I expected to show similar public hatred against minorities, because of their European skepticism, showed much more restraint in their behavior; they could not refer to Europe as a moral guide in their hatred. In Macedonia, unlike in Bulgaria before EU membership, people realized that an eventual EU membership would require profound changes in behavior. No Macedonian spoke about two Europes, one of which being less strict on respect for the law.

People in Macedonia, in general, were much more law-abiding than in Bulgaria, but this difference was more than simply quantitative. The Macedonians valued such law-abiding behavior; the Bulgarians, on the contrary, valued disrespecting the state and its regulations. This difference would certainly help Macedonia become more like Europe after it becomes an EU member, but would not help the process itself because of the fears associated with this magnitude of the change. On the contrary, in Bulgaria, the accession period was culturally much easier to pass, with slogans like “First get into the EU, later we will see!” Regarding the capacity for collective action, the Macedonians, because of their strong kinship bonds and/or respect for the law, differed significantly from the Bulgarians, who remained predominantly individualists who valued more brute force.

The image of European integration was different in these countries; in Bulgaria, which was culturally always separated from the West during the Cold War, integration was viewed as a unilateral road westward. In Macedonia the situation was much more complicated given its history, real and imaginary, and the communist period positioning between the West and the East. What in Bulgaria intellectuals and people called “The road to Europe”, in Macedonia could easily, akin of the Central European nations, be presented as “Returning to Europe”, which would require some intentional movement

westward, or even as “Taking back Europe”, which would not require any such movement, but rather would require a radical change in EU policy toward Macedonia.

III.3. Text-analogues (political cartoons)

I analyzed 140 Bulgarian political cartoons. They were published in the local press and/or presented to different exhibitions since 2002. Most of them appeared in the following daily and weekly newspapers: “24 chasa”, “Capital”, “Dnevnik”, “Novinar”, “Noshten trud”, “Sega”, and “Trud”. For Macedonia I analyzed 50 political cartoons. They were published in “Utrinski vestnik” or exhibited in public since 2005. In Macedonia, unlike Bulgaria, there was no tradition of posting political cartoons in most newspapers. Therefore, most of the cartoons were only presented at local exhibitions or were published in thematic or authors’ brochures.

III.3.a. Bulgaria

Bulgarian political cartoons represented the following messages regarding EU integration *before* the formal EU membership of the country in January 2007:

1. The EU was represented as a strict teacher and Bulgaria as a (un)willing student. The EU set the rules, or goals, and Bulgaria had to apply, or reach, them. The relations were clearly shown to be objectively asymmetrical with the dominance of the EU over Bulgaria. The EU was not only omnipotent, vis-à-vis Bulgaria, but also omniscient. The EU was always active; Bulgaria was always passive. There was a clear line of separation between the EU and Bulgaria; they represented

- different identities; Bulgaria was still shown to be located outside the Union not only geographically but also culturally.
2. The EU was represented as a financial donor and Bulgaria as a financial recipient. This set of cartoons did not represent the EU as omniscient. As in the previous set of messages, there was a clear division between EU and Bulgaria as pure separate identities. Unlike the previous message, Bulgaria was not a EU student, but rather a ruthless exploiter of its financial resources. In this message, Bulgaria was much more active and the EU was more passive; getting money required moving away from the state of inaction; letting money go required at least tacit acknowledgement that the EU was not omniscient about the real situation in Bulgaria and about how the money was spent. In close parallel with this message, another set of cartoons presented the Bulgarian criminal underworld as even more enjoying the approaching EU membership.

After the formal membership the topics undergo the following mutations:

1. A set of cartoons dealt with the new more complex Bulgarian identity as part of the larger European identity. They showed a rather humoristic mixture of European and Bulgarian signs; the message, after speaking to some of the authors, was that being both Bulgarian and European was not possible; therefore Bulgarians always wore or were associated with traditional folklore costumes that looked strange together with the European symbols.
2. The EU was still considered for a while as a financial donor and Bulgaria as a financial recipient. The motives of even greater benefits for Bulgarian criminal

- underworld were still present. Gradually, from the early 2008, this topic retreated as the EU began stopping financial aid and threatened to impose ever-growing financial sanctions. Since then there was a growing understanding in Bulgaria that the EU “free lunch” or the “party” was over.
3. Closely related to the previous, the image of the EU as an omniscient teacher reappeared again, but this time not as a guide for passive and obedient Bulgarians, but rather as a corrective for bad faith students who refused to follow the European guidelines.
 4. A set of cartoons took from the idea of incompatibility of values between Bulgaria and Europe and made suggestions that this existing fissure might lead to severance of European integration.
 5. In the second half of 2009, for the first time a common symbolic denominator was found between Bulgaria and the EU that made Bulgaria fully compatible with some European values. This denominator was political corruption and the cynical attitude toward the politics. Bulgaria was fully European not despite its corruption, but because of it. Integration, as a process of changing, was over. Bulgaria was symbolically already inside Europe. They spoke the same “language”. They behaved as equals. The asymmetrical power relation disappeared.

III.3.b. Macedonia

1. The EU was represented as a financial donor and Macedonia as a financial recipient; on this issue some Macedonian and Bulgarian cartoons looked very much alike. There was a clear division between the EU and Macedonia as separate identities. The sense of asymmetrical relations was clearly emphasized.
2. The EU integration project and Macedonian national values represented different avenues for the country's development. They were mutually exclusive and people had to make up their minds; they could not belong to both of them at the same time, but they could make a choice. They looked equally powerful; therefore any of them could potentially become dominant.
3. Macedonia was presented through its ancient history, thus defying the legitimacy of the European cultural domination over Macedonia. Integration, if any, had to follow the logic of the "natural birthright to enter", not of the "demand to be allowed". The asymmetrical relations here were inverted. Macedonia entered the scene from a position of the powerful; the EU was presented as the weaker side in the equilibrium.
4. Macedonia in vain looked for road(s) and way(s) to enter Europe. The door was always closed and locked. The horizon was always moving back and away. All efforts to move closer to Europe were futile.

III.3.c. Comparing Bulgaria and Macedonia

Bulgarians see the EU from the beginning of integration as more powerful factor in the mutual relation. As far as Macedonia is concerned, there is no consensus as to the

relative weight of the two factors. For most of the period, Bulgarians see themselves and the EU as two different elements; for Macedonia, this remains true up to the present. Bulgaria, at least in some cartoons, has overcome this exclusive dichotomy by presenting the image of a common European identity that embraces the country; Macedonia has not. Bulgaria shows a picture of multidimensional relations with and within the EU; what is good for some Bulgarians may not be so good for others. For Macedonia the EU is still a unified entity that affects the country, positively or negatively, also as an entity without internal social divisions.

Regarding most cartoons in both countries, they adequately represent the institutional level of EU integration; Bulgaria already being a member since 2007, and Macedonia still in the waiting room to begin negotiations. What does not naturally follow from the logic of institutional framework is the unintended “Made in Bulgaria” solution for the common EU identity; it is a cynical common identity bordering on criminal activity. Another unintended result this time “Made in Macedonia” builds on the local perceptions of the relative power of the EU; instead of complying or strategically accommodating to the stronger party, this vision tries to move the seesaw in the opposite direction; Macedonia symbolically becomes stronger and the EU weaker.

Such a unique way of responding to the asymmetrical power relation in Macedonia has no analogues in Bulgaria from the period before and after the start of accession negotiations. This dichotomy between the two countries, this time conceptual instead of just chronological, shows that asymmetrical power relations not only can create unintended outcomes away from the simple dichotomy between automatic learning and strategic accommodation, or a third option, but can also produce different types of

third options, different cultural trajectories that defy both logics that dominate the literature. I will focus more on these different third options in the following chapters.

III.4. Political leaders' discourse

The focus in this section is on the individual political leaders. The politicians, however, do not live in isolation. They are physical but also symbolic centers of groups of followers who maintain their beliefs through intense communication. Therefore I tried not to fall into the trap of a “tunnel vision”, to take no notice of the ideas of those who were part of these groups of followers. Because of the sheer volume of this additional enterprise they were not explicitly part of this account; however, the bits and pieces of their ideas expressed elsewhere were used when necessary in order to understand the top politicians' positions and their evolutions that might have otherwise seemed debatable and unclear.

III.4.a. Bulgaria

Alexander Lilov (b.1933)

Member of the Politburo of the Communist Party and of the State Council in the 1970s and 1980s. Leader of the Socialist, former Communist, Party in 1990-1991. Known in the party circles as the “strategist”. From 1993 led the Party's Center for Strategic research. PhD. Worked on philosophy of art, ideological struggles, and international relations. Among his most recent works were: “The dialogues of civilizations” (2004) and “Informational epoch” (2006). Despite the lack of formal positions in the state, there was a consensus among his political friends and enemies that he was still among the top decision-makers in the Socialist Party. He was credited with

having imposed the idea of unity at all costs within the party despite the calls for separation of the communist and social-democratic wings at the beginning of the post-communist transition.

An overview of some recent writings and interviews of Lilov showed that he remained a communist believer as far as the final goal of social development was concerned. He stated that there was a new form of society developing beyond the industrial and the capitalist form of production, and also beyond the soviet type of socialism (Tema News 2001-2011)². As a true Marxist, he believed that this new society would come forward following objective laws of history, and as such it was historically inevitable. Talking about Bulgaria within the large European Union, Lilov was a utilitarianist: the European Union was just an economic tool for Bulgaria to overcome its technological backwardness through foreign investments that could not be accumulated fast through internal sources. Nowhere Lilov spoke about national identity shifts toward more European elements whether descriptive or normative. The nation-state for him remained historically and conceptually the best level of analysis. Lilov did not consider European liberal democracy as the only possible for Bulgaria or even as the best form of political regime, although he acknowledged that it might have some benefits over the Soviet political regime³. Nevertheless Lilov defended the need for authoritarian leaders, akin to the Machiavellian princes of virtù, to push ahead Bulgaria on the fast track of the post-industrial informational society (Tema News 2001-2011)⁴. To summarize Lilov's political positions, he did not change significantly toward a more procedural and egalitarian political culture. He remained deeply entrenched within the communist

²<http://www.temanews.com/index.php?p=tema&iid=333&aid=8066>

³<http://gerbsenior.blog.bg/politika/2009/01/31/aleksandyr-lilov-interviu.284436>

⁴<http://www.temanews.com/index.php?p=tema&iid=333&aid=8066>

teleology; he believed that a perfect social world beyond politics was not only possible but also historically inevitable. European Union membership was just the way to accelerate the path of history in Bulgaria and therefore it was desirable. The ultimate civilizational goal, however, lied beyond the EU itself. Comparing the ideas of Lilov with the set of Bulgarian interviews, I could safely say that there was a good match between them and those who still believed in communism. They were also people of certain age (70 and over; see section 1). For them, post-communist transition was no more than a strategic retreat or a temporary accommodation before further political and social mobilization that aimed to build a communism. There was not even a talk about accepting the new procedural rules as fundamentally fair, or, using Lilov's words, there was no acceptance of the "end of history".

Georgi Parvanov (b.1957)

President of the republic since 2002 and reelected for the second and last 5-year term that started in 2007. Former leader of the Bulgarian Socialist Party (1996-2001). In early 1997 he was largely credited with preserving the social and political peace in the country by refusing, on behalf of his party, at that time with an absolute majority in the parliament, to accept a new mandate to form a government. In mid-2009 he was credited with the idea of electoral law amendments that introduced mixed proportional-single district systems instead of the existing simple proportional system. Doctor of history (1988); his scientific interests lied with the history of the socialist and communist movement in Bulgaria as well as with the Bulgarian national movement. Between 1992 and 1996 he was director of the Center for historical and political studies of the Socialist

party. Up to the late 1990s, as a leader of the Socialist party, he strongly suggested to take into account the negative Russian position on NATO and EU enlargements (Demokracija Newspaper 1997)⁵.

Unlike Lilov, Parvanov was not a communist believer. For him the real social world, the world to be improved, was the world we lived in. The European Union was mainly a tool for economic and technological modernization, and a guarantor for the peaceful development of the continent, in general, and of the Balkan region, in particular. The EU, according to Parvanov, influenced the candidate countries either with the direct effects of institutional diffusion (President Website 2011)⁶ or by changing the expectations of the local political elites and general populations (President 2011)⁷. Some statements, however, showed that he was far from uncritical regarding European discourses in different areas. Taking collective security as an example, Parvanov remained “realist” by inviting Russia to be a more active player in the Balkans alongside Europe and the United States (President Website 2011)⁸ in what he described as regional balance of forces. Another way of using the EU for domestic political purposes was his idea of increasing the relative power of the president and reducing the relative power of the parties (President Website 2011)⁹. The imperatives of adopting European norms, according to Parvanov, clashed with the existence of hundreds of parties, which promoted particularistic economic interests. The presidential institution, on the other hand, according to him, was the most republican institution in the country (President Website

⁵http://www.digsys.bg/bgnews/show_story.html?issue=207224064&media=1523776&class=2407968&story=207225152

⁶<http://www.president.bg/news.php?id=183>

⁷<http://www.president.bg/news.php?id=2784>

⁸<http://www.president.bg/news.php?id=388>

⁹<http://www.president.bg/news.php?id=306> and <http://www.president.bg/news.php?id=3093>

2011)¹⁰, thus more adapted for coordinating the economic and technological development. We could better understand these ideas for institutional change with the special personal relations between Parvanov and the former Russian president Vladimir Putin and his projects of establishing a “power vertical”. There would be no space here to explain the reasons why, unlike Bulgaria, the presidential “coup” in Russia became possible in the early 2000s. It suffices to say that Parvanov was among the chief architects of the electoral law amendment in 2009, only weeks before the general election that tried to change the rules in order to reproduce the same parliamentary majority. This showed that Parvanov was not ready to play by the rules, and that he used the EU symbolically as an excuser for his attempts to change the rules of the political game. It was hard to find some analogies of this behavior with any other Bulgarian informant in the interviews unless we assumed the closeness between it and the “honest broker” trajectory found in some civil servants (see section 1). Another example of playing at the border if not outside frame of rules was Parvanov’s decision to back the new citizens’ political movement in late 2010 that might present candidates to the incoming elections. According to the current Bulgarian constitution, Parvanov as a president was not allowed to have party affiliations; the constitutionality of such moves was therefore questionable.

Zhan Videnov (b.1959)

He was a nomenclature cadre of the Communist youth organization in the late 1980s. He was the leader of the Bulgarian Socialist Party (1991-1996) as a political and ideological heir of Alexander Lilov. Bulgarian Prime minister in 1995-1997. He stepped down in late 1996 following hyperinflation, social protests and calls for resignation from

¹⁰Ibid.

inside the Socialist party. Left the Socialist party executive in 2000; left the party by 2009. He was part of radical socialists' groups for discussions, not happy with the official party policy and the general political direction of the country. He taught courses on European integration at the European College of Economics and Management in Plovdiv, Bulgaria.

Zhan Videnov was a radical socialist; yet words such as “communism”, “revolution” were not part of his everyday vocabulary. Instead, he preferred using negative qualifications, to attack the rich and most powerful, the mafia, oligarchs, firm directors, etc. (Vesti News 1998-2011)¹¹. Ideologically he was close to Lilov. Videnov was against the separation of powers and against the courts' independence from the political executive. The state for him was a machine that did not like having more than one head. This also explained why he was against the office of president that interfered with governmental policy (Dnevnik Newspaper 2001-2011)¹²; according to Bulgarian constitution the office of president was largely a ceremonial figure. For Videnov the art of politics was technocracy, deprived of feelings and subjective dimensions of any sort. This was what he saw in the European Union and European integration, an opportunity for attaining better technocracy and social management. This technocracy was value neutral; it might be used for different political projects, including radical leftist. There was no independent civil society in his political project; even the media had to be mobilized in order to reveal the enemies of the people. The state had to be kept economically and financially as independent as possible from foreign interests, western as well as eastern. For Videnov, electoral procedures came always second to the will of

¹¹<http://www.vesti.bg/?tid=40&oid=2749391>

¹²http://www.dnevnik.bg/bulgaria/2010/06/10/915180_jan_videnov_prezidentut_triabva_da_ima_samo/

people, which, undisturbed, had always to give power in the hands of progressive parties. If not, this was always a result of lack of political principles, such as being ready to form strategic electoral and post-electoral coalitions without other purpose than taking and remaining in power. Like Lilov, Videnov had sympathizers among some older leftist citizens (see in section 1). As a technocrat, he was also close to some of the trajectories within the Bulgarian civil service; they reflected the vision of the state as unitary and independent actor from the private social interests.

Ivan Kostov (b.1949)

He was an economist who supported Marxist ideology even after the start of post-communist transition in 1989. In 1990 he entered active politics and ran for a member of parliament under the banner of the united anti-communist opposition. In 1991 he was nominated as minister of finance. In 1994 he was elected as chairman of the anti-communist coalition, Union of democratic forces; he was reelected in early 1997. In 1997, he won the general election and became Prime minister. From this time on he was also known in the party circles as the “commander”. His government strongly pursued the EU and NATO integration goals. He lost the election in 2001 and stepped down as a party leader. In 2004 he created a new center-right party, *Democrats for strong Bulgaria*, which helped him enter the parliament in 2005 and again in 2009, although his influence was currently marginal. Because of his physical appearance many Bulgarians, usually opposing Kostov’s policies, called him “mangal”, which is a pejorative word for a dark-skinned gypsy.

Ivan Kostov was a conservative politician; he advocated a free market economy with some social protection, defending Christian moral values, and a strong foreign policy orientation to the West, EU and NATO combined. He was also a strong advocate of a United Europe of nations with the possibility, but only if necessary, of some supranational institutions such as the common European currency. Throughout the 1990s and up to the end of his term in office as a Prime Minister European integration, always together with Euro-Atlantic integration, was a “civilizing” project, a Bulgarian choice for modernity, free markets, liberal democracy, and human rights (Government Website 2009)¹³. In that sense he strongly opposed the perceptions that Bulgaria was destined to remain outside the Western sphere of influence. EU membership was instrumental in bringing Bulgaria into the West. By changing the main foreign vector, from Russia toward Europe and the United States, Kostov changed domestic power relations from balanced and even tilting toward Moscow at the beginning of post-communist transition to predominantly pro-western at the end of the 1990s. In order to please the EU, he was ready to make big concessions such as closing four nuclear reactors that Brussels considered dangerous (Kapital Newspaper 2010)¹⁴. When in opposition, Kostov nevertheless advocated the Bulgarian agenda in Brussels. After becoming a EU member, Kostov tried to block Turkey’s membership because of the violations of democratic norms and human rights; he also strongly opposed the right to vote among some ethnic Turks, born in Bulgaria, who lived permanently in Turkey since the mass expulsion in 1989. Kostov easily found close matches with some interviewees (see in section 1) as far as European integration was concerned. These were mainly older citizens who opposed

¹³http://sun450.government.bg/old/bg/prime_minister/statements/2000/02_11_Otchet_NS.htm

¹⁴http://www.capital.bg/politika_i_ikonomika/bulgaria/1999/10/30/252797_zatvariame_starite_blokove_na_aec_kozlodui/

the Russian influence in Bulgaria, open anti-communists, and financially independent persons thanks to the real estate restitution policy of Kostov's government in the late 1990s. Compared to the other Bulgarian politicians within this sample, Kostov "spoke" better European language; this language, however, had been learned before the European integration of Bulgaria officially started. Chronologically, Kostov had made his "civilizational" choice much before Brussels started the integration talks; and this was for strategic reasons linked to the distribution of political forces within and outside the country. In 2010 the EU remained for Kostov only a tool, material and symbolic, for clearing the internal political landscape of uncivilized and uncivilizable enemies, found mainly in the Socialist party but also in the Turkish ethnic *Movement for Rights and Freedoms*.

Simeon of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha (Simeon Saksoburggotski) (b.1937)

Born as heir to the royal family in Bulgaria, he was forced into exile in 1946 following a referendum establishing a republican form of government. In April 2001 he called for creation of political movement bearing his name, the *National Movement Simeon II*, to take part in the forthcoming general election. He won the election with a landslide and became Bulgarian Prime minister (2001-2005). During his mandate Bulgaria joined NATO in 2004. He lost the general election of 2005, but his party took part in the new government coalition (2005-2009). His party did not enter the parliament following the 2009 general election. Simeon of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha immediately stepped down from the party leadership. As political refugee he never renounced his

claims to be a head of state. As a Prime minister, in 2001, he took oath to protect the republican constitution.

Among Bulgarian politicians, Simeon was in a class of his own, being most of his life a political refugee, mostly in Spain, and also being a close or distant cousin to most European royal families. This gave him the unique opportunity to feel himself “European” long before most Bulgarians did; in other words, he did not need to prove his Europeanness or change identity in order to become European. Unlike most Bulgarians that still perceived Europe as “over there”, since 2007 he openly spoke of Brussels as “we”¹⁵. His principal political agenda when he entered Bulgarian politics was the restoration of the monarchy or at least putting under question the legitimacy of the republic as form of government. With the passing of time, his monarchic ambitions vanished and the role of a Prime Minister so far remained the pinnacle of his political carrier. Initially reluctant about strongly pushing ahead with the EU and NATO agenda, he gradually accepted the already predominant social and political opinion and built his political legitimacy as a strong advocate of both international institutions. Outside of power he used the EU as an institutional tool for pursuing his private interests (Dir.bg News 2010)¹⁶. Feeling both Bulgarian and European, Simeon could easily switch allegiance because there was no line separating both identities. In that sense his opinions were very close to some expressed by the interviewees (see in section 1) who used the EU in order to solve their private problems and thus being comfortable of becoming de-nationalized.

¹⁵<http://meto76.blog.bg/politika/2010/04/25/negovo-velichestvo-simeon-sakskoburggotski-chlenstvoto-ni-v-.534361>

¹⁶<http://dnes.dir.bg/news/simeon-saxkoburggotski-mincho-spasov-tzarskite-imoti-6835957>

Volen Siderov (b.1956)

He entered active politics as editor-in-chief of the main opposition daily newspaper “Demokracija” in 1990-1992 and later as deputy editor-in-chief of daily newspaper “Monitor”. He studied theology. His political views were laid down in literary writings “The Boomerang of the evil”; “The Power of the Mammon”; “The Bulgarophobia” that were published in the early 2000s. In brief, he considered the international Jewish-led conspiracy and freemasonry as driving forces for modern Bulgarian political development; they aimed at genocide and enslavement of Christian Orthodox nations, forcing upon them wars and cataclysms in order to make them financially dependent. He tried briefly to work as political partner for the Bulgarian Socialist Party in the mid-1990s and unsuccessfully ran for a candidate of the Simeon Saxe-Coburg and Gotha movement in 2001. He ran, unsuccessfully, for Sofia mayor in 2003. In 2005 his newly-registered party *Ataka*, named after his popular TV talk show, the National Union Attack, finished in 4th place in the general election with 8% of the votes. He lost the presidential election in 2006 against the incumbent president Georgi Parvanov. His party maintained its electoral strength during the general election of 2009.

Siderov opposed European integration as a form of suppression of the Bulgarian nation. He advocated a strong Bulgarian state and the assimilation of the ethnic minorities through education. Every Bulgarian government before and especially after the beginning of the post-communist transition represented mafia interests that aimed at the theft and destruction of the Bulgarian nation. The EU was a form of surrendering national sovereignty; the possible entry of Turkey into the EU would signal the beginning of a new Turkish (Ottoman) yoke in Bulgaria. The EU was ruled by special interests, by

politicians who stole as much as their Bulgarian counterparts. The more integrated Bulgaria became within the EU, the more radical the ideas of Siderov became. This radicalism paradoxically appeared less radical given the even greater radicalization of the mainstream politicians against the migrants in some EU member states, e.g. in France, witnessed by the issue of the Roma deportation in 2010. Despite his anti-European vocabulary, Siderov's speeches showed the acceptance of Europe as political "normality" that he used in order to measure up the Bulgarian, and other, political and social developments (Ataka Party 2004-2009)¹⁷. When necessary, he was ready to invoke some European principles, such as the free movements of people, in order to defend his positions. His positions and political trajectory easily found analogues throughout the general population.

Ahmed Dogan (b.1954)

He took part in underground political activity against the forced change of names of the ethnic Turks in the late 1980s. Arrested in 1987; condemned to 10 years of imprisonment for creating an anti-state organization. He fell under amnesty law and was liberated in the late 1989. PhD (1985). Founding father of the party *Movement for Rights and Freedoms* (1990), also known as the Turkish ethnic party, and its perpetual leader ever since. His party supported the governments in 1991-1992 and in 1992-1994 and took part in the governmental coalitions in 2001-2005 and in 2005-2009.

Dogan presented his party as part of an alternative political and ethnic model of inclusion in the Balkans in the 1990s, the other alternative model being the ethnic populism based on ethnic exclusion and oppression, e.g. the Milosevic's regime in Serbia

¹⁷http://www.ataka.bg/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=5102&Itemid=91

and the early Iliescu's regime in Romania. The European Union was used instrumentally by Dogan throughout the 1990s as a "normality" representing ethnic tolerance as opposed to the Balkanization. Political support in parliament was offered as an exchange for presenting Bulgaria as being up to the "European" democratic standards, and his party was presented as a guarantor for political stability and ethnic peace, given the strong and irreconcilable opposition between the Communist party successor and the anti-communist political poles. With the EU membership being mission accomplished in 2007, Dogan realized that the ethnic populism that was kept under control was about to blow up, and that his party would inevitably become the center of attacks of the Bulgarian ethnic majority¹⁸. Being again in opposition, without natural political allies, made difficult the task of surviving through building larger coalition(s). The EU could not be used directly anymore as a tool for influencing the Bulgarian policy because EU membership made Bulgaria relatively immune to critiques regarding the composition of government, e.g. which parties should be in. That was why Dogan tried to influence directly the European Union by manipulating its original idea of union of democratic values instead of just economic union or of Christian political club. By trying to shift the core European identity toward more ethnic and religious inclusiveness Dogan hoped to see Turkey inside the Union, and by turning it into multi-cultural project, to "normalize" his political position within the Bulgarian political landscape. Thus, for Dogan, European integration by 2010 was not just a means of directly changing his position within Bulgarian politics or changing the priorities of public policies, it was also a new opportunity for dialogue with Brussels that represented two-way political road of mutual influence.

¹⁸<http://reporter.blog.bg/novini/2009/12/13/dokladyt-na-dogan.453865>

III.4.b. Macedonia

Kiro Gligorov (b.1917)

He was a member of the anti-fascist resistance movement during the World War II and an active participant in the political creation of the People's Republic of Macedonia after the war. He was a member of the Yugoslav federal government in the 1960s and president of the federal assembly, the parliament, during the 1970s, and also a member of the collective presidency of Yugoslavia. After the establishment of pluralistic democracy he was elected twice as president of Macedonia (1991-1999). Severely wounded during a bomb explosion in 1995; he lost one arm and remained blinded with one eye. After his terms in office accomplished, Gligorov wrote books; he also created a foundation bearing his name for cultural projects. He was an important member of the *Balkan Political Club*, a club of former Balkan heads of states and heads of governments that aimed at contributing to the regional peace and prosperity.

Gligorov was largely perceived as a pro-Serbian politician despite his claims of being equally distanced politically toward Macedonia's four neighbors during his terms in office in the 1990s; these neighbors being Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Albania. He was the political architect of the first post-independence constitution (Makedonija Portal 1999-2011)¹⁹ and of the referendum for independence of September 1991. The referendum, that officially proclaims independence, in fact opened the possibility to renew political links with the other Yugoslav republics within a new union. This aspect

¹⁹<http://makedonija.name/government/constitution-of-macedonia>

of the referendum question should not be forgotten given the real situation in September 1991, when Yugoslavia did not have functioning federal institutions, the Slovenian ten-days war was over and the war between Serbia and Croatia had already begun. Despite the slow process of European integration during the 1990s, Gligorov was its strong advocate as an alternative to the ethnic enclosures and the creation of Slav or Christian Orthodox axes. Despite his European optimism, he did not accept European leadership without question (Utrinski Vesnik 2001)²⁰. In that respect, he shared the same opinion with many Macedonians who did not accept one-size-fits-all type of solutions coming from Brussels (see section 1). Gligorov, being optimist as far as EU integration was concerned as a distant goal, remained pessimist regarding its short-term prospective (Balkan Political Club 2002)²¹. That was why he suggested other intermediate forms of integration that stimulate regional cooperation. This key element might suggest that Gligorov still saw European integration through the prism of the former economic ties with the other former Yugoslav republics, a quite common opinion in Macedonia.

Branko Crvenkovski (b.1962)

He entered the politics at the first multiparty elections in Macedonia as part of Yugoslavia (1990). A former communist, Crvenkovski presided over the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia, the SDSM, since 1991, except for the time of his presidential term in office. He was a Prime Minister of Macedonia after independence from 1992 to 1998 and from 2002 to 2004. As a Prime Minister, he officially applied for EU membership. From 1998 to 2002 he was the leader of the opposition in parliament.

²⁰<http://www.ex-yupress.com/mkutvesnik/mkutvesnik8.html>

²¹<http://www.balkanpoliticalclub.net/media/publications/18/ChangingBalkansOHRID1.pdf>

Elected president of the republic for one term between 2004 and 2009. Known for his controversial decision in 1996 to remove all Albanian flags in front of governmental buildings in the areas where the Albanian minority represented the majority of the population; in 2005, as a president, he made a political U-turn by legalizing the Albanian flags.

Regarding the “name dispute” with Greece, which by extension was a dispute with the EU, Crvenkovski insisted on finding a solution that would be satisfactory to both sides (Macedonian International News Agency 2010)²². As a president he frequently expressed the view that Macedonia should live by European norms and not vice versa, thus accepting the asymmetrical power relation between Skopje and Brussels (Lobi News 2005)²³. By doing so, he put in jeopardy his political future, given the strong opposition within Macedonian society on this issue; I could summarize this negative social attitude with the sentence: “No name change, even at the risk of not entering the EU (and NATO)”²⁴. With nationalist propaganda playing in favor of his political enemies, now in power, the answer Crvenkovski was giving was to embrace the EU stand at any political cost even if that includes asking for change of the republic’s name, even in case of a real conflict of interests between Macedonia and Brussels, thus leaving the nationalist field even more in the hands of his political enemies. Crvenkovski’s views were shared by some ethnic Macedonians, and by most minorities in the country. The tough question was to understand the real influence of the EU on this ideological evolution; whether the EU was not just another name for asking for creation of new Yugoslavia when all former

²²http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=115280; also see <http://macedoniaonline.eu/content/view/15218/45/>

²³<http://www.lobi.com.mk/default-en.asp?ItemID=C52DBF45435D9D48A3C66DDCFD6F9681>

²⁴Ibid.

Yugoslav republics joined the EU. My tentative answer so far would be affirmative, the EU really was a way to sell again the Yugoslav idea; the proof was the change of the EU integration issue from marginal in the 1990s when Crvenkovski was a prime minister to top priority in the 2000s, when he was a president. In the 1990s an eventual rapprochement with the EU would have distanced Macedonia from most other former Yugoslav republics in the midst of military conflict. Once the wars ended and Milosevic was removed from power, the possibility of all former Yugoslav republics entering the EU became real, thus explaining the more active and pro-European polity of Skopje.

Lubcho (Lupcho) Georgievski (b.1966)

Leader of the Party VMRO-DPMNE from its inception in 1990 to 2003. The first vice-premier of Macedonia after its independence in 1991. Leader of the opposition in parliament until 1998 and a Premier between 1998 and 2002. Removed from the party leadership in 2003 he created a new party with marginal influence. While premier, he presided over the military confrontation between Albanian armed separatists and the police in 2001; the conflict ended after the EU provided diplomatic aide. After the conflict, he suggested the creation of ethnically pure nations on the Balkans, through population exchange, in order to eliminate the risks of new ethnic conflicts; he kept this idea unchanged throughout the years ahead (Frog News 2011)²⁵. This suggestion was universally condemned, thus probably contributing to his demise as a party leader in 2003. In 2006 he received Bulgarian citizenship (President Website 2011)²⁶; this decision was severely criticized in his country and he gradually left Macedonian political life.

²⁵http://frognews.bg/news_996/Liubcho_Georgievski_Velika_Albanii_shte_spasi_Makedonii/

²⁶http://www.president.bg/v_izivi.php?id=2644&st=10

Georgievski declared himself a “bulgarophile”, which in the context of Macedonia was a code word meaning either feeling ethnically linked to Bulgarians or feeling to be of Bulgarian origin. This position made him automatically an anti-Serbian and anti-Yugoslav politician. Accordingly, his attitudes toward possible EU integration followed the ups and downs of the Serbian chances for euro-integration. He was more enthusiastic toward EU integration when Milosevic was in power in Belgrade and EU integration would mean distancing Macedonia from Serbia; in the early 2000s, however, he proposed his anti-European plan of creating pure ethnic states. This anti-European turn explained why Georgievski complained about the agreement to end the ethnic conflict in 2001 as being imposed under the pressure coming from the EU and the United States (Frog News 2011)²⁷. By deduction, I would suggest that the conflict of 2001 itself was a way of ethnically dividing the country, mainly between the ethnic Macedonians and the Albanian minority with possible subsequent exchange of population. Regarding the “name dispute” with Greece, he advocated finding a compromise respecting the asymmetrical power relations with the EU²⁸. The reason for accepting this time the EU diktat might have lied in the strategic calculation to destabilize the ethnic identity of the country through imposing a new name, thus making the Macedonians more acceptant of the idea of their Bulgarian origin; only such a radical switch in national identity could guarantee that he reentered Macedonian political life as a mainstream politician. The views of Georgievski were now indeed very marginal in Macedonia; the idea of an ethnically divided Macedonia was not popular even among the ethnic minorities who preferred EU integration as a way of solving their national aspirations to live without

²⁷http://frognews.bg/news_996/Liubcho_Georgievski_Velika_Albanii_shte_spasi_Makedonii/

²⁸<http://emi2.blog.mk/2010/02/22/toplina-kon-ugarija/>

borders. For him the EU was either a tool or an excuse, never a new supranational identity.

Nikola Gruevski (b.1970)

His family originated from the territory of Greece. He was an economist (Global Politicians Newsletter 2007)²⁹; his economic ideas developed in the mid-1990s and were still not changed. He challenged the liberal dogma of the benefits of foreign investment for fast economic development. He was minister of finance in the VMRO-DPMNE government between 1998 and 2002. After the EU-brokered peace agreement in 2001 and the electoral defeat in 2002 he presided over the pro-EU faction within the party, ousting the former leader Georgievski and becoming himself party leader. He won the parliamentary election in 2006; he got another term in office with a landslide victory in 2008 after failing to secure an invitation for NATO membership; he won again the election in 2011. He was the political architect of the Skopje-2014 projet; a huge by the local standards public investment that started in 2008 aiming to change the image of the capital city center by adding ancient-style buildings, structures, and monuments.

Gruevski advocated finding a compromise with Greece over the name of the republic (Turkey & Macedonia Newsletter 2010)³⁰. He however did not accept that Greece picks the name or circle of names to choose from. He considered the EU not as unified entity, but as an international organization within which there were many, often conflicting, interests; he tried to isolate Greece within the EU in order to change the balance of forces in Macedonia's favor. His perception of the EU reflected his vision of

²⁹<http://www.globalpolitician.com/23730-macedonia>

³⁰<http://turkeymacedonia.wordpress.com/tag/nikola-gruevski/>

Europe as a community of relatively independent nations; a community within which the real decision-makers were and would always be the national governments. Within such a Europe, Macedonia had to remain relatively independent and relatively economically self-sufficient, which corresponded to his economic vision. For him the EU influence, which was by its very nature heterogenous, far from imposing the idea of inevitability of the membership, of the asymmetrical power relations, of the EU diktat, made him politically more active in order to rebalance these relations, by looking for strong allies within the EU³¹. Instead of complaining, like Georgievski, about the EU diktat, Gruevski affirmed his independence vis-à-vis the EU by trying to isolate Greece within the union; the strong popular support among the main ethnic group in Macedonia made him even more confident that his stand of defiance was politically sustainable.

It went without saying that his views were supported by many ethnic Macedonians. Unlike Gligorov and Crvenkovski who interpreted the EU as a tool of renewing the links between the former Yugoslav states, and Georgievski who saw the EU as a possible tool for “Bulgarization”, Gruevski entered a dialogue of defiance with Brussels to foster a separate Macedonian identity. The asymmetrical power relation between the EU and Macedonia, therefore, instead of bringing Macedonia closer to Brussels, made the country more independent and self-confident.

III.4.c. Comparing Bulgaria and Macedonia

³¹Most countries in the world, including many EU members recognized Macedonia under its constitutional name (Ministry of foreign affairs of Macedonia 2007). I personally observed that even at the EU office in Skopje the local political maps had names “Republic of Macedonia” instead of “Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”.

Bulgaria and Macedonia are on two different stages of European integration, which partly explains the differences in both countries between the developments of a new European identity (“I am a national but also European politician; I can act on different levels, national and supranational; I use different communities, national and supranational as references, determinants, and possible correctors for my policies; I look at influencing social life on both national and supranational levels”). Some top Bulgarian politicians develop such a new, more complex identity: Kostov, Simeon II, Siderov, and Dogan; there is, however, no such trend among the top Macedonian politicians. Interesting fact, none among the Bulgarian former communist leaders within the sample: Lilov, Parvanov, and Videnov, develops supplemental European identity; as it turns out, which may be the possible explanation for this fact, their political sub-culture is very resistant against western ideological indoctrination. They remain either communist believers, such as Lilov and Videnov, or use the EU only as an instrument for personal political ambitions, such as Parvanov. As far as European integration is concerned, the Bulgarian non-communist politicians are more likely to be influenced by it. Among them, however, Kostov is a peculiar case; he is under EU influence only if I enlarge the definition of EU integration well beyond the period of formal negotiations. He embarked on the EU train before the train is put together; as if he made the right calculation long in advance and adjusted his earlier positions, which were of being a Marxist economist, to fit the imperatives of the future world, neo-liberal and neo-conservative. Simeon II had fully adopted the European perspective to the point of using the EU institutions for personal interests. He, however, had developed this new identity long before the EU integration by any definition; in a sense that he was European as early if not much earlier

than being Bulgarian. I would point at the two remaining Bulgarian cases as most interesting for my research; Siderov and Dogan developed new European identities as EU integration went on. They felt part of a larger political landscape where their different political luggage, extreme right or liberal, could find storage space. They felt influenced directly by the processes within this larger landscape. But they were not just reacting to events that were orchestrated elsewhere. They both focused their policy on redefining the core meaning of being European, exclusively Christian or inclusively multicultural, respectively. They both looked at moving toward the political center and to a dominant position within domestic and supranational politics by rearticulating the main principles Europe was standing on. It seems that such approach is not trademark of Bulgarian politicians who represent ethnic minority interests. Dembinska (2009) reports similar development in other new EU countries, such as Poland, Latvia and Lithuania.

There was no corresponding new European identity under development among the Macedonian top political decision makers. Two of them, Gligorov and Crvenkovski, used the EU only as a politically correct tool for reestablishing close links with the former Yugoslav republics with a possible hidden agenda of reestablishing close links with Serbia in particular. Close to this group as a way of using the EU as a tool, but with the idea of moving Macedonia closer to Bulgaria was Georgievski. Only Gruevski was in fact strengthening the local national identity by redefining the power relations with the EU, a union that in his view was rather a community of heterogeneous interests than a supranational union speaking with one voice. Arguably, Gruevski was the only Macedonian politician who changed under the influence of EU integration, but in quite

different direction of the EU's formal intentions, by becoming less pro-European and more nationalistic.

The stronger influence of the EU in Bulgaria, even as a tool for personal political ambitions, was reflected in the fact that some Bulgarian politicians, all within the communist spectrum, could use it in order to change the rules of the political game in order to remain in power, e.g. Parvanov. This paradox could be explained by the fact that although the EU was perceived as influential by the population, the politicians, as relatively less influenced and more autonomous in their decisions, could use this new symbolic actor in order to change the political agenda, of course in the name of EU integration. In Macedonia, where the country did not see the EU as such a powerful domestic player yet, the local politicians, even if they contemplated unconstitutional political changes, e.g. Georgievski's idea of pure ethnical division of the country, they could not use the EU as a main excuse.

To summarize, most politicians, both Bulgarian and Macedonian, are relatively immune to the influence of EU integration in the sense of identity change; most of them remain and some, like Gruevski, move even more toward nationally-based identity, looking at the EU only as a tool for serving their short- or long-term political domestic agenda. Some politicians in Bulgaria, such as Siderov and especially such as Dogan, however, along with the instrumental vision of the EU, have also developed a new complex European identity allowing them to look at the political world differently, not only to fully accept liberal democracy's rules, but also to act simultaneously on different levels, national and supranational. This is not a simple reproduction of the institutional logic that follows the EU integration of Bulgaria. These two top politicians, especially

Dogan who represents the Turkish minority, are not simple agents that follow the imposed rules and norms from Brussels in exchange for protecting their own political and social or ethnic interests. On the contrary, they are relatively free actors who try to influence the source of their own new identity. They not only apply the norms without question, but also, and this applies especially to Dogan, enter a new form of dialogue that has a potential of changing the nature of EU integration by changing the nature of the EU itself.

IV. Discussing conventional explanations: advantages and disadvantages

Two ideal-types of cultural change under asymmetrical power relation, institutional and strategic, can be easily differentiated within the existing literature, see chapter I, the literature review. These ideal-types are based on specific ontological assumptions; the former (Levitsky and Way 2005a; 2005b; 2007; Pridham 1999; 2001; 2001; 2005; 2007) assumes the mechanical transfer of new norms and takes the local population, including the elite, as simple agents, the latter (Vachudova 2001; 2005; Mansfield and Pevehouse 2006) assumes more dynamic relations and takes the local population, especially the elite, as strategic players. Both models are fairly optimistic regarding the final point of EU integration; the new member states would finally accept the new norms and become like the old EU members. If roadblocks appear on the way to integration, they would be mainly either old cultural habits, for the institutional model, or lack of material incentives, for the strategic model. The former would gradually disappear with reeducation; the latter could easily be fixed after providing additional incentives. Both models assume that the more interventionist the EU becomes, putting emphasis on power and economic resources, the more likely the post-communist countries would be put on the right track.

This chapter tests these assumptions. It shows that the findings partially corroborate each of them. It also shows that some information refutes either of these assumptions. With the information presented in the previous chapter, I have enough material to either confirm or reject these conventional approaches on the basis of parsimony. Instead of using parsimony to confirm or to reject these conventional models,

I build ideal-types or ideal zones where these conventional approaches are largely confirmed by different sources of information. These zones are constellations of different, relatively independent, factors: material, individual and cultural, which creates an opportunity for these models to provide sufficient understanding of the EU integration influence on the political culture. The findings show possibility to reframe the information with new and alternative methods of interpretation; reframing does not call for collecting new information, but only to enlarge or to change the scope of new possible ways of understanding.

IV. 1. Institutional model of cultural change

The institutional approach to understanding and controlling political processes and behavior in general is the main theoretical paradigm at the origins of contemporary political science. Its premises are that the presence of certain institutional arrangements is sufficient to set in motion some desired outcomes as far as the political behavior is concerned. A necessary prerequisite is that the authority that imposes these arrangements has to possess a monopoly on the legitimate use of physical violence, following Weber's definition of the state (1959). Different causal mechanisms from psychological, the fear of the consequences for not obeying the authority, to cultural, through education and internalization, guarantee that the new norms would be accepted, if not immediately then at least gradually when a sufficient number of generational groups are exposed to their influence. This approach, although treating issues that are part of political system, is in fact a politics-killer, and a technocratic paradise at the same time. Within this approach,

intended social feedback is lack of any change beyond initial institutionally driven change. Either it presupposes the presence of a group of politicians and their counselors separated from society, who from time to time impose new rules without being pressured from below, or it presupposes the end of politics as human business beyond the initial intended outcomes. In any case, the institutional approach is not based on a dialogue between the rulers and the ruled; in agreement with Thucydides (1972, 400), the stronger party, which is the state vis-à-vis society, or the stronger state vis-à-vis the weaker state, gets as much as he can, and the weaker must accept that. The democratic mechanisms of control and influence are not an inherent part of this logic; a particular society can be ruled even without such democratic or even without any social counterforce. Ruling without positive social feedback is not a utopia; Tocqueville's (2003; 2008) fear of an omnipotent state that destroys society and individual freedoms until nothing is left of them is not a science fiction but an arguably good description of the French political experience before and especially after the revolution of 1789. In brief, the institutional approach at the origins of contemporary political science was much more descriptive than normative despite its formal allegiance to the law.

Further, and in a similar vein, the rulers as institution-givers are not automatically part of the elected officials. The sovereign state and democracy are two independent principles that are historically happily married, rather unintentionally, within the contemporary western political regimes. The presence of one of them does not automatically presupposes the presence of the other. The institutional approach of political culture change, therefore, as an ideal-type of governance, does not require any social feedback.

At the origins of contemporary political science, when the discipline was still part of law, as early as Walter Bagehot (2009) and Woodrow Wilson (2006), each one of them justified certain institutional arrangements, e.g. parliamentary vs. congressional types of government, that were expected to produce a good government, a government that would guarantee the rights and liberties in the age of enlarged electoral franchise. Such good government would protect the liberties from both omnipotent state and bonapartist-style dictators. Up to, and in some countries, well beyond the World War II, this law-based institutionalism was the predominant theoretical approach in political science. Looking for right institution or constellation of institutions had become a search for a philosopher's stone in political science. This approach was used not only to justify the existing order, far from it. Left radicals such as Lenin and liberal critics such as David Mitrany, each from different angles, applied its main premises in order to offer new solutions to old questions; the former (2009a; 2009b) establishing a new type of political institution, a party based on democratic centralism, and contributing to the creation of revolutionary councils as new form of state authority; the latter (1966) envisioning new horizontal asymmetric interstate institutional solutions within an anarchic world that would prevent a new global war.

In North America, this original institutionalist approach was put on serious test with the advancement of the new behavioral and statistical methods following the Second World War; in Europe, within or outside the context of European integration (Lijphart 1977; 1984; 1996) the institutionalist approach remained monopolistic up until the 1970s and perhaps much later; arguably it is still among the dominant theoretical paradigms. In Europe, unlike North America, not all countries acknowledge political science as a

separate discipline, making it still organizationally dependent from the faculties of law, history, economics and philosophy (Klingemann 2007, 17). In the sub discipline of international relations both realist and especially liberal streams use institutionalist premises. An additional reason why it is so important to try to look at European integration through the prism of this approach is that integration itself is engineered taking it and its premises into account. Most European Union leaders, from its founding fathers onward, share the same institutional zeal that requires putting the main emphasis on laws and directives instead of social interests and state-society dialogue. To illustrate this point, which largely contradicts neo-functional vision of Ernst Haas (2004) of the process of integration as spilling over from one domain to another, all new common policies should first be included in a union new treaty, agreed upon by all member states, before the European Commission could propose laws in these domains. This dominant institutional approach explains the need of constant EU treaty revisions in order to accommodate for any new important change, coming from either internal or external environment. The European Union, therefore, looks like an unaccomplished institutional project. This interpretation of the facts is profoundly anchored not only among the top European politicians, who often use construction metaphors, but also among foreign researchers (Boismenu and Petit, 2008).

The general literature on post-communist democratization, and that with a special emphasis on the EU enlargement and integration as a causal factor contributing toward this democratization, use extensively elements inspired from the institutionalist approach. If there is an official EU explanation of the link between enlargement and democratization, it is first of all institutional one; the strategic considerations, if

mentioned, come always second; democratic stabilization, peace and stability prime over economic growth, better quality of life and eventual financial assistance (EU 2002, 4-5). This set of priorities, institutional first, strategic next, is confirmed in my interviews with some EU representative in Skopje, the informants “John”, “Beth” and “Claire”.

Political and other conditionality should apply to all new members; new post-communist countries that expect to join the EU are exposed to the new institutions and norms that are part and parcel of the EU; they ultimately become part of domestic legislation and are subject to state enforcement. Following different mechanisms the population in the new member states accepts the new institutional behavioral framework; democratic behavior is part of this framework. A country that joins the EU, therefore, through the mechanism of institutional transfer is expected to become more democratic. Therefore, as presented in the hypotheses under H1 in chapter II, a society that is exposed longer to the EU institutional transfer, *ceteris paribus*, is expected to become more democratic. Individuals who are exposed longer to the EU institutional transfer within a particular society, *ceteris paribus*, are expected to become more democratic. The older people, socialized in non-democratic political culture, are expected to remain less democratic than the younger people despite the presence of EU integration as facilitating factor.

The following sections will test this ideal-type of relation between EU institutional transfer and democratization with the information gathered during the two field trips in Bulgaria, a country that is already a EU member, and Macedonia, which is still in the waiting room of candidates still hoping to begin accession negotiations. This test is not a hypothetico-deductive demonstration to confirm the correctness of this

model. The goal is not to prove or to reject it in general; it is rather an effort to establish the ideal zones or ranges of conditions, where this model would be more or less appropriate.

IV.1.a. Corroborating circumstances of the institutionalist model

I construct this section as testing of hypotheses regarding the institutionalist model of cultural change. My field trips to Bulgaria and Macedonia provided empirical material. The goal here is not to confirm or refute the entire approach, but rather to show the conditions under which this approach becomes valid, and, if such is the case, under which conditions it becomes more relevant than the alternative approaches. I make this demonstration by presenting informants in couples; each of them epitomizes different cultural trajectory despite these informants' similar socio-economic profiles. As far as different hypotheses will be tested, some informants may appear more than once as being representative to different concepts, e.g. are exposed longer to the EU institutional transfer within a given society, are exposed exclusively to the EU institutional transfer as part of one generation, or live in a country exposed longer and more intensely to the EU institutional transfer.

According to hypothesis H1a, individuals who are exposed longer to the EU institutional transfer within a particular society, *ceteris paribus*, sometimes become more democratic as far as their political culture is concerned. They may put an additional emphasis on respecting the formal rules of the game; they may feel more competent as far as the political system and political issues are concerned; and finally, they may

consider enlarging their scope of friends and partners when their social interests promotion is at stake. In all these cases, people can trace these changes back to the role of the EU integration as causal or at least as one among the key facilitating factors.

Bulgarian interviewee “George” was 45 y.o., male, a state civil servant, although he prefers calling himself “a public servant”. He administered international projects and grants within the Bulgarian ministry of culture; these projects and grants included, but are not limited to, EU financial resources, although, in fact, administering these EU resources represented a big part of his job. His daily tasks were twofold. On the one hand, he provided information to potential social clients about existing EU programs that were ready to provide financial aid; on the other hand, he contacted EU financial agencies to solicit financial aid for existing projects that could not be executed without such aid. This put him in constant relation both to EU authorities that provided financial assistance and to Bulgarian social actors that asked for such assistance. His contacts with the EU under many forms began in the early 1990s. He worked at the French cultural institute in Sofia; some years later he was appointed expert at the Bulgarian Council of Ministers to take part in the negotiation process with the EU. His contacts with the EU and the current work as an “honest broker” (as he described his position) were life changing. At the beginning of the 1990s he described himself as hesitant, without orientation, therefore inactive; he did not vote at that time. Now he felt freer, happier, more meaningful, with clearer vision about his and his own society’s future. He could see the real results of his work and be sure that they would not be washed away with the next governmental change. He talked with certain satisfaction about a micro-revolution in the people’s mentality, more readiness for cooperation, for going beyond individual selfishness. He

was ready to continue his work that put the accent on the personal meaning, despite his rather modest salary as a civil servant. Politically, he voted regularly now, he felt civically competent and self confident about the issues that were at stake, and was ready to cooperate with anyone, if necessary, regardless of his background toward collective political action.

In sharp contrast to “George” was “Boris”, 45 y.o., male, journalist and head of department at a national news paper. The reason to choose him to contrast with the “George” was their similarities in terms of socio-economic background. The main difference that made them interesting in the context of this research was that “Boris”, unlike “George”, had not been exposed to the direct influence of the EU in any of its material or symbolic forms. Indirectly, however, he knew about the EU far more than the average citizen; he was a journalist translating international news, including those coming from EU countries, and he frequently accompanied Bulgarian official delegations abroad. Yet, the last 20 years of transition had shrunk significantly his feeling of seeing clearly the general social development and its direction. A conversation with him was a chain of complaints about all imaginable life subjects: money, work, and sense of personal meaning and social cooperation. Gradually he lost touch with reality and described his situation as “being in a dark forest where invisible predators were preying to get you”. As nothing substantial had come out of EU integration, according to him, he felt even more confused now than earlier when he had some hope that someone, an outside force, would force a positive change upon Bulgaria. He advised his two children, 16 and 10 y.o., to study hard in order to move out of the country at the first opportunity. This was despite the fact that, in material terms, “Boris” was much better off than most Bulgarians and

significantly better off than “George”, his comparable case. In terms of political culture, “Boris” had stopped to vote, precisely when Bulgaria had become a EU member; he voted almost automatically before without feeling that his vote really made a difference; now he saw the EU as giving legitimacy to what he described as a political oligarchy, a small circle of powerful individuals who hid behind the backs of elected marionettes. Despite his above average access to information, he was ready to believe gossip and conspiracy theory rumors. He did not feel competent enough to understand where Bulgarian society was heading; he felt deeply mistrusting anyone who would ask him to join forces for collective action of any kind, including political. The EU for him remained a project that had not reached and would not reach the general population. He still looked at it as something that happened elsewhere, not for him or for the people he knew; for “George”, on the contrary, the EU was something that happened right here, he felt part of it, part of the process of making, not a bystander who only suffered the negative consequences.

In Macedonia, unlike Bulgaria, there were no officials with extensive experience in accession negotiations with the EU; the reason for this was simple – the country had not yet begun formal negotiations to join the Union despite having an official status of candidate country. Yet, there were individuals with intensive, although not long, relations with the EU, working, among others, in local NGOs. The interviewee “Velko” was 27 y.o., male, an intern in a local NGO that had strong ties with the EU as a main sponsoring organization; his tasks were mainly administering EU projects that transferred expertise to local administrations’ executives, mayors and councilors. He graduated from a local university majoring in European studies. His life plans were strongly associated with

Macedonia becoming a EU member; he found meaning in contributing to this goal. The EU was the key that opened the door for modernity and prosperity, for security in his personal and social plans. He easily took side with European conditionality and positions even if this would harm the national feelings of some of his compatriots. More specifically, he had no personal objections to changing the name of the republic in order to satisfy Greece, which as a EU member objected to the beginning of the negotiations until this sensitive issue was solved to its satisfaction. On this issue “Velko” was in a minority within Macedonian society; he was even more marginal within his generation of young ethnic Macedonians. He was, however, ready to withstand the angry comments from his compatriots because of his understanding that such a national concession was necessary for the common good. He, however, did not romanticize the EU; his job in an NGO brought him constantly face to face both with EU representatives and Macedonians who benefited from the EU aid and expertise. Very much like “George” in Bulgaria, “Velko” in Macedonia liked to see how he made a small but nevertheless visible difference in society. Despite their age difference of 18 years, and despite his shorter exposure to the EU influence, “Velko” could already make a difference between himself now and many years earlier when he thought he was more confused about his life plans and social development in general. He could also distinguish himself from some of his classmates who were not exposed to such EU influence, people who had largely remained on the other side of the line within the “name” debate. A life-changing event for him was the ethnic clashes between the police and the Albanian paramilitary formations in the early 2000s. At that time “Velko” was an army recruit and without the diplomatic intervention of the EU he could have been sent to fight and risk his life. The EU,

therefore, was for him like a guardian angel that despite public opinion was right to ask concessions from Macedonia in the name of peace; the special place of the EU in his heart had partly determined his academic background and his professional orientation. As far as his political culture was concerned, he voted regularly, felt civically competent and was ready to join forces, even with ethnic minority representatives, in the name of collective action. On all these issues he noticed a progress during recent years. On the contrary, Macedonian subject “Spiro”, 24 y.o. male and student in technology, had recently become less active politically; he had stopped voting after feeling incompetent to understand how his vote could make a difference. This was not a strategic calculation that equates voting behavior with the statistical possibility to influence election results; “Spiro” was not sure that his vote as a systemic input would produce the desired political output, in other words he was afraid that his vote would ultimately turn against him and his family which he cherished very much. Like Bulgarian “Boris”, Macedonian “Spiro” liked social and political gossip; he was also ready to accept without further proof many conspiracy theories that represented his country and his ethnic majority group as targets of foreign and domestic forces. He, unlike the Bulgarian “Boris”, did not see the world as a “dark forest”; the main reason for this was his strong family orientation. The family for him was a world apart, harmonious and predictable, nothing to do with the conflictuality and unpredictability of the world of politics. In the harmonious world of family kinships everything had its explanation, everybody had a place, and everybody felt meaningful. This romantic understanding of the family was no doubt a necessary opposition to the hostile outside-the-family world. After trying briefly to experience some of its forbidden fruits away from his family, “Spiro” had returned to his origins. Unlike Bulgarian

“Boris”, he did not plan moving away from Macedonia; on the contrary, his personal plans to stay in Macedonia and to raise ethnocentric and family-oriented children-patriots had never been stronger than now.

According to hypothesis H1b, individuals who are exposed exclusively to the EU institutional transfer and cultural influence within a particular society, *ceteris paribus*, sometimes become more democratic as far as their political culture is concerned than individuals for whom this exposure is part of a longer process of socialization under older and sometimes opposing cultural factors. In other words, younger people are more likely to put an additional emphasis on respecting the formal rules of the game; they may feel becoming more competent as far as the political system and political issues are concerned; and finally, they may consider enlarging the scope of friends and partners when their social interests’ promotion is at stake. In all these cases people can trace these changes back to the role of EU integration as causal or at least as key facilitating factor. To determine the appropriate age of people to illustrate this point I bear in mind that at the time of field study people in Bulgaria and in Macedonia should have been under 40 y.o., the younger the better, in order to satisfy the criterion of being exposed exclusively to political socialization after the fall of the communism, which also includes factors such as EU integration. People over 40 y.o., the more the better, would have been exposed to previous communist type of political socialization.

The Bulgarian informant “Andrew”, 55 y.o., male, journalist, was relatively well-exposed to EU matters. He frequently traveled to Europe to report and analyze political and economic events. He also gave university courses on journalism with frequent

mention of how this profession was organized in Europe. He was originally socialized in the communism and did not take the western democracy as the final point in human history. He was quite cynical regarding the existence of any absolute truth, including the democratic procedures that could guarantee the rights and freedoms of citizens; this cynicism was partly a reaction to his original communist socialization, just confirming how deeply he still felt its cultural presence. He was deeply convinced that Bulgaria was a good case of political and economic oligarchy where ordinary citizens could do nothing to improve their fate. That was why he had stopped voting, although his preferred choice in case he had not, would be to vote for a party that leaned toward the center left. Because of the EU factor, he felt less competent to influence public life; journalism for him was an easy way to receive his regular salary until retirement, not a way to influence public opinion. The EU factor made him feel smaller and less significant. He had withdrawn from active social life into his nuclear family, where he was undisputed leader. As far as his family felt good, he felt safe. There was no need to contemplate any other form of larger collective action; on the contrary, all change should have come from individual and secretive actions away from the public eyes. Despite his relatively good exposure to the EU, and perhaps because of it, “Andrew” had become politically less active, less trustful, less competent and more isolated. On the contrary, interviewee “Mika” was 30 y.o., female, a NGO servant, and also well exposed to EU matters. For a brief period she was a civil servant that compensated for the lack of the “Andrew”’s long exposure to the EU matters. Her life motto was “we should care”; it applied to social and economic as well as to environmental and peace issues. The solution started from each and everyone, but also required common efforts; therefore it needed good coordination and mutual trust. The EU

as a set of new institutional arrangements answered the need to facilitate this good coordination and mutual trust. Because of the EU, life and its challenges became clearer and the mechanisms for change also became clearer. “Andrew” and “Mika” shared the common in-depth knowledge about the EU as an institutional arrangement; they both shared the belief that Bulgaria represented political and economic oligarchy where democratic procedures were just a fig leaf to hide special, very frequently criminal, interests. Unlike “Andrew”, “Mika” was much less cynical although far from naïve regarding the possibility to find solutions and the role of EU integration in this process. For “Mika” the EU gave people the tools to make the necessary changes, nothing more or nothing less. With her proactive stand “we should care” it was easy to build a logic that looked for solutions instead of excuses. For “Andrew”, originally socialized in a far less active position that expected others to solve our problems, the EU was not a necessary tool provider, but an additional problem added on the top of the existing ones. For “Andrew”, the new post-communist socialization, including EU integration, was nested within the old communist socialization. For “Mika”, her proactive attitude was not nested within another passive position. That is why she did not look for excuses but for means. Her decision not to vote on the national level did not make her less political because she switched her allegiance toward a more European identity. On this level, she felt very competent and ready to vote and to cooperate. For “Andrew” there was no European identity to compensate for the lack of political participation, competence and collective action on a national level. Therefore, with relatively equal exposure to the European influence, sometimes the presence or the lack of anterior political socialization might

become the determining factor for understanding the different cultural trajectories within a particular society.

The state of affairs did not look very different when the subjects were chosen among those who did not have extensive links and knowledge about the EU integration. The informant “Konstantin” was 51 y.o., male, a private company owner. He stayed away from active politics; he did not vote, although this might change under some conditions, he did not feel competent enough to understand the general processes within society and did not contemplate any form of collective action. He did not trust people; his workers were “thieves” who stole at first opportunity. The same applied to political parties and their leaders; they were all the same, completely detached from real life and ordinary peoples’ needs and interests. Their main ideological affiliation was either with communism understood as collective interests taking precedence over individual or capitalism based on individualistic values. As his parents, people more than 80 y.o., took the communist stand, he felt obliged to take the opposite position. His social ideology was therefore a form of unconscious emotional reaction instead of a careful intellectual, including material, conclusion. This emotional reactivity had existed for more than 20 years and had nothing to do with the presence of EU integration; the latter was a non-event for him. As far as voting was concerned, he did not vote, but this could change. He would vote if there were a direct threat of communist restoration, although he was not sure how he would determine whether there was such a threat. A good guess would be that he could feel the threat through the emotional reactivity to his parents, another way of confirming that even at his age he was not very detached emotionally from his parents. Despite the apparent opposition on most political issues, “Konstantin” was very

traditional when it came to his family relations; he maintained his marriage despite its empty shell nature, his wife lived for most of the year abroad, and did not understand free relations under any justification. The informant with whom to compare him was “Iakim”, a 27 y.o. male student in technology, socialized well after the start of post-communist transition. He was also not fond of the political situation in Bulgaria, but did not see any special distinction between the former communists and the parties that built upon anti-communism. Unlike “Konstantin”, who was individualist on an intellectual level but an emotional traditionalist, “Iakim” was individualist on both levels. He did not acknowledge the sacrosanct traditional form of marriage and maintained free relations without a clear commitment for life despite his parents’ opposition on this issue. It seemed at first that EU integration did not play a significant role in this process of traditional family erosion. In Bulgaria the normalization of divorce practices in the symbolic world happened during the last decade of communism, in the 1980s. Mass seasonal emigration in the 1990s and the early 2000s had made two-parent families with children a rare animal in Bulgaria. Within this new social environment, “Iakim” felt rather good, unlike “Konstantin” who felt depressed and without clear understanding of where society was heading. Despite the age and material differences, “Iakim” felt more competent and self-confident than “Konstantin”. Introducing the European card to both of them with the statement “but the traditional family is gradually eroding in Europe too” seemed not to comfort too much “Konstantin”; for “Iakim” it was just another proof that the recent developments were going in the right direction. Although the EU had not directly contributed to the Bulgarian traditional family’s erosion, people socialized after the fall of the communism, including under influence of EU integration, could much

better handle this process and resist traditionalist temptations of restricting family normality to traditional nuclear model only - two parents plus children, having official marriage certificate.

In Macedonia, given its earlier stage of EU integration, compared to Bulgaria, informants exposed to EU influence were comparatively less exposed than their Bulgarian counterparts. Another peculiar fact in Macedonia regarding the institutional logic of cultural transfer was that the country, as part of Yugoslavia, socialized its citizens in a much milder form of communism as a type of society opposed to the West; it was not clear, most informants witnessed, whether such opposition to the West existed at all for those who were socialized in Macedonia. The facts were that the country during communism, after an initial radical shift in the late 1940s, reestablished private property and management of the land; private services were thriving; citizens were allowed to travel and work abroad; financial remittances from economic emigrants were welcomed. It was therefore much more difficult to me for Macedonia, compared to Bulgaria, to discern two ideal-types of socialization, one that applied exclusively to communism and another that applied exclusively to the time after communism. If such a distinction was to be made, it had for sure to eliminate matters that applied to the economy and emigration, and instead put an emphasis exclusively on politics. The Macedonian informants “Ana” and “Velko” could provide some insights about the effects of living within different socialization environments with regard to the development of dissimilar political cultures. “Ana” was 45 y.o. female and a manager of an NGO that administers EU projects; she was initially socialized within former Yugoslavia. For her, present day Macedonia as a unitary state was just one out of many possible political configurations; the others

included being part of a larger regional and continental federal or confederal body, or being annexed by one of its stronger neighbors, or being divided along ethnic lines with or without annexation, or being internally federalized without foreign annexation. This informant was very flexible on this point, although obviously she had some preferences; the most desirable solution would be to see Macedonia as part of the EU; the country itself should be based on individual rights rather than on ethnic communities. The Yugoslav experience was frequently and without solicitation used as reference to show the preferences of being part of a larger multinational organization; among the usual pluses were peace, economic prosperity, and more individual opportunities. The EU was therefore Yugoslavia writ larger and more stable because the factor of physical force, a key element in maintaining Yugoslav unity, was taken out of the equilibrium. The interviewee to compare with was “Velko”, a 27 y.o. male, NGO intern. His life plans are strongly associated with Macedonia becoming EU country; he found meaning in contributing to this goal. The EU was the key that opened the door for modernity and prosperity, for security on the personal and social levels. He easily took side with the EU’s conditionality and positions even if these would harm the national feelings of some of his compatriots. More specifically, he had no personal objections to changing the name of the republic in order to satisfy Greece. Unlike “Ana”, “Velko”, because of his young age, was socialized outside the Yugoslav context. He did not use Yugoslavia as a point of reference save when he was explicitly asked to draw parallels; for him Yugoslavia was a matter of the national past, not future, like the Second World War or the Ottoman Empire. This difference had serious consequences as far as the foreign orientation of the republic was concerned. For “Ana”, the European project naturally put Macedonia closer

to its former sister republics of former Yugoslavia; for “Velko”, this was not a necessary even less natural outcome, there were no reasons to put Slovenia ahead of neighboring Bulgaria, both being EU members, on the list of preferred economic and foreign partners. Regarding the political culture, both informants looked surprisingly similar but this similarity was superficial. They both actively took part in electoral process, both felt competent to understand the main social issues, and both understood the need for collective action that transcended the narrow limits of their ethnic group. Yet, for “Ana” there was always a scent of nostalgia, or *déjà vu*; meaning she was always related to the former federation and tried to grasp the present reality through the lenses of the Yugoslavian legacy. On the contrary, for “Velko”, the meaning of his way of thinking politics and the place of Macedonia in Europe found justification in new EU norms. For him, Yugoslavia was a doomed project from the beginning because of the emphasis it made on the ethnic and power balance instead of individual civic rights; the EU was a project, he thought, that fixed this problem once and for all. Unlike his older compatriot, “Velko” did not look at the EU as Yugoslavia writ larger and more stable; they were qualitatively different entities. These two informants looked similar at first in terms of political culture, but in fact they were quite different because of their different socialization. I would guess that with the development of EU integration beyond the initial stage in Macedonia, one of them, more certainly “Ana”, would feel less competent and more afraid of change, and therefore would become more distanced from active political life. For her the European project and its corresponding socialization, just like for her Bulgarian counterpart “Andrew”, was deeply embedded in earlier communist-time socialization. In the Macedonian political context such de-politization for “Ana”

seemed without alternatives. She could not feel active and competent outside the supranational framework; the only real project that called for such supranationalism was EU integration; EU integration, however, did not provide any special guarantee for the recreation of the links between the former Yugoslav republics; any alternative political arrangement seemed too radical and risky to handle for “Ana” despite the intellectual understanding that such alternatives existed. For “Velko”, on the contrary, recreating Yugoslavia being not a goal per se, all roads for peace, stability and prosperity seemed open once Macedonia became a EU member. EU integration helped “Velko” feeling more self-confident than “Ana”; he was ready to take much higher doses of criticism for his pro-EU position than “Ana”. He did not need to hide behind traditional rationality and evoke the past to justify the need of compromise on the sensitive “name” issue. In this respect, he felt much stronger when he affiliated with the EU position on this issue than “Ana” did; for the latter, the EU stand was not enough to justify the need of compromise; only by evoking the Yugoslav past could she feel confident enough to suggest finding compromise that would at the same time suit EU demands.

According to hypothesis H1c, individuals living in societies that are more intensely and for a longer period of time exposed to the EU institutional transfer and cultural influence, for example by becoming EU members, *ceteris paribus*, may become more democratic as far as their political culture is concerned than individuals living in societies that still wait for admission. In other words, an individual in Bulgaria is expected to be more democratic than an individual with similar socio-economic profile in Macedonia; the Bulgarian is therefore more likely to put an additional emphasis on

respecting the formal rules of the democratic game; he may feel more competent as far as the political system and political issues are concerned; and finally, he may consider enlarging the scope of friends and partners when their social interests' promotion is at stake. In all these cases an external observer and analyst could trace these changes back to the role of EU integration as causal or at least as a key facilitating factor. According to this argument, it is insignificant whether Bulgarians and Macedonians are more influenced by the EU as individuals through their unique biographies; they act within larger communities where norms are transmitted through communication without explicit mention of the source of these norms.

Already discussed in another theoretical context informants "Mika" from Bulgaria and "Velko" from Macedonia would illustrate the possibility of a positive effect on democratic culture of an earlier and longer EU integration. They were both young, meaning socialized after the fall of communism, above average as far as education was concerned, with extensive and professionally linked knowledge about EU integration; they both were financially independent from the society they lived in thanks to the EU programs they administered. A good example again was subject "Mika", 30 y.o., female, a NGO employee, the one with the motto "we should care", applied to social and economic as well as to environmental and peace issues. For her the solution started from each and everyone, but also required common efforts; therefore it needed good coordination and mutual trust. The EU as a set of new institutional arrangements answered the need to facilitate this good coordination and mutual trust. Because of the EU, life and its challenges became clearer and the mechanisms for change also became clearer. The informant "Velko" was a 27 y.o. male, NGO intern. His life plans were

strongly associated with Macedonia becoming a EU country; he found meaning in contributing to this goal. The EU was the key that opened the door for modernity and prosperity, for security in personal and social plan. He easily took side with the European conditionality and position even if this would harm the national feelings of some of his compatriots. More specifically, he had no personal objections against changing the name of the republic in order to satisfy Greece. On the surface, both informants expressed strong democratic values. Unlike her Macedonian counterpart, the Bulgarian informant expressed strong political competence also on supranational level. The EU was not just an external intergovernmental organization that provided with new rules; the EU was already part of her new identity, both collective and individual. On the contrary, the Macedonian informant still considered the EU as an external entity; the earlier stage of integration did not allow him to operate symbolically and materially on supranational level. Both interviewees had undergone major shifts in their culture under the influence of the EU toward more inclusive civic models; the Bulgarian one has gone much further because of the additional institutional opportunities linked to EU membership. She behaved as if she was part of the institutional transfer, not only a recipient. In this sense there was no risk that a sudden and strong anti-EU public opinion shift in Bulgaria could change her position. She would consider such shift as a proof of national immaturity and the need of stronger EU sanctions, that she would be glad to be part of, to put the country on the right track. The Macedonian interviewee felt deeply embedded in the national community; the conflicts between Macedonia and the EU were really painful; he was ready to make unpopular statements but nevertheless he was a hundred percent Macedonian, not even a bit European.

To summarize briefly the findings regarding the zone of corroboration of the institutional model of cultural change, for both Bulgaria and Macedonia, some people who are more exposed to the EU's influence within a particular society can really develop a clear vision and more understanding about the social processes; this change can lead toward more active political participation, higher sense of competence and readiness to contemplate collective action. To develop such clearer vision, a person should be actively involved within social and administrative practices where the EU is clearly identified as being at one end of the chain of communication. Therefore this person should feel directly accountable to Brussels for his behavior. An alternative arrangement that eliminates the EU as ultimate arbiter, despite the formal similarities, would be considered as inherently not working. If I push this logic to the extreme, one way of successful institutional transfer for both Bulgaria and Macedonia with appropriate cultural consequences would require complete subordination of all chains of communication to Brussels, where all citizens feel accountable directly to the EU, in areas of administration, policing, and taxation. In brief, this scenario requires eliminating the nation state as an intermediate actor between the Union and the citizens. Within this model of cultural change there are some important qualifications. This institutional influence applies to those persons who are not previously socialized in the communist social environment. For those who are, EU integration is either a non-event or an event that cannot overcome the previous ideological frameworks. The new society remains embedded within the old teleological paradigms or within a reaction against them. Only those who are sufficiently exposed to the new socialization, at least 25 y.o., without being excessively exposed to the old one, not above 45 y.o., are ready to accept automatically

the new way of behaving in a democratic realm. The peak of the EU's capacity to influence cultural change within a particular society seems to fall between the beginning of the accession negotiations, which is the current situation of Macedonia, and the formal adherence to the Union, or the current situation of Bulgaria. At that precise moment the people who are most strongly influenced by EU integration still remain symbolically within the domestic political realm. Some of them, with the passing of time, may switch their identity and allegiance toward the supranational European level. This per se is not a problem for the presence of democratic culture; my findings simply show that in a multi-level political system it can operate on one level only, and that this level is not always the national; among my interviewees there is none to express democratic culture on both levels, national and supranational; those who switch to supranational level abandon national political system.

For this institutional model of cultural transfer to become universal, it has to put all citizens within chains of communication that ultimately lead to Brussels; despite this, only a certain generational bracket would accept this logic of cultural change, and only if this elimination of the nation state occurs before formal adherence to the Union. This is a logical error, because if such dismantlement of national state takes place, it would have to follow, not to precede the formal adherence to the Union. Therefore, unless additional information from other independent sources proves me wrong, I can tentatively conclude that institutional model of cultural change has already reached its largest expansion in Bulgaria as far as current population is concerned.

IV.1.b. Some limitations of the institutionalist model

In its theoretical purity, detached from any particular social context, including the post-communist, the institutional model of cultural change under asymmetrical power relation should look at the relatively young, 25 to 45 y.o., professionally linked to the EU persons who live in countries that are well advanced in their course of EU integration. They would represent the hard core of social layers that would ultimately transfer new supranational identity on the top of their national identity; they first would adjust their cultural and political values akin to EU expectations. In reality, however, the picture is more complex than that. It is true, some informants falling within this category develop in accordance to this model's predictions; they are here compared to those who fall outside this group, being either much older and initially socialized under previous social and political system, they are much less exposed to the EU influence and they live in countries that are generally less advanced on their way of EU integration. Other subjects who would have otherwise comfortably fallen within the same group of EU supporters show surprisingly little change as far as their political culture is concerned. The following sections will present and discuss some of these cases in order to fine-tune the institutional model of cultural change.

Bulgarian cases "Diana", "Julia", "Anette", and "Doroteia" were all female, respectively 35, 42, 36 and 41 y.o. Their knowledge about the EU was above average for this society, although not equal among them. They worked respectively as a EU info-center clerk, a foreign company servant, a teacher and a university clerk. Their socio-

economic profile made them excellent transmitters of EU values. Yet, they did not vote or had already stopped voting; they did not feel competent enough to understand social and political development and hid behind political gossip and conspiracy theories; they did not trust their compatriots in general, and ethnic, religious and sexual minorities even less. The informants “Diana”, “Anette” and “Doroteia” did not feel accountable in any way to Brussels; they were part of the Bulgarian administration, state or public. They all had knowledge about how their professional lives could have been, had they worked directly as European Commission employees, as opposed to how things currently were. For each of them, their work existed in two parallel worlds, one of imagination – European, and another real - Bulgarian. The successful attempts of negative “bulgarization” of the EU norms, making it appear that social behavior followed EU norms but in reality making no change in substance, made these three interviewees highly skeptical regarding the chances of EU integration beyond mere declarations and appearances. Therefore, the withdrawal from active social and political positions for these three subjects was a logical outcome of their disillusionment. The EU was useful for providing an alternative, more rational model of behavior but not useful enough to enforce this model, to force the nation-states to comply with it. As far as the fourth subject, “Julia”, was concerned, her logic of social and political non-engagement was quite different. She measured up the progress of a particular country with its relative economic development; Bulgaria therefore could not pretend to be as European as Germany or France was, based on objective quantitative data. The increased EU influence on this informant could allow her to withdraw financially and symbolically from Bulgarian society. “Julia” was a special case, much more selfish and distanced from

any sort of collective action. She was, however, not alone within Bulgarian society; the sample showed other examples of people who withdrew from collective action once they had the opportunity to make it on their own depending on external financial sources only. To sum-up, in Bulgaria two possible limitations of the institutionalist model came from disillusionment following negative “bulgarization” of EU norms and practices and an original selfish position that looked at the EU as a source of financial independence from the host society.

Two Macedonian cases “Tonka” and “Tinka” confirmed these two qualifications. Like Bulgarian “Diana”, Macedonian “Tonka”, 25 y.o. female, worked at a local EU info point. Like her Bulgarian counterpart, the Macedonian clerk was well informed about the nature of her job in theory, and suffered everyday from the local labor norms that contradicted EU regulations for a safer working environment; when a truck full of paper brochures arrived, she was charged to discharge the truck because her boss said so, not because this was part of her job description. Subject “Tonka” felt insecure as far as her job prospects were concerned; she made a distinction between it and the safer environment in which the EU counterparts worked. This insecurity explained why she was so reluctant to give an opinion on almost any topic. She was not accountable in any way to Brussels or to its representatives in Macedonia. The disillusionment about her real status made her less socially and politically active by fear of governmental reprisals. The other Macedonian informant “Tinka” was 30 y.o. female, studying part-time as a PhD student in Germany in EU matters and part-time working in Macedonia on similar projects. Like Bulgarian “Julia”, she did not hide her selfish stand on many issues, relying for financial assistance on her foreign sponsors and describing her native society

as backward. Without elaborating on this issue so much, like “Julia” she linked her staying and working in Macedonia with the general economic development of the country.

IV.1.c. Toward building an institutionalist ideal-type of cultural change under asymmetrical power relation

In Max Weber’s comprehensive sociology (1904) an ideal-type is an analytical tool to understand better some aspect of reality. This tool, epistemologically, is forcefully arbitrary in the sense of cutting parts of reality that seem relevant for the investigation. In his two lectures given at the very end of his life, “Science as a Vocation” and “Politics as a Vocation” (1959), he presented two ideal-types, one for each profession, that represented coherent models to measure up some real cases that were assumed to fall within one or another group. These two ideal-types became possible as the crossroad between certain material, cultural and psychological prerequisites that allowed actors not only to enter these professions but also to stay there as long as their active participation was needed. Neither of these individual prerequisites, however, was sufficient to make us understand these two professions. Only in conjunction could they create the ideal-types of logically coherent professionals, living from and for their respective trades. According to this ideal-type approach of understanding social reality, the Machiavellian prince at the time of Weber had become a political amateur, far away from full-time practice in politics, and therefore, according to Weber, destined to disappear from political landscape; on the contrary, the plebiscitarian political leaders and unelected bureaucrats,

because of their full-time jobs as politicians, could better represent the ideal-type of politicians.

Based on the findings gathered during my field trips in Bulgaria and Macedonia, I construct hereafter the ideal-type of cultural change within the institutionalist approach under asymmetrical power relation; this is also the range of conditions where subjects, because of their socio-economic profile and particular psychological and cultural prerequisites are particularly inclined to follow the theoretical expectations within this model. For clearer illustration, this ideal-type will follow the tripartite structure of Weber: material, psychological and ethical. Each part of the structure is dynamic; only a particular constellation of these relatively independent three factors allows confirming the institutional hypothesis.

As far as the material prerequisites are concerned, EU integration develops within the framework of asymmetrical power relations between the EU and the candidate country. Being asymmetrical can easily be proven by the fact that it is the candidate country that applies for EU membership, and not the other way around. Having said that, however, does not say anything about the level of asymmetry. A country that has relatively less bargaining power and a country put under protectorate are both subordinated partners in an asymmetrical relation; in the former, such a country will give disproportionately more concessions than have gains, in the latter, the change will be administratively imposed without negotiations. Where can the EU candidate countries best be situated on this material scale? Both Bulgaria and Macedonia are nominally sovereign countries. The EU does not have the power to give direct administrative orders to any particular citizen or official within these two countries; administrative enforcement

of EU law is achieved through national administrative mechanisms (Eurofound 2010). EU integration, however, represents a set of conditionalities (Grabbe 2002; 2006), which are not negotiable except in terms of timing of application; e.g. the candidate countries may not have the power not to allow EU citizens to buy agricultural land, but may negotiate reasonable transitional periods (Richardson 2001, 271).

Therefore, EU integration's asymmetrical power relation treats the candidate country as a unitary actor, not as a multitude of citizens. Within this framework, some citizens, however, may develop direct relations with the EU, and for some of them these relations remain stable beyond the accession process. The presence of a sovereign state as a filter between EU norms and the candidate state's citizens does not allow for the direct transfer of EU institutions unless there is a political will within the host society. For an ideal-type of institutional model it would be more logical not to have such a sovereign state; the reality on the field, however, does not allow for such possibility. The EU has never tried to eliminate the sovereign state as such a filter in order to impose more easily its norms. On the contrary, the facts show that the states that at different times have been put under EU and NATO security protection in the Balkans, such as Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, are the states that must wait much longer in order to qualify for the EU criteria of membership. Despite this problem, at least from the perspective of the ideal-typed logic of understanding, the EU prefers to emphasize the need for a sovereign state with greater capacity, which is the reason why I make it part of the ideal-type of cultural change within the institutionalist approach. With the presence of a sovereign state, the zone of possible positive effect of institutional transfer on political culture shrinks. As some of my interviewees witness, e.g. "George", individuals who are best

disposed to the EU norms are not simply those who are accountable to Brussels; they must also have their compatriots accountable to them as part of the EU chains of communication. In other words, an NGO official or public administration clerk will more easily accept EU norms not simply as a result of his position of inferiority vis-à-vis the EU, but only as far as this position of inferiority is coupled with a position of superiority vis-à-vis his compatriots. Otherwise, as the findings suggest, e.g. “Eli” and “Fani”, there is a very strong temptation within the state administration in Bulgaria to use the EU as leverage for detachment from the host society. Being part of these chains of communication that start in Brussels but end in remote towns and villages, however, is not part of the original asymmetrical power relation; it is part of the political will of the host country to enforce EU norms in certain ways. Given the ambivalent results in each country, it is clear that these results represent less an overall plan than a picture where the parts are not pre-designed to fit with each other. The material elements of the institutional ideal-type are therefore the presence of a sovereign state, which is a rather counterintuitive theoretical prerequisite, and the chains of communication and accountability between Brussels and the individual citizens, which is more a part of the host society political system than of the process of EU integration.

As far as psychological and cultural factors are concerned, not all informants feel equally comfortable within the chains of communication that make them accountable directly to Brussels, with or without extending these chains toward the other social actors. Some interviewees, again “Eli” and “Fani”, feel more comfortable within truncated chains of communication where the presence of the EU makes them say that they feel happy to escape the old material dependence on their host society. They say they become

happier when they are less required to think about the domestic social and political issues. The EU becomes a refuge for their individualistic souls. On the other extremity are those, e.g. “Diana”, “Anette” and “Doroteia” who feel disillusioned with the EU; they have seen how the sovereign state has turned down all good intentions of civilizational change, and subsequently they have withdrawn into their private shells: their family, their private business, and their social gossip. Only some of those who have fallen within chains of communication, which extend up to Brussels and down to every individual citizen, e.g. “George”, “Kamen” and “Cyril”, may feel politically relevant. For them natural fears of change are compensated with the satisfaction of seeing the fruits of their own work.

According to Weber (1959), to become a part of a political process an individual must follow the ethic of conviction, or the belief that his activity would contribute toward reaching certain intended goals; to remain part of politics, however, this individual must follow the ethic of responsibility, or thinking according to which he must persist even if not all desired goals are attained or are attainable. These two ethics apply with equal strength to both Bulgaria and Macedonia. Only a part of those who enthusiastically embraced the EU as a new institutional opportunity for change, e.g. “George”, “Kamen” and “Cyril” are still on the ship; some have never embarked, e.g. “Julia”; some have decided to take the lifeboats and are now at safe distance from the domestic political life, e.g. “Diana”, “Anette” and “Doroteia”.

In brief, the ideal-type of cultural change under the institutional transfer model requires that individuals become part of direct chain of communication and accountability between Brussels and other citizens, that they have the passion to see the

changes that come with their unique contribution and the understanding that results may not always reflect the intended goals. If this is the case, the institutional model posits, only then may an individual be more willing to accept the democratic procedures as norms, to feel more competent to understand the complexity of issues, and to wish to cooperate with other citizens regardless of their ethnic or other background. These are the conditions of possibility according to which EU integration can make post-communist citizens more democratic, following the institutionalist model of cultural change.

Only some informants show signs that they fit comfortably with this model. Most informants, either because of material, psychological or cultural reasons, fall outside it. They cannot, therefore, automatically reproduce the logic of transferred institutions and become more democratic because of EU integration unless they are particularly interested to do it or because some other cultural factors enter the game. This set of particular strategic interests will represent the topic of the next section.

IV.2. Strategic model of cultural change

The institutionalist model of cultural change, discussed in the previous section, takes people largely as black boxes as far as their internal motivation, including cultural one is concerned; the institutions within an asymmetrical power relation will help produce the necessary behavior, sometimes immediately, sometimes after a significant lag. The assumption is that the new norms are transparent in terms of interpretation, the intended goal is sufficiently clear for those who have to live with it. Why nations with similar institutional arrangements differ as far as their political outcomes are concerned is

a puzzle that this approach cannot solve without either negating its own postulates or without starting looking for more complex solutions that go beyond its strict theoretical borders. An example of such similar institutional and constitutional arrangement leading to different political outcomes is post-World War I Western Europe.

The strategic approach, inspired from economic theories and methodological individualism, tries to open the black box for interpretation and to provide answers regarding the process of decision-making that make more or less likely institutional acceptance and/or transfer. Actors' rationality is based on cost-benefit calculation, which is assumed to be both a universal human characteristic and a paramount code of interpretation of social reality; without the latter assumptions, the strategic approach would be no more than a particular way of interpreting reality, alongside more emotive, traditional or value-oriented rationalities, to use the Max Weber inspired typology of rationality (McFalls et al. 2006).

Humans, according to this approach, are one-dimensional as far as their main interpretational code is concerned and unidirectional regarding their possible social behavior. This behavior is supposed to occur only if it represents a stable positive relation between costs and benefits, and any change requires finding marginal benefits that outweigh the marginal costs linked to this change. Political behavior is therefore an activity that follows the same basic rules as economic activity. The strategic approach, naturally, does not pretend to explain all social reality; it does not hide the fact that some if not most human behavior escapes from this simplistic logic of material and power accumulation. It just assumes that these alternative motivations are not rational. In order

to claim superiority within science, it needs to relegate to secondary positions all those alternative non-economic interpretations.

For different reasons, the strategic approach, like the institutionalist, if triumphant, would signal the end of the politics as an autonomous activity. The moment when people would behave exactly as expected because of the right cost-benefit calculation, would be the end of the human liberty, which, on the contrary, presupposes that we do not behave exactly as planned, and that this liberty occurs despite some necessary prerequisites, such as a cost-benefit calculation. We may act according to instrumental rationality, but we also act according to other rationalities, not based on cost-benefit calculation; we also may act based on irrational feelings, and sometimes based on our subconsciousness, which, despite our best efforts, does not always resurface as part of our rational thoughts.

Within the context of EU integration, the strategic model puts emphasis not on abstract institutional transfer, but rather on the change in the cost-benefit analysis among domestic political leaders (Vachudova 2005). As leaders of sovereign states, they are those who make decisions to approach the Union and they are those who must assume the political consequences of integration. EU integration as a complex process is a transformation with too many uncertainties. No post-communist country in Central and Eastern Europe has willingly ever before undergone such a complex process of identity change. Earlier EU enlargements could guide but not predict the exact outcomes of new enlargements; these former rounds of enlargements engaged countries that were already capitalist, with more stable democratic institutions; and most of them had no major issues with their national identities. All these factors made the post-communist countries less

prepared to assume their responsibilities as EU members; the local political elites embarked on far riskier business with EU integration. According to the strategic approach, to maintain political consensus in such difficult times, EU integration had to address purposefully these problems and manipulate cost-benefit calculation so that they remained positive despite the risks and uncertainties.

The strategic approach within EU integration, officially, had been assigned second place compared to the institutional (European Commission 2002). Of course, official statements such as “We, the Union, must provide additional money, high recognition, or transition periods in order to accommodate politically the government of ...” were hardly to be found anywhere. The Union used more general words such as enlarged markets, increased rates of economic growth and better quality of life. A special positive treatment, however, was indeed happening. Signals were frequently sent to Brussels indicating malaise with some requirements, financial arrangements, and short timing. Negotiations between the EU and the candidate countries were far from imposing an all-or-nothing logic. The “all” side, the transfer of the *acquis communautaire* was formally respected; there was, however, an alternative “conditionality” coming from the dominated party; it could, sometimes quite successfully, negotiate modalities under which the new institutional transfer would take place.

The literature on post-communist democratization that puts special emphasis on the EU as a causal factor contributing toward this democratization uses extensively elements inspired from the strategic approach (Vachudova 2005, Mansfeld and Pevehouse 2006, Dimitrova 2002, Gallagher 2005a; 2005b). Political and other conditionalities, such as institutional transfer, work more smoothly when they are aligned

to the strategic interests of key domestic political actors; these actors act as veto players at many sensitive points within the chain of institutional diffusion from the EU to the candidate country. Only when such alignment is present then institutional diffusion becomes possible and likely. Being part of strategic alliances formed around domestic political actors, the general population too accepts the new norms as being more advantageous than preserving the former status quo, and accordingly changes behavior in order to accommodate new norms. Being able to manipulate interests from its position of relative strength, the EU is ultimately able to direct change by providing necessary incentives that change the cost-benefit calculation. At the end of the process, institutional diffusion is expected to be the same across the post-communist countries that join the EU, even if the enlargement process may have different speed, which indeed it has, and may lead to different internal political outcomes. Democratic behavior is part of this framework of institutional diffusion that puts emphasis on strategic consideration.

According to the set of hypotheses H2, presented in chapter II, a country that joins the EU in alignment with its political elite's interests, therefore, is expected to become more democratic. Individuals who consider EU integration as compatible with their political interests, such as taking and keeping power, *ceteris paribus*, are expected to become more democratic. In case of conflict of interests between the EU and the candidate country, *ceteris paribus*, those who side with the EU will be more democratic than those who keep identifying exclusively with their native country. Bulgarians on all levels, political figures, civil servants, and ordinary citizens will be more democratic, *ceteris paribus*, than their Macedonian homologues; the latter will be less interested to

articulate similar norms and values given the uncertainties related to the process of European integration.

The following section, again, will test this ideal-type of relations between the EU as a strategic actor and democratization with the information gathered in two field trips in Bulgaria, a country that is already EU member, and one field trip in Macedonia, which is still in the waiting room of candidates hoping to begin accession negotiations. This test, as in the previous section, is not a hypothetico-deductive demonstration to confirm the correctness of this model. The goal is not to prove or to reject it in general; it is rather an effort to establish the circumstances under which this model would be more or less appropriate.

IV.2.a. Corroborating circumstances for the strategic model

According to hypothesis H2a, individuals who consider EU integration as compatible with their political and economic interests, such as taking and keeping power and their material welfare, *ceteris paribus*, as a result may become more democratic than individuals who struggle against integration or at least have serious objections against some of its aspects. The former may put an additional emphasis on respecting the formal rules of the game; they may feel more competent as far as the political system and political issues are concerned; and finally, they may consider enlarging the scope of friends and partners when their social interests' promotion is at stake. In all these cases, people can trace these changes back to the role of EU integration as a causal or at least as a key facilitating factor.

In Bulgaria, the informants “Alex” and “Lazar” illustrated this trend. The former was 24 y.o., male, unemployed and former retail seller; the latter was 21 y.o., male, student who worked part-time in services without specific profile. They had both finished high school. “Alex” had plans to emigrate to North America; “Lazar” had plans to work in Bulgaria or to work in Europe. At the time when interviews were made they both were politically not active as many Bulgarians of their generation. EU integration was a major point of discord among them. “Alex” did not spare words to describe all negative events that resulted from the integration; foreign large corporations had entered the country and had smashed small business, including the one he was part of. All traditional values, such as hard work, moderation, family, had been eroded; it was the law of the strongest that determined the social positions of everybody. The EU legitimized the political and the economic oligarchy in the country; elections were a sham; people voted with marked ballots: “only the illiterate, the poor and Gypsies vote”; the EU had brought more money into the country so there was more to steal and criminality was growing; there was less choice in everything, from the politics to ordinary life; people were limited to physical survival. As a result, he felt greater insecurity; a possible solution would have been to move as far away as possible from this reality. For “Lazar”, the world and the role of EU integration looked very differently. The money that the EU brought into the country created new and better jobs; the bigger markets gave more opportunities to sell and eventually to work, without losing chances to return to Bulgaria. The EU enlarged the notion of family by normalizing models of free and informal relationships; “Lazar” was part of such an informal relationship; EU practices were a strong argument against his more traditional family’s understanding and possible pressure. Even if both subjects were

not particularly active politically then, there was significant difference among them as far as their political plans were concerned. “Alex” would not vote any more under any circumstances, because all parties were alike, meaning all parties were part of the ruling “mafia” circles. For “Lazar”, he could eventually become more active if the politicians put in danger some of the new opportunities and assets he had become accustomed to. He would not accept not to have the EU as a larger job market, not accept not to have more opportunities to work in Bulgaria, not accept not to have the larger framework of relationships, not accept any social pressure to formalize his family relationship or to be accountable for any act of infidelity. These were his bottom lines that he was not ready to negotiate under any circumstance. Unlike “Alex”, who had gradually lost orientation and feeling of competence in understanding social issues, for “Lazar” the process was quite the reverse; he linked EU integration with better understanding of his position and his interests in society. These two informants stood on two opposing positions regarding the image and the potential place of ethnic minorities in Bulgarian society; for “Alex” they were marginal elements that normal people should stay away from; for “Lazar”, there were normal people, perhaps unlucky at reaching the national financial average, but nonetheless at least potentially part of the social fabric, and other people had to find some positive ways to deal with them.

Another confirmation of the hypothesis H2a for Bulgaria came from the informants “Andrew” and “Magda”. “Andrew”, already discussed in another theoretical context regarding the institutionalist model, was 55 y.o., male, journalist and university professor, who did not shy away from acknowledging his emotional affiliation with the moderate wing of the Socialist, ex-communist party. This affiliation had a material

background too; power in Bulgaria made people richer and he had expected good returns when his political friends were in power. EU integration, however, made his preferred political, economic and international choices an almost impossible mission: among these he personally preferred the existence of a strong moderate left party, a social-democratic society with strong social protection nets, and a foreign policy orientation to Russia; the EU, on the contrary, brought in more economic liberalism and favored right-wing parties that looked to the West. As a result, “Andrew” had become politically less active, less trustful, feeling less competent to influence the events and socially more isolated. That was why he had stopped voting, although his preferred choice in case he had not, would have been to vote for a party that leans toward the center left. Also because of the EU factor, he felt less competent to influence public life; journalism for him was a way to receive his regular salary until retirement, not a way to influence public opinion. The EU factor made him feel smaller and less significant. He had withdrawn from active social life toward his nuclear family. As far as his family felt good, he felt safe. There was no need to contemplate any form of collective action; on the contrary, all change had to come from individual and secretive actions away from public eyes. By contrast, “Magda”, a 55 y.o., female, journalist, was a strong supporter of right-wing parties, because of their anti-communism, liberalism, and strong foreign policy orientation on the West, the EU and NATO combined. For the same reasons as “Andrew”, but with opposing valence, “Magda” favored EU influence in all its forms, political, economic, and cultural. Her position within the state-run news agency depended on the color of the ruling party; therefore she could not put all parties within the same basket. EU integration was the way of finally settling scores with the old communist guard that hid under the

mask of political neutrality. Every step away from Russia, from state-run enterprises, every vote fewer for the former communists was a victory, and “Magda” was willing to take part in making these victories happen, as a journalist, citizen, and political activist. She voted regularly and made solicitations to vote for her preferred anti-communist parties; she felt politically competent to make distinction between the “good” and the “bad”; the former was anything that took Bulgaria further away from communism. EU integration was a unique chance for Bulgaria to make this transition as fast as possible. The only apparent glitch for “Magda” came from her attitude toward the Turkish party, the *Movement of Rights and Freedoms*. Because of traditional tensions between this party and hardcore anti-communists in Bulgaria and because this party had formed a governmental coalition with the former communists, “Magda” did not even consider the possibility of forming strategic alliances with this party under any circumstances. Despite this reluctance, “Magda” had no bad attitudes toward the ethnic minorities in Bulgaria; the only way for them to join forces politically would be for them, the minorities, to abandon the *Movement for Rights and Freedoms* and to support long-established anti-communist parties.

In Macedonia, “Gosho” was 45 y.o. male, ethnic Albanian, born in Macedonia, studied in Macedonia, lived in Skopje; he was occupied in small trade, domestic and sometimes international. He strongly supported the Macedonian bid for the EU. For him, this membership meant more peace in this part of the Balkans and more economic prosperity. Personally, he favored integration because of the new opportunities for his business; it would create more jobs for people to stay and live in Macedonia, including for his extended family. He voted regularly; the main Albanian parties strongly supported

the EU integration of Macedonia; his electoral choice was not personal but based on extended family collective attitudes. As far as his feeling of political competence was concerned, he embedded it within his feeling of belonging to Albanian community. “Gosho” was a good illustration of the fact that for many ethnic Albanians as well as for ethnic Macedonians, the interests were based not only on individual perceptions but also on collective identity perceptions; people not only asked “what is good for me” but also “what is good for my community” and “how my community will gain/lose”. On this point, the citizens in Macedonia and Bulgaria differed significantly; in the latter interests were much more articulated as individual, not collective. “Gosho” understood why EU integration was good for the Albanians in Macedonia; open borders with the neighbors within united Europe would mean no borders with other Albanian communities living in Albania and Kosovo. This would also mean more rights, individual and collective, for the Albanians in Macedonia. His impression, shared by other Albanian informants in Macedonia, was that they were still treated as second-class citizens; despite formal recognition, their language and culture were not given their due status. Without such positive ethnic assertion he did not feel he could defend his interests; thinking of it made him very active as far as his political participation was concerned. He understood that his interests, individual and collective, lied in the capacity of his political leaders to find common ground with at least one of the two main Macedonian parties; he was well aware that any step forward requires political compromises with the ethnic majority; this was the reason why, despite the majority reluctance to solve the sensitive issue over the name of the republic, he was ready to give another chance to the ethnic majority before resorting to violent means. He understood that if ethnic confrontation happened again as

in 2001, the EU could again postpone negotiations for membership. The Union made “Gosho” understand and defend his interests with peaceful means, in respecting the rules of the game, and in considering the opportunities for forming supra-ethnic political alliances. On the contrary, “Petko”, a 61 y.o. male and former French teacher, was a strong opponent to EU integration. He felt threatened, personally and collectively, from the changes that this integration would bring into the country. Individually, he and his wife had lost most of their French language students; English was growing in force, and those who had interests for French had many alternative options, including studying abroad. At the collective level, he felt that EU norms would give too many rights to ethnic minorities; the ethnic nature of his state would be diluted. If the “name” issue was a prerequisite for beginning negotiations, nobody knew what the prerequisites for becoming a EU member state would be. EU integration for “Petko” was good only for the ethnic Albanians and for other minorities that tried to solve their national questions without violence. The EU, therefore, meant giving up the sovereign state in exchange for good words and empty promises. Thus far, he voted regularly for the nationalist party VMRO-DPMNE, the only real guardian of Macedonian statehood according to him. He doubted, however, that even this party would always be vigilant to protect the national identity of the state. If EU integration went forward, he was not sure whether he would keep voting. He did not need his country within the EU in order to feel European; he did it already. He did not feel the EU would bring more economic prosperity to the country; on the contrary, he saw a negative impact of EU influence. His political goal, as far as EU integration was concerned, was to block it as long as possible. As far as the nature of the state was concerned, he would prefer an open confrontation with the Albanians instead of

making the country a multinational state. He was afraid that given the unequal demographic development that favored the Albanians, such open confrontation would become the only solution. He lamented that the confrontation of 2001 was stopped, with the aid of the EU, before solving the problem between the two main communities in the country. This problem, according to “Petko”, could be solved by expelling the Albanians from the parts of Macedonia where they settled in mass during the 20th century. Whether the remaining parts traditionally populated with Albanians would remain or not part of Macedonia was not of his concern, as long as the ethnic Macedonians kept running the country as a unitary national state. If necessary, he was ready to limit the political rights of those who declared themselves not to be Macedonians.

According to another postulate of the strategic theory of democratization, presented in hypothesis H2b, in case of a major conflict of interests between the EU and the candidate, or the new member country, *ceteris paribus*, those who side with the EU will be more democratic than those who keep identifying exclusively with their native country. The former may put an additional emphasis on respecting the formal rules of the game; they may feel becoming more competent as far as the political system and political issues are concerned; and finally, they may consider enlarging the scope of friends and partners when their social interests promotion is at stake. In all these cases, these people can trace the changes back to the role of the EU integration as causal or at least as key facilitating factor.

In Bulgaria, one major issue illustrating the conflict of interests between the EU and the new member state was the enforcement of EU directives, part of the Union’s

acquis communautaires. Formal membership in 2007 was the starting moment for the direct application of certain directives; it also marked the starting point of transition periods for the application of some other EU norms. Interviewees “Cyril” and “Jivka” were both civil servants, working for the government. At the time of interviews they both worked on projects that dealt with EU pressure on Bulgaria to fulfill its obligations that followed its membership. In brief, the European commission at that time had opened several infringement procedures (*European Commission* 2010) against Bulgaria for not respecting EU norms in several areas. The Bulgarian government was supposed either to comply within reasonable periods or to defend its case before or after the file went to the EU courts. If the country were found guilty, the courts could impose hefty fines on Bulgaria. Obviously, as state civil servants, both subjects were supposed to work for the government, which was a defendant in the conflict. As citizens, however, they had their own opinions on who’s right and who’s wrong. Informant “Cyril”, a 35 y.o. male, with law degree, was a strong partisan of the EU; in case of conflict of interests between the Union and Bulgaria he would automatically and wholeheartedly take side with the Union. The EU for him was a civilizing force; conflicts, therefore, were necessary elements in the westernization of Bulgaria. The EU made him politically more active and made him feel more competent. Bulgarians, he thought, were a backward nation that needed external leadership, just as small children needed parents in order to develop. There was no way for Bulgaria to avoid fulfilling its European obligations; the EU was the only actor that could have legitimate interpretations of its own rules. The logical outcome of any conflict between the EU and Bulgaria had to be the latter’s obedience. He did not see any problem defending such position despite his work within the state administration.

Bulgaria as a EU member had to fulfill certain obligations; therefore working toward such a goal was compatible with the notion of being patriotic. On the other hand, informant “Jivka”, a 35 y.o. female, also with law degree, defended opposite views. Bulgaria was a sovereign state despite its formal EU membership. A conflict of interests between it and the EU did not necessarily confirm the idea that Bulgaria did not fulfill its obligations or that it acted in bad faith. On the contrary, a conflict might have reflected all sorts of misunderstanding; it could be, she frequently put an emphasis on that hypothesis, that social and political forces opposing the government tried to force the government’s hand by using the EU as legal leverage. She defended the position that the government had to be the only social actor that had the right to communicate with the EU. Using the EU as a tool against one’s own government, she said, was an unpatriotic act, almost an act of treason. Informants “Cyril” and “Jivka” ontologically constructed different social realities in which the EU was among the key elements. The former interpreted EU integration as construction of a new state on top of the existing European states, this new state always had to take precedence; for the latter the Union was rather a confederation of sovereign nations that had to coordinate and lead, but not impose; for her the main level of loyalty and political reference had to remain the nation-state. For the former, relations between the EU and Bulgaria were always asymmetric and the EU was dominant side; for the latter, relations were already equal-to-equal. The new norms that came from the West made “Cyril” more active; it was quite the opposite with “Jivka”; she became more confused trying to accommodate her vision of Bulgaria as sovereign state with the fact that it was still accountable to an international organization; this confusion made her defend with even more zeal Bulgarian sovereignty. She did not suggest that leaving the

EU would be better for Bulgaria, but clearly preferred that the EU not interfere with the domestic affairs of the country. This was in sharp contrast with “Cyril” for whom this interference was a good sign that the westernization of Bulgaria was happening. The informants were divided over the issue of political collective action. For “Cyril”, the social movements, including society’s involvement in EU-Bulgaria relations was a good sign of social progress; for “Jivka”, society had to leave the state to speak on its behalf; some ethnic minorities because of their split loyalties were to be looked upon with suspicion. They were not essential for the good functioning of the Bulgarian state; therefore they had to be kept away from EU-Bulgarian relations.

In Macedonia, a country that was still waiting to know the date of the start of the accession negotiations, therefore far from reporting the fulfillment of conditionality, a major conflict issue between the country and the EU was the name of the republic. The EU required finding a compromise over this issue as a precondition for starting negotiations. Informants “Jordan” and “Milorad” illustrated well how taking sides with or against the EU on this issue could potentially have an impact on their political culture, and in consequence, potentially on their political behavior. “Jordan” was 53 y.o. male, architect. He did not recognize any special right of the EU over European symbolics. Macedonians, he stated, were Europeans since time immemorial; they did not need lessons to become civilized, which they were already; they were civilized long before most European nations had ever really existed. The “name” issue, for him, was artificially created; looking for another name for the republic was therefore unacceptable. The only people who asked for such compromise were the ethnic minorities, who were not real Macedonians. They, he continued, did not respect the state and acted as if foreign

interests, both literally and figuratively, directed them. On the other hand, “Milorad”, a 45 y.o. male, working in archeology, accepted the legitimate concerns of the EU regarding the potential clash over the name; he suggested finding compromise over the name that would satisfy both sides; he was convinced that such compromise could be reached. For him, it was normal for someone to be Macedonian and at the same time to accept EU conditionality on this sensitive issue; thus not only minorities were interested in quickly solving this problem. As far as EU integration was concerned, he considered it without alternatives for the country; the main question was not whether, but when. Unlike “Jordan”, he made a clear distinction between the EU as an organization that promoted peace and prosperity, and European culture, which was much larger and older. There was nothing humiliating for Macedonia to accept EU norms and still pretend to represent a unique and ancient national culture. As far as the political culture of both subjects was concerned, right now “Jordan”, who stood against the growing influence of the EU, was politically more active than “Milorad”. “Jordan”, however, would have reconsidered this level of activity if the EU had imposed its will and Macedonia was forced to make any compromise over its name. On the opposite side, “Milorad” was expecting to become more active in the process of EU integration; once the political life of Macedonia was detoxified from the sensitive issue of the name of the republic, he was convinced he could better protect his interests as professional, father, and intellectual.

Finally, as to strategic model is concerned, according to hypothesis H2c, we would expect that Bulgarians on all levels, political figures, civil servants, and ordinary citizens become more democratic, *ceteris paribus*, than their Macedonian homologues;

the latter have had fewer incentives to articulate similar democratic norms and values given the uncertainties related to the process of European integration. We can evaluate politicians' democratic culture and behavior on the issue of the relation between the main ethnic group and the largest ethnic minority, the Turks in Bulgaria and the Albanians in Macedonia. These ethnic minorities are traditionally seen as threat to the territorial integrity of both countries; majority-minority relations may vary from mistrust in calm periods to confrontation in stressful situations. Both countries had such situations in the not-so-distant past. The last communist government in Bulgaria started campaign of mass deportation of ethnic Turks in 1989, just months before the fall of the communist leader Todor Zhivkov. Macedonia had tensions in the mid-1990s and violent clashes in 2001 with ethnic Albanians. In both countries, the growing influence of the EU has had a moderating effect on these key relations. In Bulgaria, the campaigns against the Turkish minority stopped immediately after the end of communism in 1989 and never resumed. The *Movement of Rights and Freedoms*, which represented the interests of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, was registered. In the 2001-2009 period this party was part of the ruling coalitions; this status was not necessary, given the distribution of parliamentary seats. In Macedonia, the largest Albanian party, the *Democratic Union for Integration*, entered the government in 2002 in coalition with the *Social Democratic Union of Macedonia*, the latter being the party that succeeded the communist party in early 1990s. In the next ruling coalition, led by *VMRO-DPMNE*, another Albanian party, the *Democratic Party of Albanians*, joined the government. As in Bulgaria, this Albanian participation in ruling coalitions was not necessary given the distribution of parliamentary seats. Currently, neither Albanian party is officially listed as part of the

ruling coalition. The *Democratic Union for Integration* frequently boycotts the work of the National Assembly in Macedonia, blocking its effective functioning. In Bulgaria since 2009, despite the fact that the ruling party was short of a majority, it did not invite the ethnic Turkish party to join the government. In both countries, during the period of the highest point of EU influence, for Bulgaria following the invitation to begin accession negotiations in the late 1990s until the formal membership in 2007, for Macedonia following the peaceful solution of the conflict in 2001, the mainstream politicians made larger political concessions toward the main ethnic minority parties. In Bulgaria, given the much higher level of certainty of the EU integration, such concessions started in the early 1990s; it was not until 10 years later that Macedonian politicians were ready to make similar political concessions toward the Albanian minority. Being less certain about future EU integration, about the name, about the national character, and about the territorial integrity of the country, Macedonian politicians were quick to renounce these concessions once the EU pressure became less intense. A similar trend, but from a higher level of EU pressure, occurred in Bulgaria, where the mainstream politicians began publicly to renounce such concessions once the EU pressure became less intense. In Bulgaria, EU integration began earlier and moved along a line of greater certainty than in Macedonia. This allowed Bulgaria to escape the violent confrontations that had plagued interethnic relations in Macedonia. EU integration, in general, reduced the amount of fear in the political system and allowed the key players to behave more rationally by negotiating concessions and providing guarantees instead of cutting links and increasing insecurity. This reduction of fear, due to EU integration expectations, might have trickled the whole way down the system, reaching ordinary citizens. Several informants, with no

special personal relations to the EU, from both countries, reported variations over time in their attitudes toward the main ethnic minorities, from moderate mistrust and indifference to intolerance and open hostility. In Bulgaria, after two governmental terms in which the *Movement of Rights and Freedoms* was part of the ruling collations, the rank and file supporters of the same mainstream parties that allowed such coalitions were now vehemently opposing such ideas. The EU factor and its decreased role in Bulgarian politics after 2007, without a doubt, played a role in this significant shift. It did not matter whether the tolerance of the early 2000s was possible because of EU pressure or just in order to please the dominant party pending EU membership; in both cases a prerequisite for such higher tolerance was the reduction of the amount of fear that such concessions would lead to loss of the ethnic nature of the state in favor of foreign interests; in both countries the key minority was seen as serving foreign interests. In Macedonia, political concessions toward the Albanian minority could have been just strategic play pending the EU membership whose possibility seemed to have evaporated in 2008. Nevertheless, such concessions also reflected the lower level of fear about the future of the republic within the process of EU, and NATO, integration. With the process of negotiations on hold for an unspecified period, the fears were back; the higher and more traditional levels of mistrust bordering intolerance were also back. In Macedonia, unlike Bulgaria, another renaissance of warmer interethnic relations might have become possible if the EU, and NATO, decide to give the country a clear roadmap toward membership.

IV.2.b. Limitations to the strategic model

Ideally, the strategic model should not divide people according to their socio-economic status. Everybody, regardless of age, sex, ethnicity, income and health, is potentially a strategic player, able to make rational choices based on cost-benefit calculations within a particular institutional framework. The EU produces a new institutional environment; some people really do profit from it. They see new and enlarged business opportunities coming with it, new and enlarged life choice opportunities, more guarantees for newly acquired personal liberties, more assurance of peaceful development and less fear based on other peoples' intentions. It is not a contradiction of the strategic model if some subjects who see the EU as a symbol of less opportunities of all kind become less democratic; they have simply made different cost-benefit calculations, and it would still be consistent with the strategic approach with some adjustments. The real limitations come from people who consider the EU as providing more opportunities and still becoming less democratic; or, on the contrary, becoming more democratic because they see the EU as a tool of shrinking the pool of opportunities.

Informant "Julia", already presented as an illustration for the limitations of the institutionalist model, was a 42 y.o. Bulgarian female, with higher education in finances, working for the local branch of an international audit company. She clearly saw the new opportunities associated with the EU; she had worked for some years outside Bulgaria in other EU countries and had returned to work in the homeland because of the relative economic and other advantages: no rents to pay, cheaper goods and services, being close to friends, among the other benefits. She had no doubt about the benefits related to the

fact that her country was now a EU member. As some other Bulgarians, and Macedonians, who financially depended on foreign sources of income, she considered it a waste of time to take part in local political life. She did not fear any hypothetical change as threatening her financial stability; she could always pack and leave if the situation became intolerable or if the comparative advantage of Bulgaria turned into disadvantage. The EU almost physically detached informants like her from the need to be part of their national political communities. Had they been equally dependent financially from sources within their homelands, they would have most probably reconsidered this detachment. Had they been middle parts of stable chains of interests relating the EU to their homelands, they might have looked with more curiosity and personal interest at local political development. Therefore, a significant limitation for the strategic model comes from the place that the people occupy in the realm of new opportunities that become possible with the EU integration.

On the contrary, some informants who have seen the EU as shrinking their opportunities have, at least initially, become politically more active, although not in all dimensions; taking part in elections has not always been accompanied with increased collective action on the micro level. Bulgarian subject “Alex”, whose views were already discussed earlier in this section, had not always been politically inactive. Initially, he tried to reverse the negative social trends associated with the EU integration by investing more time and energy into politics, spending more time reading newspapers, listening to TV and radio political news. It was his feeling of inability to influence the events that finally made him decide to withdraw from any political activity. In Macedonia, where EU integration has not moved for some time, this ambiguity makes some people that fear

integration become politically more active. They may still contemplate the possibility that such a situation is partly due to their efforts to block the integration. If the Bulgarian example is to serve as pattern for development, some among these Macedonian subjects may reconsider and diminish their political involvement once the process of EU integration begins appearing irreversible.

Another limitation to the strategic model comes from the way people see their personal capacity to change, grow, and improve, and this in the context of the new institutional reality, made possible with EU integration. Although potentially everybody can make cost-benefit calculations within a particular cultural context, not everybody behaves in order to maximize the benefits and minimize the costs; thinking does not lead automatically to doing. Some informants are overwhelmed by the size of change they think might rise from integration and as a result they feel paralyzed in political inactivity; for them avoidance of change becomes synonymous with avoidance of fear associated with change. The more they stay away from the politics in all its forms, the more they fear becoming involved. They just count the days of life; they are happy when the days are alike and complain when the days bring news. Any news is always a bad news because change is bad in itself. And because they fear any move outside the usual pattern, a pattern that cannot be sustained, any change makes life turn from bad to worse. This phenomenon does not apply to very old people alone, which would be understandable to some degree and intuitive. Such politically withdrawn individuals, although more rarely, appear at any age, even the youngest. Usually behind any such biography hides some key event of deep trauma, which the individuals can clearly link with their former period of relatively higher activity. This withdrawal should not be confused with the cynical

“everything is the same and then why should I bother” mentality. This particular withdrawal does not make people less interested with one or another outcome; they still have preferences and cheer when their preferences by miracle happen to materialize. They, however, would not intervene to contribute to this more preferable outcome because they feel very confused as to the roadmap for achieving these preferable results. This withdrawal also should not be confused with the well-known free riding phenomenon. Although the rational component cannot be completely excluded from their reasoning, the relative weight of dense and negatively charged emotions, such as shame and fear, may by far outweigh the strategic considerations. This shame comes from the fact that these people cannot stand up to the new cultural norm of self-propelling individuals, a norm that the new capitalist society gradually imposes as a criterion for success. Instead of trying and proving, to themselves and to others, their incapacity to live up to the new standards, they simply withdraw. Their fear comes from the expectations of new failure that may worsen the conditions for survival or growth; if such failure is linked to personal activity, these people would have also to blame themselves for it, an outcome they want to avoid by remaining outside the active political life.

IV.2.c. Toward an ideal-type of strategic cultural change under asymmetrical power relation

Based on the information gathered during the field trips in Bulgaria and Macedonia, I construct hereafter the ideal-type of cultural change within the strategic approach under an asymmetrical power relation; this ideal-types describes the conditions

of possibilities under which people, because of their socio-economic profile and particular psychological and cultural prerequisites are particularly inclined to follow the theoretical expectations of this model. For clearer illustration, this ideal-type will again follow the tripartite structure of Max Weber including material, psychological and cultural elements. Each part of the structure is dynamic; only a particular constellation of these relatively independent factors would be consistent with the main strategic hypothesis.

As far as the material prerequisites are concerned, EU integration develops within the framework of asymmetrical power relations between the EU and the candidate country. These asymmetrical relations have already been discussed, while presenting the institutional model. They have been proven by the fact that it is the candidate country that applies for EU membership, and not the other way around. Having said that, again, does not say anything about the level of asymmetry. A country that has only relatively less bargaining power and a country put under political and military protectorate are both dominated sides in an asymmetrical relation; in the former, such country will make disproportionately more concessions, in the latter, the change will be administratively imposed without negotiations, therefore without any opportunity for strategic choice as far as the subordinated side is concerned. Where are the EU candidate countries situated on this material or objective scale? Both Bulgaria and Macedonia are nominally sovereign countries. The EU does not have the power to issue orders to any citizen or official within these two countries in particular. EU integration represents a set of conditionalities, which is not negotiable except in terms of the timing of their application. The EU's asymmetrical power position takes the candidate country as a unitary actor that

speaks with one voice, the voice of his government. Within this framework, some citizens as part of the administration develop direct relations with the EU, and for some of them these relations remain stable beyond the accession process. The presence of a nominally sovereign state as a filter between EU norms and the candidate state's citizens does not allow for the direct transfer of EU institutions unless there is a necessary political will within the host society. Within this ideal-type of the strategic approach such political will is a necessary key; without it, it would make no difference whether the local actors make strategic decisions or not; they would only follow the instructions coming from the dominant side without discussion. The conditionality imposed on Macedonia on its road to EU membership is arguably stricter than it has been for Bulgaria; there are more prerequisites for Macedonia before beginning the accession negotiations; there is also one condition unique for Macedonia, to find compromise over its constitutional name. Being new, small and militarily very weak country with a record of tense relations with some of its neighbors puts Macedonia in even weaker position vis-à-vis the EU than Bulgaria; the latter has existed as a state since the late 19th century and has not changed its borders since 1940. Despite this significant difference, both countries are located within the broad range of asymmetric relations; strong enough not to accept any deal with the EU but not strong enough to change the asymmetric nature of relations. There is no proof so far that the EU has even tried to eliminate the sovereign state filter in order to impose directly and more easily its norms. On the contrary, the states that have been put under special EU and NATO security protection are the states that must wait much longer in order to qualify for the EU criteria of membership. The EU prefers to emphasize the need of a

sovereign state with greater capacity, which is the reason why the sovereignty should be part of the ideal-type of cultural change within the strategic model.

The strategic model applies best to those individuals who maintain several strategic games with actors that are located not only “above” but also “below” them on the scale of decision-execution, e.g. the informant “George”. This means that these players have the opportunity to improve their strategic positions not only vis-à-vis the EU, but also and above all vis-à-vis their compatriots. Becoming a hegemonic political party because of the EU integration, e.g. the Bulgarian politician Ivan Kostov in chapter III; better protecting economic interests because of EU membership, e.g. “Lazar” and another Bulgarian politician Simeon II; all these new realities become possible only when the strategic players are part of longer chains or situated within multi-level games. The informants who do not establish such longer chains of relations usually detach themselves from the local reality, e.g. “Eli”, or prefer not to engage in collective political action in a good illustration of the free-rider phenomenon, e.g. “Julia”. Being part of these chains of communication that start in Brussels but end in remote towns and villages is not part of the original asymmetrical power relation; it is part of the strategic political will of the host country elite, or part of it, to enforce its positions vis-à-vis the local population and the other parts of the elite. The material elements of the strategic ideal-type are therefore the presence of a sovereign state that allows the existence of independent from Brussels interests, and the direct chains of communication and accountability between Brussels and the individual citizens via the local political elite.

As far as the psychological and cultural factors are concerned, not all informants feel equally comfortable within the chains of accountability to Brussels, with or without

extending these chains toward the other social actors. Some of them feel more comfortable within truncated chains of communication where the presence of the EU allow them to escape their former material dependence on their host society, e.g. “Julia”. They become more interested when they are not or are less required to think about local social and political issues. The EU becomes a refuge for their individualist aspirations. On the other extremity are those who feel disillusioned with the EU, e.g. “Alex” and “Diana”; they see how integration and the new realities associated with it ruin their habits and interests, or do not produce the expected positive changes. Some of these people may become politically very active for a brief period, e.g. “Alex”, in order to prevent these changes from happening, before succumbing into political apathy when they realize that their efforts are futile.

Following again Weber, I agree that to become a part of a political process an individual must follow the ethic of conviction, or the belief that his activity could contribute toward reaching a certain desired goal; but to remain part of politics, this same individual must follow the ethic of responsibility, or the idea according to which he must persist even if not all desired goals are attained or are attainable. These two ethics, reflected through individual interest, apply with equal strength to individuals in both Bulgaria and Macedonia. Only a part of those who enthusiastically embraced the EU as a game that offers new strategic opportunities were still on the ship, e.g. “George”; some others had never embarked or would never embark on it, e.g. “Petko”; some had decided to take the lifeboats and were at safe distance from political life despite the objective evidence that the EU integration was consistent with their material interests, e.g. “Konstantin”.

In brief, the ideal-type of cultural change under the strategic approach again requires the existence of a sovereign state, the establishment of direct chains of communication between Brussels and the ordinary citizens, the passion to enjoy seeing the changes that come with your unique contribution and the understanding that results may not always reflect the desired goals. Only with these prerequisites can an individual be more willing to accept the democratic procedures as norms, to feel more competent to understand the complexity of issues, and to wish cooperating with other citizens regardless of their ethnic and other background. This is the zone within which the EU integration can make post-communist citizens more democratic, at least according to the strategic action approach.

Some informants indeed show signs that they fit comfortably with this model. Some informants, either because of material, psychological or cultural reasons, fall outside it. They cannot, therefore, always reproduce the logic of transferred institutions and become more democratic because of the EU integration even if they are strategically particularly interested to do it. An alternative to both institutionalist and strategic models becomes necessary to account for such a diversity of the ethnographic findings.

V. Alternative ways of understanding the effects of EU integration on post-communist political culture

Most of the existing literature puts influence of the EU integration somewhere on the formal institutional - strategic scale, depending on the degree to which the actors are considered to express and defend their interests in the process of integration or are considered as simple transmitters of external impulses, see Annex 1, table 1. The information gathered during two field trips in Bulgaria and Macedonia has partly confirmed and partly qualified these theoretical expectations. There are indeed certain circumstances, presented in chapter IV, under which these models are correct as far as the development of democratic political culture is concerned. One possible way to continue with this research, the path that I am not taking, however, would be to measure the relative weight of each of these two ideal-type models, either by assessing the importance of findings that corroborate each one or by providing new findings that would finally give supremacy to the institutional or to the strategic approach.

The path I choose here is different. I will reframe the findings of my interviews and other sources of information using inductive type of analysis, and, whenever possible, alternative qualitative methods of research. This reframing aims to present the same findings, already discussed while asserting the conventional models, within alternative theoretical perspectives. These findings are not neutral regarding any analytical framework; they are not value free social facts (Durkheim 1982). On the contrary, within interpretative approach, as opposed to positivist one, findings have always a meaning attached to them; the specific meaning depends on analytical

framework in which these findings are placed; this analytical framework may or may not follow dominant social practices. My understanding is that within triangle that has findings, meanings and practices at each of its corners, each group of elements remains relatively autonomous. The possible combinations between them, theoretically, are infinite; in fact, certain combinations are more typical than others and they represent main trajectories of cultural change that I present and discuss later in this chapter.

Reframing therefore means redefining the analytical context that makes sense of already collected findings. Making sense always requires putting the findings in relation with particular analytical contexts. The way I proceed requires putting the gathered information in different possible, cohesive analytical frameworks. These alternative perspectives should be logically sound, either complex or parsimonious. The goal, therefore, is not to present the definitive mode of cultural change, but alternative ways of understanding it, like any real number in the mathematic may represents a sum or a multiplication of potentially infinite number of simple digits. Unlike in mathematics, in the social world the possibilities are not so infinite, although an inductive analysis may always leave space for yet another possible and logical understanding.

V.1. Some alternative approaches for (re)framing social reality

The formal institutional and strategic models or any possible combination among them, such as rational choice neo-institutionalism, may appear to represent an exhaustive picture of social reality, but this is just an appearance that easily fades when another, more interpretative dimension, is introduced into analysis. Some of the alternative

approaches represent enlarged and enriched visions of either formal institutional or strategic models; others however are relatively more autonomous, see Annex 1, table 2. These alternative approaches are not frequently used in the literature, especially the one that discusses the EU integration impact on post-communist democratization. This is the reason why I will present and discuss them in the following paragraphs before reframing my findings using them as new analytical tools.

Intentional approach. This is a method of understanding that puts emphasis on the relative independence of human will and is embedded in the phenomenological approach in the humanities (Mucchielli 2004). What matters is the subjective intention that produces desired outcomes; the intention is the “willingness toward” that introduces relations of tension between a subject and an external object. Intentions and behavior are closely related. Intentions may be more or less rational. Despite their conceptual closeness, intentions have a broader scope than strategic behavior. In fact, being strategic is just a particular case within the much larger intentional school. For example, buying more expensive “fair trade” coffee or protecting the environment may make much better sense within the intentional than the strategic paradigm. To understand behavior, we need to understand the subjective intention first, which is ultimately based on perceptions of instrumental functionality of the external object or action. Different people may also have similar intentions that are externalized in different objects and therefore lead toward different social behavior. For example, willingness to protect peace and forestall a shift in the balance of power may lead to preventive wars (Walt 1990) or to creating international institutions (Keohane and Nye 1977); willingness to provide social protection and

assistance may lead to creation of means-based or general insurance-based or corporatist social welfare nets (Esping-Andersen 1990). These very different outcomes may be situated on the same level of instrumental rationality. In this respect, EU integration is not just a mechanical transfer of formal institutions with or without corresponding strategic behavior from the weaker candidate state. The way to understand better this integration passes through understanding the subjective sense of instrumental functionality embedded into this process. According to this approach, pertinent questions to ask, therefore, are: “What is the function of being EU member?” “Is it purely a form of economic cooperation or aims at an identity change?” This functionality may, I insist on the word *may*, be simply strategic, for the ruling elite to gain access to new sources of foreign investment and for the general population to gain access to foreign labor markets. Such a reductionism is only an assumption that should not intervene with the research and block other possible broader interpretations, such as becoming part of a new continental normality or asserting new foreign priorities.

Motivational approach. This is a method of understanding that puts emphasis on the relative importance of subjective stimuli that determine individual and collective choices, their preferences and behavior (Mucchielli 2004). It is conceptually close to the institutional approach, but again, as in the case of the relation intentions-strategies, its scope is much larger, although both are not completely overlapping. As far as the search for right stimuli is concerned, psychoanalysis looks for clues into profound impulses, behaviorism into instincts and reflexes, social psychology into group values, and situationalism into social interactions (Mucchielli 1996). Unlike the institutional

approach, motivation should be understood more as an imposition rather than an induction to behavior; people do not need to understand why they obey when they obey. For example, people may obey the logic of groupthink without knowing that they have stopped thinking independently (Janis 1972); political campaign advertising can change agenda priorities to issues and candidate attributes emphasized in the commercials (Atkin and Heald 1976). Within this approach, the presence of emotional and physical levels of human nature are more important than intellectual capacity to understand the logic of change. Understanding and choice, through education, are therefore less important than our capacity to act in a certain way under the right combination of stimuli. Institutions may, sometimes, act as stimuli, but most of the time they concentrate their influence on the intellectual level and produce effects with a certain time lag. For example, there is a conventional understanding that a time lag of 15-20 years exists between setting up a democratic constitutional framework and producing stable democracy and functioning national and local governments (Natsios 2010). EU integration, according to the motivational approach, would be less based on choice or even on the adequate presence of institutional transfer; under asymmetric power relation the EU's objective would be to find appropriate stimuli to direct change exactly as we change TV channels with remote control until we reach a desired program.

Approach based on beliefs. This is a method of understanding that puts emphasis on the relative importance of (inter)subjective deeply held, uncritically accepted, beliefs in supernatural being(s) or phenomena for understanding human behavior (Mucchielli 2004). The level of these deeply held beliefs is not necessarily conscious; on the contrary,

the subconscious or unconscious level is privileged. The approach based on beliefs as a method of understanding may be situated anywhere on the scale between institutional and strategic approaches. If looked upon as a form of cultural determinants, it partly overlaps with informal institutions (Huntington 1998); if conceptualized in an interpretative framework, it partly overlaps with strategic thinking (Putnam 1994; 2000). Beliefs, however, can also exist outside this simplistic universe. They are rich in terms of multiple significances and may change through cultural interaction process. People may exit a particular belief system without becoming more strategic or without leaving certain institutional frameworks; e.g. entire nations may become predominantly atheist without challenging existing political and economic arrangements. The contrary is also true; people may stick to a particular collective belief system and at the same time successfully challenge a whole range of formal institutions, political and economic; e.g. the patrimonial leader “cult of personality” in Russia holds equally well during the tsarist and communist era (Pipes 1989). As far as EU integration is concerned, this method of understanding may put particular attention on the belief system prerequisites and evolution in order to understand the modalities of current cultural change. For example, certain beliefs may facilitate or obstruct the democratization as part of the whole package of EU integration (Radu 1998).

Approach based on mentalities. This is a method of understanding that puts emphasis on the relative importance on the multiplicity of, and on the equal value of different rational systems accountable for diversity in human behavior (Mucchielli 2004). Unlike the method of understanding of belief systems, which puts emphasis largely on

subconscious or unconscious and on the presence of supernatural being(s) and phenomena, the method based on mentalities privileges consciousness. Understanding a different society requires understanding its unique ways of thinking its being; e.g. different concepts of space and time have less to do with deeply held irrational beliefs than with specific social practices well understood by those who take part in them (Le Goff 1980). Also a good illustration of a specific mentality would be a secular ideology with far-reaching consequences on social and political behavior. For example, having or not having a well-organized trade-union movement is only partly induced by formal institutional factors such as laws and appropriate political climate; it is also part of different equally rational ways of dealing with the problem of social and financial insecurity within modern capitalist economy, by putting more emphasis on solidarity or on individual human capital. As far as EU integration is concerned, this method of understanding may put particular attention on the particular mentalities and their evolution in order to understand the modalities of current cultural change. Being part of a new supranational organization that takes away important parts of the state sovereignty may trigger different, but equally rational reactions, in societies that historically have been part of similar, of course, far from identical, supranational arrangements. In this respect, using Bulgaria and Macedonia as case studies was particularly useful; the latter, unlike the former, was part of former federal political arrangement.

Approach based on attitudes. This is a method of understanding that puts emphasis on the relative importance of repetitive relations between meaning and some external phenomena (Mucchielli 2004). Attitudes are general orientations toward certain

elements of the world, e.g. hate toward members of certain nations, ethnic communities or social classes. Thus certain objects become locked in terms of significance. Attitudes are a complex concept; they may mobilize both conscious and unconscious elements. Post facto rationalizations are frequent whenever people or groups justify their attitudes toward particular external object. Despite their long history of attachment to positivist epistemology and quantitative methods (Thomas and Znaniecki 1918-1920; Almond and Verba 1963), as stable relations between subjects and objects akin to social facts, attitudes could also potentially be integrated into a more interpretative analysis that uses qualitative methods. For example, a general attitude such as liking may in fact mean qualitatively and quantitatively different feelings, with or without necessary behavioral consequences. In the case of EU integration, some attitudes that may become useful here include those toward the EU itself as an economic and political organization, toward the idea of Europe as a community of values or as a club of interests or as a community of ethnic versus civic nations, and toward alternative centers of influence, states or international groupings, that may have similar integrationist goals.

V.2. Induction versus deduction

Considering other possible approaches to reframe our understanding of social reality is not sufficient regarding the further ways of proceeding with the research. It is possible that these new approaches, partly overlapping with existing ones, be applied within a similar hypothetico-deductive method of analysis; a scientific inquiry proceeds by formulating a hypothesis in a form of that could conceivably be falsified by a test on

observable data (Belanger 1998). Thus, instead of producing hypotheses on the basis of institutional or strategic assumptions regarding the influence of EU integration on post-communist political culture, I could as well present hypotheses using alternative parsimonious models, where at the center I could put particular core beliefs, attitudes, mentalities, intentions or stimuli. It is not because my field studies do not provide abundant information that could eventually confirm any of these assumptions that such hypothetico-deductive method of analysis would not be my logic for the further research. On the contrary, the following few examples show that the findings are flexible enough in terms of significance to accommodate any of these alternative ways of reframing the analysis.

EU integration could be understood in terms of an *intentional* analysis, being itself functional with respect to other ultimate goals, either rational or emotional. In Bulgaria, the “road to Europe” is a “civilizing” project that goes far beyond the simple strategic calculations of either politicians, e.g. Ivan Kostov, or ordinary citizens, e.g. the informants “Fani”, “Kamen” and “Magda”. This positive image of the EU was not a necessary part of integration itself; it was already created and disseminated in the country, these informants witnessed, when EU integration had not even started. In Macedonia, EU integration could be seen, e.g. by “Milorad”, as a function that led toward becoming symbolically equal with the other former Yugoslav republics. Imposing equal conditions on all candidate states, the EU was making them appear equal in terms of rights and opportunities, something that was not true within the former Yugoslav federation, as some Macedonians observed, e.g. “Velko” and “Dobrina”.

On the *motivational* level, certain shared social values, such as trust, might act as quasi stimuli in facilitating or impeding EU integration. In Bulgaria, the traditional low level of social trust (Valkov 2010) might contribute toward the fact that the EU institutional transfer remained predominantly a matter of legislation rather than a new way of behaving. In Macedonia, a high level of trust in similar situations, as observed during my field trip, might ultimately facilitate the transfer of values, but at this preliminary stage of integration this phenomenon acted more against the acceleration of integration.

As far as the *belief system* was concerned, some Bulgarians, e.g. “Andrew” and the politician such as Volen Siderov, showed widespread and uncritically assumed faith in the strategic malice of the EU as a screen behind which private interests were hiding that plotted against the national interests of Bulgaria. The current situation in the country where, many believed, e.g. “Alex” and “Boris”, the state was nothing more than fig leaf that hid special interests was assumed to represent reality; this belief rejected the idea that the public sphere might represent an autonomous reality by assuming that sometimes the private interests were hiding too well to be easily recognized. In Macedonia, a similar widespread and uncritically held belief, part of the nation building process, was the faith in the cultural achievements if not superiority of the country on the international scale in relative as well as in absolute terms, e.g. “Petko” and “Mara”. These beliefs in both countries were without doubt impeding EU integration, which was based on perceived as benevolent asymmetric power relation; in Bulgaria they worked against the need to create a relatively independent administration above special interests; in Macedonia they

impeded the logic of institutional transfer as a process between actors situated at different stages of a single civilizational process.

Away from the subconscious level and on the more rational level of *mentality* analysis, the historic experience of both countries, as part of different supranational arrangements, had created different, equally rational expectations as far as EU integration was concerned. In Bulgaria, which for decades was part of COMECON's economic cooperation arrangement, political inequality between the member states went hand-in-hand with formal sovereignty in planning and managing domestic economic affairs (Zwass 1989; Bideleux and Jeffries 1998). Macedonia, on the other hand, as member of the Yugoslav federation, was subjected also to supra-republican decision-making bodies; in addition, it was part of the infra-federation political process where centralized economic benefits were conditional upon being part of the dominant constellation of nominally equal republics; after the death of Tito the majority of 5 out of 8 republics and autonomous regions was necessary to make decisions within the federation. These different institutional arrangements pushed Bulgarians and Macedonians into different ways of reasoning; the Bulgarians had learned that there was no point in challenging openly the external center of domination, in their case Moscow; the Macedonians had learned that they could always stick with the winning majority in the external center, in their case Belgrade. As a result, following this mentality of compliance, the Bulgarian version of EU integration appeared smooth on the surface with very high acceptance rate of the EU *acquis communautaires*; the problems came later when these *acquis* had to be locally enforced. In Macedonia, on the other hand, local mentality, illustrated with the dominant politicians Nikola Gruevski, looked for means to become part of a winning

European coalition that would overcome the Greek veto that stood on the way of integration.

Finally, my findings confirmed assumptions part of the approach based on *attitudes*. It would be unnecessary to repeat here the stories that pointed to the attitudes toward ethnic and religious minorities in both countries. Such attitudes, without doubt, impeded the development of a civic democratic political culture by a priori eliminating a significant number of citizens from collective action on the basis of both rational and irrational arguments. Another illustration showing the power of attitudes related foreign states, either members of EU or not. In the case of Bulgaria, the attitudes toward two states, Russia and Germany, were key in trying to grasp the cultural shifts that occurred during EU integration. Russia, as heir of the Soviet Union and tsarist Russia, was considered as “liberator”, once or twice (in 1878 only, or in 1878 and in 1944), according to the party affiliations of Bulgarians. Becoming part of the EU was therefore equal to detaching from Russia, which might be associated with quite negative emotions, e.g. “Nako”. Germany, on the other hand, had twice waged war as an ally. For Bulgaria it was a natural counterbalance to Russia with all negative or positive cultural consequences. In the case of Macedonia, on the contrary, Germany had legacy of occupation. The other country that carried a high emotional charge was Serbia. It was not considered a “liberator”, but for generations it had been associated with a particular development that gave Macedonians their own administration, language, and history. Becoming part of a EU that would automatically exclude Serbia from the final list of members would therefore be considered as unfair, to say the least, e.g. “Ana”.

These brief illustrations showed that some alternative analyses can also be helpful for understanding important aspect of the post-communist political evolution; understandings that were not necessarily based on institutional or strategic premises or on a combination of both. Presenting these alternative ways of understanding within a deductive method of analysis would require building cohesive models, drawing hypotheses, and testing them, trying to give comparative edge to one or another understanding at the expense of others. The preceding sections showed that such a task would be difficult if not impossible. The main problem came from the fact that they all, to a degree, were confirmed by some of the findings. Choosing among them would therefore purposefully eliminate important parts of the findings that emphasized interpretative richness of this research.

The remaining sections of the chapter will follow an alternative inductive approach; an approach based not on testing reality against models and prefabricated hypotheses, but based on an inductive accumulation of knowledge that pays attention not only to the ethnographic richness of life but also to the richness and complexity of interpretations. The findings are not neutral in terms of interpretation; even the seemingly simplest observable facts bring at least one possible interpretation. If it happens that certain facts have only one interpretation, this does not mean that they speak for themselves in a positivist way, but that there is a large social consensus regarding their possible interpretation. This means that I can include certain findings into different interpretative frameworks. Instead of trying to establish a single way of understanding the political culture shift under an asymmetrical relation within the EU integration process, I

will present, for each country, different types of possible trajectories. The results, as part of an inductive method of analysis, are necessarily not complete; the number of types or possible dynamic trajectories may increase as far as additional future findings are provided. The presented results cannot be the final word on this question; on the contrary, following the wise warning of Max Weber, they provide the next transitional step in the limitless process of knowledge.

V.3. Some post-communist political culture trajectories

There are two alternative ways of constructing ideal-types of political culture shifts, or trajectories, under asymmetric power relation with the EU. First, I can start from similar end results in terms of political culture and build up ideal-types that converge from different starting conditions toward similar end points. These ideal-types would try to understand how it was possible, through different causal mechanisms under the influence of EU integration, to make people with different preconditions finally find themselves within similar political culture patterns. Second, I can start from similar starting points and show how EU integration has made possible either divergence or convergence of political culture along the way. I personally prefer the latter option. It is more consistent with the inductive method of analysis; it is also more consistent with my open-ended understanding of historic process, a process where there are no ending points properly speaking. As a metaphor, I imagine a group of trees, all of them having separate roots, but each growing by pushing branches up and away; some of these branches join the branches of other trees in forming new indistinguishable branches. Looking at the

configuration of the trees from ground level may thus present quite a different picture from one at the branches' level. As the trees are still growing, the most recent snapshot may represent not the final configuration but only a transitional state.

Despite the multitude of responses, Bulgarians and Macedonians held some typical attitudes toward their political systems and visions regarding their place within it when EU integration started. The EU's influence and integration, therefore, were factors, among others, that had effects within already existing cultural matrices. Some individuals, representing political sub-cultures, started from rather a-political attitudes, e.g. "George" and "Kamen"; others from a high level of political involvement, e.g. "Iva" and "Magda", with or without encompassing all relevant elements of a democratic culture, i.e. the acceptance of norms and procedures, the subjective feeling of competence, and the capacity to join forces with other social actors that overcome narrow ethnic or other boundaries.

I begin by presenting the types of possible trajectories with those that are relatively stable over time in both countries³². I then present those that are introducing significant changes over time, either by adding to or subtracting important elements from the democratic culture. The presentation is accompanied by brief comments on EU integration's influence regarding different trajectories, both stable and changing. Whenever possible, I discuss the arguments of the existing literature.

³² All trajectories are visualized in a common graph in Annex 2. On the graph, T1 shows the time when the EU identifies the membership of each of both countries as political goal; T2M and T2B represent the present time for each country; the lines for Bulgaria are longer because they represent a longer time of EU influence; the dashed arrows represent the Macedonian trajectories, the uninterrupted arrows – the Bulgarian trajectories. The three-sign symbols in the bottom represent the combination of elements within the political culture; the first represents the acceptance of democratic procedures; the second – feeling of civic competence, the third – willingness for collective action; therefore the combination "---" means having no meaning to vote, not feeling competent, and not willing to take part in collective action.

V.3.a. Stable trajectories

The EU's influence began to affect both countries on the basis of already existing material and cultural prerequisites; these prerequisites included, among others, the intersubjective and internalized attitudes toward social and political roles. For some informants, the EU did not change significantly these prerequisites over time; integration for them was therefore a non-event, or to be more precise, a non-process³³. These informants, however, might be situated on different levels of previous political activity; the EU might not affect people who were already either politically very active, e.g. "Janet" and "Nicolas" or inactive, e.g. "Paulina" and "Juri". Several equally powerful mechanisms, acting either on a material or symbolic level, or on both, were contributing to this non-event, to this stable trajectory over time, regardless of the initial level of political participation. Ironically, the EU, through different means, was contributing toward some of these mechanisms not to make fundamental shifts within the particular state of political culture. Therefore, ironically, some stable trajectories were, in fact, due also to EU integration despite the lack of objective change over time in parallel with the EU integration process.

In the following paragraphs, as well as in the following sections, I will start the presentations with behavioral phenomena before looking for possible EU integration determinants on informants' symbolic level.

³³ In Bulgaria people who remain throughout the period within the group of a-political subjects are "Julia", "Iren", "Lazar", "Paulina", "Todor", "Juri", "Iakim", "Ognen", "Pirin", "Radko", and "Tino"; their Macedonian counterparts are "Spiro", "Milorad" and "Mina". Those only keeping voting without additional self-investment in the politics are "Plamen" and "Rumi" for Bulgaria, and "Tonka", "Risto", "Zvezda", "Gosho" and "Elena" for Macedonia. Stable and active involvement in politics show the subjects "Janet", "Iva", "Magda", "Nicolas", "Olga", "Nako", "Ognjan", "Sever", and "Ianaki" for Bulgaria and "Ana", "Borko", "Velko", "Dobrina", "Velichka", and "Slobodan" for Macedonia.

Economic independence. I call here economic independence a capacity of individuals to live and thrive in society on basis of a private source of income that is independent from governmental sources of income or salary in private companies. In fact it is tantamount to an act of de-proletarianization. Within the existing literature on social prerequisites of democracy, such economic independence is positively correlated with democratic political regimes (Moore 1966).

My findings in Bulgaria found a reversed correlation as far as the democratic culture was concerned. The informant “Balkan”, a self-employed IT specialist, stated that he was a businessperson and for that reason he paid no attention to politics under any form. He was proud not to know which party was in power and proud to be financially self-reliable. The informant “Alex”, even after suffering losses as small businessperson, shared this attitude toward politics. This mechanism, which explained being and staying constantly out of politics under all or under most of its forms, might act on both the material and symbolic levels; it might be objective, such as private ownership of means of production that had a small but guaranteed market which was not subject to market fluctuations; or subjective, the feeling that “only sky is the limit”, that there was no boss to be held accountable to, including the government, that no matter what happened in society material survival was assured. The feeling of economic independence remained largely a matter of belief that was rarely, if ever, put into question. On the intellectual level, informants who expressed such a belief, e.g. “Balkan”, agreed that in the modern world nobody was really independent and that if somebody was not interested in politics, politics was for sure interested in him, under the form of laws, regulations, and above all,

taxes. Yet, they trusted their feelings that being economically independent they could cope with all unexpected circumstances, if such circumstances arise, without the need for collective action under any form. Therefore, they did not consider changing profoundly their (un)political habits. This feeling of economic independence, for those who stayed out of the politics, was a sign of parochial behavior (Almond and Verba 1963) and appropriate understanding of the role of individuals in society. Feeling incapable of influencing public affairs under any form, these subjects found in the small private sector the place to survive and their *raison d'être*. EU integration was only partly responsible for this type of behavior. It legitimized private property as a basic pillar of the national economy; therefore, it legitimized the small business as well, making any return toward a more planned economy culturally difficult if not impossible. "Balkan" said that now that Bulgaria was part of the EU, no government could tell him what to do for a living. On this point, there were some important differences between Bulgaria and Macedonia; it was in Bulgaria that the EU culturally affected the feeling of security for those who professed economic interdependence; in Macedonia, where small private ownership was legal and thriving since the 1960s, the EU did not take a role of its institutional insurer. In Macedonia, the EU, however, promoted economic independence by enlarging the horizons for businesspersons. This promotion, in Macedonia, unlike in Bulgaria, was also linked to a rather high level of political participation, e.g. "Pavka", "Risto" and "Gosho", and to feeling of competence and readiness to contemplate collective action. So, this mechanism of economic independence could be part of two very different trajectories within stable political cultures. It could lead to remaining outside the realm of politics, as in Bulgaria, or, on the contrary, it may contribute toward remaining within high level of

political participation, as in Macedonia; both looked equally rational in terms of finding appropriate means toward desired goals; the former took economic independence as a way of detaching from the social tissue, the latter found in it a better way of gaining more within the social and political tissue. The EU in all this played a secondary, but not negligible role of providing material and/or cultural incentives that kept the actors within these prefabricated paradigms. The mechanism that supported this stable political behavior was a complex phenomenon, it included elements from several models of interpretation: institutional, strategic, and deep beliefs. It was both material and cultural as far as the material basis did not automatically impose a particular interpretation of social reality. In Bulgaria, this model reflected the deeply held mistrust between people and the expressed desire to increase the level of individual protectiveness not by collective action, which would certainly imply more political participation, but through material separation, which existed more in the minds of people than in reality. This explained why Bulgarians who felt disillusioned from this mechanism of protection instead of reconsidering more social ways of acting preferred to withdraw even more from social affairs, either by social marginalization, or by spatial detachment from society (both presented in the following sections). In Macedonia, where such economic independence required substantial self-investment in politics, this mechanism, on the contrary, required a substantial level of social trust; being disillusioned therefore from this way of economic protection would rather lead people toward alternative social arrangements instead of social marginalization or spatial detachment from surrounding society. I guessed that this profound difference between Bulgaria and Macedonia in terms of significance of economic independence was linked to the way people in these two

countries saw the relation economy-politics. In Bulgaria where businesspersons, and not only, e.g. “Alex”, “Balkan” and “Nicolas”, linked politics to dirt, the proper place of economy was as far away as possible from it; in Macedonia, where many people separated politics, which was not pejorative, from partisanship, which was rather pejorative, businesspersons saw their place above the partisanship, but within and not outside the realm of politics.

Spatial detachment from society. This concept does not completely overlap with economic or political migration, although it has all positive attributes that make it look like a simple relocation in a country different from the country of origin. Theoretically it is quite close to “exit” strategy described by Hirschman (1970). The main difference is that such detachment represents not a purely rational decision, but a complex of rational, emotional and cultural elements.

In Bulgaria, and in Macedonia to a lesser extent, such detachment was a quite natural way of feeling in more security, and economic independence from the state or from large predator private interests, if a more traditional way of reaching economic independence through small business had not achieved its desired goals. The level of social mistrust for these subjects, either Bulgarian, e.g. “Fidanka”, or Macedonian, e.g. “Tinka”, remained very high. Their social practices drew on painful narratives of broken promises and friends’ unreliability; they both narrated about the low glass ceiling, which blocked any vertical mobility as main reason for their plans to move and stay abroad. At the same time, they cited emotional reasons for moving abroad, the feeling of insecurity; in the case of “Fidanka” this insecurity applied also to her two children. Even a small increase of personal and family protection through less emotionally charged and

materially easier ways seemed at some point a dead-ended effort. One possible way of solving this dilemma would be to embrace again more collective action, based on more trust, including political action, more consistent with Hirschman's "voice" strategy. Another option, presented here, tried to reach the desired level of personal protection through physical, but not emotional, detachment from the country of origin. Unlike Hirschman's "exiter" who simply cut a relationship, Bulgarians and Macedonians who physically exited remained profoundly attached emotionally to their native lands. As a result, the level of anxiety of those moving abroad remained very high, making the strategic explanation for this radical move less plausible. It was more the feeling of pain back home rather than intellectual pursuit of happiness abroad that stimulated this move. These people were escaping from, not going to. Their final destination did not matter so much as the fact of being elsewhere; e.g. "Chris" just waited for the final liberalization of the EU labor markets before moving out without having a specific idea where to go. EU integration played a certain, and sometimes a very significant, role in this process. The opening of borders and freedom of movement represented one of the main pillars of the European idea and of the European Union. The process of spatial detachment was therefore also a complex phenomenon, institutional, strategic, and emotional, where each element increased the force of the others. EU integration made the choice of moving to Europe more rational for those who associated staying home with impossible to afford costs; at the same time the ability to move abroad made the pain of staying, for those who really felt the pain, more acute and impossible to sustain. This "exit" mechanism limited the scope of helpfulness of the model of Levitsky and Way (2005a; 2005b; 2007), presented in the literature review. According to this model, the high leverages and

linkages between EU and post-communist countries would lead toward higher level of acceptance of western norms and values, including political. My findings showed that such high leverages and linkages were consistent also with the opposite trend, with withdrawal from political life and taking physical but not emotional refuge in another country. In order for Levitsky and Way's model to work, people had to interpret the high western leverages and linkages unequivocally as new opportunities to act within society, not outside it.

Social marginalization. On top of political apathy, certain informants, especially in Bulgaria, showed signs of distress that were not accompanied by tangible plans either of reconnecting with larger social forces or of spatial detaching from society in order to alleviate the suffering. These informants, e.g. "Boris", "Tino" and "Juli", fell into substance abuse, which was sustained by the recently developed culture of very high tolerance toward certain types of substance abuse, such as alcoholism. People stopped feeling ashamed by the fact that they abused their consumption of alcohol. Some made their abuse public in an ironic local version of the western "coming out" gay practices. They accepted themselves with all their imperfections, old and new, turning their shame into some sort of personal pride. The role of EU integration in this process was not paramount, although it was far from negligible. In a similar vein as it moved society culturally more toward accepting private business as a normal way of managing economy, it also increased the level of social tolerance toward all kinds of new practices or old practices on a different scale. Unlike those who moved abroad in order to ease the pain of being home without personal protection, those who were marginalized stayed in the homeland despite the pain, which was diluted in substances. They feared being

emotionally cut from home, where at the same time they feared the presence of other people who surrounded them. Only alcohol appeared to give them temporary relief; where they felt capable of making logical statements, they preferred abstract topics, like art or philosophy; discussing current social topics made them easily very angry. Being sober, as witnessed “Tino” and “Juli”, was very frequently equal to being depressed by the lack of vision and feeling of being able to be in control of own life.

Social identifiers. Here I present a mechanism of social identifiers, irrevocably linking some interviewees’ destinies with large groups that determine their stable political orientation; these informants may have quite different initial levels of political participation that remain stable. These groups may be organic, such as the nuclear family, or artificial, such as a political party, or a combination of both, such as an ethnic community, especially a minority ethnic community. Such a mechanism is close to Hirschman’s notion of loyalty; according to some (Graham and Keely 1992) this is an affective moderating variable that reduces the incidence and volume of voice or exit. For example, patriotism may prevent people who cannot influence the politics (“voice”) from emigrating (“exit”).

My findings showed that some people transferred to these groups the responsibility for their political choices as well as their level of political involvement, e.g. “Janet” said “in our family we traditionally vote socialist”; “Nicolas” said “it would be shameful for my family not to vote against the communists”. These groups provided understanding of the individuals’ place in society and, if any, within the political process. Ironically, people with such strong referential attitudes toward certain groups, organic or artificial, were outside of real politics as a strategic interaction despite the deep

conviction of some informants, e.g. “Janet” and “Nikolas” to the contrary. Any act that might potentially be political they saw only through the prism of larger group-based interests or values; the first rule for these people was conformism, not to disturb the imagined group’s status quo. They reacted with deep sadness to any real or potential split within this group; they feared it most of all, because it put in jeopardy their proper identity and well-being. These groups acted as emotional safety nets for these informants; they increased the level of feeling protected and cared for to bearable levels; people with such strong attitudes toward group belonging would hardly seriously consider being detached geographically from their homeland; in the Bulgarian case, they would also not cross the line between social drinking and substance abuse in order to ease the pain created by high levels of social mistrust. My findings showed that the family as a source of material and emotional protection acted much better in Macedonia than Bulgaria; this may at least partially explain the difference in the level of substance abuse in public between the two countries. The role of the family in both countries had another noticeable effect on political participation; it opened the door to the cultural influence of Christian orthodox and Muslim religions and made an active role in political life even less likely. As far as the minority ethnic community or preferred political party was concerned, the two countries shared very similar levels of identification. The creation of artificial groups of identification such as political parties was a complex phenomenon that only partly stayed within institutional or strategic paradigms. It was conditioned upon other factors, such as attitudes toward state, nation, freedom, equality, historical facts, and neighboring countries, among the others; some of these factors might reflect long-term social cleavages (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Some of these attitudes were

symbolically deeply embedded; the choice between freedom and equality and the chance to be able to make a choice between these concepts in the first place as well as the attitudes toward minorities did not automatically follow social prerequisites. They were also emotionally embedded; the feeling of joy or pain while cooperating was hardly a product of a pure logic based on the benefits and costs of such cooperation. As a matter of fact, the EU had very little say in any one of these groups of identifiers and as far as people with stable political trajectories were concerned, regardless of their initial level of intensity. Nevertheless, the EU might influence the political culture by influencing the intersubjective perception of its relation toward some of these identifiers. For example, the perception that erosion in family values followed a pan-European logic of similar erosion might affect the image of the EU and thus its role as a politically empowering tool, a key element in Vachudova's active leverage of influence (2005); according to her, such active leverage made democratic-minded people feel empowered to challenge illiberal regimes. Some informants, e.g. "Magda", did feel empowered. For them erosion of traditional institutions such as the nuclear family or the church were part of a normal civilizational process; others, e.g. "Konstantin", felt weakened, in a world where everything might be put in jeopardy they withdrew to their private business and/or family.

V.3.b. Increasing the sense of civic competence and the willingness for collective action

Unlike the previous section, this one narrates two independent trajectories of those informants, Bulgarians only³⁴, who report an increased sense of civic competence to understand the political process and an increased willingness to undertake collective action that may transcend narrowly defined ethnic boundaries constituting of nationhood in this particular Balkan country. EU integration plays a major role in both trajectories. There are no such observable trajectories in Macedonia, a phenomenon that is only partly due to the fact that this country is at a different, earlier, institutional stage of EU integration. The reason why these informants evolve, unlike those who remain stable over time, and why they evolve differently, can neither come out of EU integration itself, nor out of the specific position of each interviewee, material and cultural, at the onset of integration. It is a specific response on a sub-cultural level, including specific social practices, to EU integration as an external stimulus, which creates the possibility of different trajectories of political culture development. The different mechanisms, acting on both material and symbolic levels, are partially overlapping.

Acquiring a better sense of vision. The word “vision” associated with the impact of EU integration on individuals was ubiquitous in the interviews with informants who reported an increased sense of political competence and greater willingness for collective

³⁴ In Bulgaria people who report such increase in both political competence and collective action are “Eli”, “George”, “Kamen”, “Cyril”, “Darina”, “Emanuil”, “Jivka”, “Mira”, “Fredj”, “Ganyo”, “Jan”, “Ivan”, “Kosta”, “Laika”, and “Maria”. There are no informants reporting any increase in these elements in Macedonia.

action, e.g. “George” and “Kamen”. The EU gave them a better roadmap that made the future less fearsome. “George” said that “Europeanisation was like stepping again on a firm road after years of stepping on shaky ground”; “Kamen” added: “We can see now where exactly we are, without it, nobody can move forward”. The EU created the impression that it represented the future for the country; therefore Bulgaria had only to imitate it in order to move forward. In fact, the EU stepped into an already existing cultural paradigm of progress that was inherited from communism. Despite affirmations to the contrary, most Bulgarian informants were profoundly shaped by the Marxist idea of economic progress; some of them had only to rearrange the rank list of countries, by putting the advanced western nations ahead of the post-communist ones, in order to have a new global picture and a roadmap for future reference. The economic and social differences between more advanced European countries and Bulgaria were therefore not a source of anxiety; the new clearer roadmap of EU integration linked these different dots and showed the means of joining the more advanced nations. The wheel needed not be reinvented; Bulgaria had simply to follow and imitate literally in order to move forward. EU regulations were not burdensome; they were the means to make Bulgarians familiar with the new roadmap. On this point, therefore, some informants indeed confirmed the optimistic expectations in the literature (Pridham 2005), presented in chapter I, section 1.a.a; according to these expectations, EU integration made people more easily learn their new social and political roles. This confirmation, however, was limited to those who inherited the modernization paradigm from communism, and, within their circle, to those who saw the different levels of economic development as an opportunity for political action. Only for them did EU integration offer a better sense of vision; for others, who

will be presented later, the differences, on the contrary, imposed a norm not to take part in the political process until these differences were eliminated.

Acquiring a better sense of security. Another element that seemed important to most informants who reported an increased level of democratic political culture was the sense of better security directly linked to the fact of EU integration. “Security” here had to be defined well outside the traditional concept of physical or material safety. It was also, and above all, a feeling of greater comfort associated with the inevitable stress of the unknown. The transition in Bulgaria as in many other post-communist countries, as some critics of transitology point out (Carothers 2002), had been largely associated with high level of stress coming from the unknown end- and mid- points of transition. After 45 years of a society based on a non-capitalist economy, a non-democratic political regime, non-liberal values, and without liberal migration policy in both directions, it would be of no surprise that there was hardly anyone in the country who could practically know where the country would head and how a stable capitalist, democratic and liberal society should look, except for the media-imported, meaning also media distorted, western models. Some of my informants shared these distortions: the taxi-driver “Chris” complained that in a capitalist economy government decided how much he could charge per kilometer instead of using supply-demand equilibrium; “Alex” complained that there was no literacy test, “as everywhere in Europe”, for those going to vote; “Nevena” said that waiting in lines for public services was communist heritage, that “there were no lines in Europe”. I would wrap up these anecdotal evidences with a statement made by one of the leading politicians Ahmed Dogan. Asked about the dubious links between his party and business interests, he said that such practices of merger between political parties and

economic interests were common and legal anywhere in the world, from America to Japan, that this was the only way to do politics (Mediapool 2005). With so many distortions, some of which were still alive, the first years of post-communism were years of trial and error, leaving many people with the bad impression that the situation in the country became worse and even less clear than before. Some of these same people, once EU integration took off, moved again toward a more optimistic interpretation of the situation. Moving along the new roadmap, these people reported that they now felt more secure as far as the general social direction was concerned. On this point, the findings also largely confirmed the optimistic stream in the literature, more particularly its institutionalist branch. The only glitch came from the fact that the mechanism that increased the sense of security was a complex of cognitive and emotional particles, not just a process of learning. This additional emotional dimension, feeling secured by knowing what was going to happen, as the feeling of having better vision, was also linked to intersubjective cultural prerequisites. This time it seemed that a key element in this mechanism was the perception of the EU as a paternalist authority, an authority that provided a comprehensive protocol of the steps that lied ahead. This cultural paradigm, as well as the idea of progress, also came from communism; it was a resurrection of the idea of the party-state that knew better and gave directions on the micro-level. For two reasons, this understanding could not be automatically transferred to EU. First, the Union did not employ communist teleological vocabulary, which was a major obstacle for those who continued to feel attached to communist ideas; second, more important, the EU existed on supranational level; considering the EU as a new incarnation of the party-state could de-legitimize the nation-state. Therefore, what the optimistic stream in the

literature predicted became a matter of chance; only some of those who accepted the communist paternalistic relation between citizens and party (state) embarked on the boat of EU integration as a provider of better security, and only some of those who embarked on this boat stayed attached to the national level of the political process, e.g. “Kamen”. Others either did not embark at all, e.g. “Janet” and “Iva”, or embarked, but shifted allegiance toward supranational institutions and stopped caring about national political life, e.g. “Emanuil” and “Mira”.

Acquiring a sense of dignity. Although very few used the word “dignity” to describe their personal situation in relation to EU integration, most Bulgarians who experienced an increased level of political competence and willingness for collective action reported an increased sense of feeling good as persons, to see the results of their own work, and to be proud of it. These informants reported it against the backdrop of sadness and humiliation that reigned in the first decade following the start of the post-communist transition. Regarding that time, they reported having lost the clear separation between “good” and “bad”; therefore they could not establish proper criteria to evaluate their own work; as a result, they could not claim to take pride in what they were doing because of the sense of moral relativity that dominated society; within the virtual debate between Nietzsche (1966) and Weber (1959) on the relation between morality and politics in the modern world these informants took the side with Weber who claimed that political activity presupposed having strong moral convictions. These informants at the beginning of post-communist transition were not sure whether what they were doing was “right” or “wrong”; the only thing that mattered then was their biological survival. EU integration began restoring their sense of personal dignity. It began by the simple fact that

the country was considered ready to begin accession negotiations and, later, to be invited to join the Union. In the sea of self-doubt, this process was perceived, e.g. by informants “George” and “Kamen”, as if at least something in the country had been done or might have been done right. With the process of integration under way, some informants, e.g. “Emanuil” claimed being proud of their work by seeing it as small, but tangible elements in the new roadmap of integration. EU integration restored the sense of moral absolutism, that some things were unmistakably morally “good”. Feelings attached to these “good” things made some informants feel personally ennobled.

Acquiring a sense of freedom. People who reported an increased sense of political competence and willingness for collective action also reported an increased sense of having real choices in areas where they felt stuck for many years earlier. These choices could apply to matters such as life styles, sexual preferences, dressing, hairstyles, traveling, working, and hobbies. They could also apply to setting different time and individual priorities. The sense of having choice was born when the sense of material emergency was put to rest. It was only partly due to a better material standard of living. On the contrary, some informants reported, with a certain sense of dignity, that they had chosen less lucrative alternatives because of the better sense of meaning attached to them, e.g. “George” and “Eli”. The best option was not any more associated with the higher material return. Raising children, spending time in nature alone (“Emanuil”), having fun with friends (“Mira”) had become more important, above a certain point of material satisfaction, than accumulating more and more money. Furthermore, making money became again more and more attached to some moral bases. Making money per se, in some social circles, was no longer considered the only way to be present in society; some

people stopped speaking about how much they make and stopped showing signs of affluence, e.g. “Radoi” and “Sasha”. On this point, informants made statements that confirmed Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (1943), inspired by classical Marxism, according to which a certain level of material needs’ satisfaction had to be met before individuals began aspiring for other, less material needs, such as friendship and having extra free time. What was interesting here was the way these people symbolically put these two levels of needs, material and non-material, in sharp opposition. They did not want to consider their present lives as a quantitative increase from their previous material situation, but as a qualitatively better alternative. Being concerned with material aspect of life became synonymous to being selfish, part of the crowd, ordinary. On this point, some informants did not follow the strategic approach in the literature, presented in hypothesis H2; they did not become politically more active because they saw their interests being better protected; on the contrary, they tried to remove these interests as part of their worse alternative self, which for them was part of a social situation of emergency, not part of social normality. For these informants, prerequisites for more political activity were a clear vision what social “good” was and personal detachment for material interests.

Acquiring a new sense of teamwork. Without exception, the Bulgarians who reported increased political competence and willingness for collective action also reported increased ability for teamwork, real or desired. They were ready to attribute this new feature to EU integration as a symbolic promoter of teamwork. Traditionally the level of social trust in Bulgaria was low (Valkov 2009; 2010); the first post-communist decade, which was the time of biological survival, only further contributed to this phenomenon; the “other” was perceived largely in terms of a competitor who sucked up

important economic resources for himself and thus diminished one's own chances of survival. Teamwork, therefore, in all its forms was largely inhibited. It was not supported discursively on any level. Being teamwork-oriented was tantamount to a return to "old communist times" of collective behavior. EU integration succeeded, within some social circles, especially those closely linked to the integration itself, e.g. "George", "Kamen" and "Cyril", in restoring the image of teamwork as a positive value in itself, irrespective of the social and political system, socialist or capitalist. Some of them, e.g. "Cyril" emphasized the need for increased team spirit as a cultural precondition ("we need a revolution in the culture") for improving the chances of Europeanisation of the country. The "teamwork" mechanism, as the next section will show, was among the key factors that separated the group of those who resolved the dilemma "European or Bulgarian" in favor of the national identity from those who preferred to feel more European. The later group, e.g. "Emanuil" and "Mira", considered their fellow citizens as culturally backward and thus not apt for collective action.

Before moving on, I want to make some general comments regarding elements of positive cultural trends that do not fall within any of the above-mentioned points. All these mechanisms, acting on either material or symbolic levels or on both, are common for most of those who report an increased sense of civic competence and willingness for collective action. There are, however, two very different trajectories within this group of informants. One of the trajectories increases the above-mentioned elements of democratic political culture, but pushes the informants away from the domestic political realm; the other one, on the contrary, makes the interviewees much more involved with the

domestic political system. In brief, the first trajectory creates more Europeans than Bulgarians; the other makes Bulgarians politically more active. Beyond the factors already discussed in this section, another one that seems to contribute to this diversity of outcomes is the deep feeling of national group shame that is produced in the first group as opposed to the other, where the corresponding feeling is that of national pride. These feelings of shame and pride are both attributable to the influence of EU integration and to the intersubjective perceptions of the chances for Bulgaria to follow the new European roadmap. The first group, e.g. “Emanuil” and “Mira”, answers this question with “no”; they do not see how Bulgaria can achieve the EU’s high criteria without changes in the way most people think. According to them, becoming European is not just a process of performing certain routine tasks; it is also a profound identity change, a process of separation with former values, history, and heroes. Being Bulgarian without saying goodbye to these old traits of identity makes these informants feel ashamed to be part of such a backward nation; they prefer to identify themselves with the EU as a beacon of civilization and high standards. They do not hesitate to embarrass Bulgaria any time and any way they can; they would gladly defend any cause they consider just, in which Bulgaria is put on the bench of the accused. On the contrary, the second group feels profoundly proud of being part of a nation that has been attributed a place within the EU. They feel confident about the chances of the country to fulfill all the conditionality that is required of it as a member of the Union. For them, there are no inhibiting national traits that make impossible such a move forward; being European is not associated with abandoning oneself, but is to acquire new progressive traits on the top of the already existing old national traits. My interviews show that it is this dichotomy pride-shame that

is accountable for this trajectory diversity. It is this dichotomy that accounts for later institutional and strategic preferences, within the theoretical limitations already presented, and not the other way around. People who feel ashamed of being Bulgarian, along the process of EU integration, and because of this process, are much more likely to become detached symbolically from the national social and political system. People who gain an additional sense of pride within this process, on the contrary, are motivated to become more and more attached to their native society under all its forms. The emotional level is therefore the first level of reaction that allows for subsequent rational choices.

There are no Macedonians, or at least none within my sample of interviewees, who experience such pro-democratic cultural changes under the influence of EU integration. This suspicious absence is, of course, partly due to the fact that the country is at a different stage of EU integration itself. Unlike Bulgaria, which has been an EU member since 2007, Macedonia still waits to be invited to begin accession negotiations. Considering that Bulgarians who are positively affected by EU integration are without exception actively involved with the process of EU integration may indicate that a similar positive trend could materialize in Macedonia once the country experiences similar EU influence. However, this would be an arbitrary and too optimistic expectation. The Macedonians who have the potential to experience such a positive surge in their political culture in the future are already politically very active. In addition, they would hardly filter the EU through the dichotomy national pride-national shame. My interviews show that the EU is not directly related to this dichotomy in Macedonia; it is, however, indirectly related to it through the comparison with other regional states, especially some former Yugoslav republics and Albania. The history of common federal statehood and

the subordinate position of Albanians in modern Macedonia have constructed a system of coordination within which Macedonians feel proud every time they may perform at least as well as their former Yugoslav brethren and feel ashamed every time they do not do at least as well as neighboring Albania; the EU, for the lack of a better actor, is considered a neutral arbiter in this comparison. According to some informants, e.g. “Milorad” and “Velichka”, as far as EU integration is concerned, Macedonians would feel very proud if they managed to join the Union before some of the former Yugoslav republics and would feel very ashamed if they managed to pass the finish line of integration only after Albania. In either case, the dichotomy pride-shame is not related directly to the feeling of being Macedonian, which is unequivocally, for ethnic Macedonians, charged with positive connotations. Another reason why Macedonians could not pass through the same positive trajectories as some Bulgarians do, is the fact that the group of Macedonians best prepared to follow the trajectory of “Europeanisation”, is already situated at the top of the democratic political culture having all necessary elements highly developed. If this group, for any reason, radically change behavior and under the impact of EU integration, moves toward abandoning political activity on the national level, this would represent a step backward, not forward, in their democratic political culture. Finally, those Macedonians who have potential for this democratic culture to increase appear not to link EU integration with more opportunities to act at home in any domain, political or economic, e.g. “Tinka”. Some of them, like her, may move abroad, some, e.g. “Kiro” and “Spiro”, may withdraw from larger society toward family or toward small business because they have no particular hopes vested in the EU; these tendencies make me doubt that they would live through the process of integration by acquiring better senses of

vision, security, dignity, freedom, and/or teamwork. They would rather remain socially and politically marginalized, living either within or outside the country.

V.3.c. Reducing or eliminating the tendency to vote, civic competence and willingness for collective action

This section narrates the trajectories of informants, both in Bulgaria and Macedonia³⁵, who report a decreasing tendency, up to its total elimination, to vote, of feeling civically competent, and of willing to contemplate collective action. In most cases, the role of EU integration is important, if not paramount; without it, these trajectories would not take place for some of the interviewees.

Economic independence. Economic independence, as already discussed in section 3.a., was the capacity of individuals to live and thrive on the basis of a private source of income that was independent from governmental sources of income or salary in private companies. In both countries the feeling of economic independence was tantamount to feeling free not to engage in any public topic as long as there was no direct impact on the source of economic independence. This phenomenon had been already discussed more in

³⁵ For Bulgaria informants that stopped voting altogether without having been feeling civically competent or willing to undergo collective action were "Diana", "Stasi", "Tosho", "Boris", "Fidanka", "Gabriel", "Konstantin", "Radoi", "Sasha", "Boriana", "Chris", and "Doroteia"; informants that in addition to stopping voting felt civically less competent were "Alex", "Christine", "Andrew", and "Anette". For Macedonia those that stopped voting without losing the sense of civic competence without having willingness for collective action were "Pavka" and "Mara"; the informants that stopped voting without losing the sense of civic competence and willingness for collective action were "Tinka" and "Branko"; the informants that lost their collective action without stopping voting and losing the sense of civic competence were "Kiro", "Petko", and "Jordan".

depth in the section that narrated the stable a-political trajectories. Its main elements remained unchanged: people felt that they became bosses and did not need to report to anybody anymore; they needed a small but guaranteed market which was not subject to frequent fluctuations; they felt independent from any large social projects; and their attitudes toward politics reflected the parochial logic of relative isolation. EU integration, as in the section that narrated the stable trajectory, was partly responsible for this type of behavior. It legitimized private property as a basic pillar of the national economy; therefore, it legitimized small business as well, making culturally impossible any return toward the planned economy. There were some nuances for Bulgaria and Macedonia regarding the sense of economic independence and its impact on voting behavior. In Bulgaria people were much more cynical toward politics in general; economic independence was therefore a way to get out of the dirt, to make a family nest far away from the storms of public life; “Konstantin” said: “a true man always has to have enough money in his pocket and not depend on anybody else”. In Macedonia, the attitudes toward politics was much less cynical; therefore, business persons tried to stay clear from being too much engaged with one particular political party, despite their partisan preferences; for them business was symbolically located above partisan politics, which were a dividing factor; in Bulgaria business was symbolically located outside politics in general. Therefore, there were qualitative differences between Bulgarians and Macedonians who stopped voting as a result of their economic independence, with or without the impact of EU integration. In Bulgaria, these people, e.g. “Radoi”, originally felt politically less competent and socially more mistrustful; stopping voting had cut the last cord that attached them to larger social projects; this informant, despite his excellent

financial situation, by local standards, urged his two teenage children to move abroad at first opportunity to study and eventually to work and settle down. In Macedonia, these people, e.g. “Pavka”, originally felt both competent and/or socially more trustful; for them stopping voting did not cut links with larger social projects, it made them feel only above the factional divisions linked to the partisan level of political life. This Macedonian informant said: “It is bad for my business to be too close to one particular party; what my foreign partners will say? It is good for my business to have friends in any government, regardless of my partisan preferences”. Regarding the disagreement in the literature between Vachudova’s optimistic and Bideleux’s pessimistic vision as far as the relation between economic liberalization and political democratization is concerned most of the informants eventually would side with Bideleux. He argued (Bideleux 2001) that liberalization and democratization were two contradicting one another instead of mutually reinforcing logics.

“The game is over” mentality. Another mechanism, consistent with the Hirschman’s “exit” strategy, having a strong impact on the significance of voting in Bulgaria only, was the feeling that there was nothing to be done in order to improve social reality, that the big decisions had been made, and the “little people” had to suffer their lot. Making individual or collective contributions was a waste of time, money and energy, which could be much better spent in making money or in doing nothing. EU integration played a key role in maintaining this reasoning. On the one hand, political discourse, during integration, put an accent on European conditionality, which was consistent with Raik’s (2004) pessimist predictions; according to this author, the imperative conditionality of integration had to make people politically passive. Indeed,

the impression most Bulgarians had on this issue was that the country had lost all its bargaining power the day it decided to submit its application for EU membership. From that time on, Brussels imposed its will, and Bulgarians had to accept the consequences. The wave of multinational corporations that entered the country at about the same time as the accession negotiations was presented as a direct consequence of EU integration; therefore it was of no surprise that Bulgarians who lost jobs, such as “Alex” in the small retail and service businesses, linked their personal loss with EU integration. If economic independence was valued because of its capacity to make people feel free from social links and responsibilities, the loss of this opportunity forced them again into the proletariat. Up to this moment this re-proletarianization had not brought any re-politization; it seemed that other psychological factors such as anger and blame, at society, as well as self-victimization interfered with the possibility of getting back into politics. Such people were at a crossroad; the other options they had, as we saw in other informants, if they decided not to reintegrate society, were emigration, alcoholism, or anti-social behavior. The argument that some psychological traits might represent powerful boosters or obstacles to get back into politics is not new in the literature. Tarrow (1998: 111-112) said that converting passivity into action required an emotional energy, an emotional force, which might be fuelled by anger, pride, loyalty, and other “vitalizing” emotions. Shame was, he continues, in contrast, decidedly “devitalizing”. Rutten (2007) in the same vein discussed shame as a powerful inhibitor to political activism. An interpretative look at the same question, however, showed that there were no decidedly vitalizing and devitalizing emotions; e.g. anger might equally well explain political passivity, as with those who shared “the game is over” mentality, and shame might equally well cause

political activity, as with those Bulgarians who transferred their activity on pan-European level.

“Showing the politicians” mentality. Another mechanism made sense of voting abstention with the reasoning that this was the appropriate way of showing the politicians the lack of respect they enjoyed from ordinary citizens. This mentality existed among interviewees in Bulgaria only. They linked it with a strong feeling of pain about current social and political processes. It was not because these people did not want to vote, or because they felt civically incompetent that they had decided not to participate in political process; on the contrary, they felt competent enough and they strongly believed, e.g. “Tosho”, that the ultimate way to try to influence politicians was by sending the message that they did not want to be part of the “democratic masquerade”. They said that they would gladly return to politics if they saw enough proof of respect for their interests coming from the politicians; in fact, these people cared less about their material interests than about the lack of respect shown to them as individuals. They wanted to see that politicians offered them a clear roadmap on which they could find themselves. This mentality, on a symbolic level, was partly triggered by EU integration. These people blamed the EU, together with their national governments, for not having delivered on its promises for better quality of life, understood as more disposable income and more transparent administration, both being important parts of the integration process. People felt they have done their part of the deal by reducing consumption for years and accepting all sorts of new regulations coming from above; they now wanted to see the other side fulfilling its part of the contract. I classified this behavior in the group of negative impacts because there was, so far, no indication that such a political strategy could have

any positive and pro-democratic influence on Bulgarian political life. Those who advocated this tactic did not deny that they had failed so far to attain their goals, and as a result, they acknowledged that the politicians felt even less pressured from below to change their way of doing politics. There was yet another way to understand this mentality; some citizens wanted to have a real choice of party programs. EU integration so far had led to uniformity of programs, which largely followed EU conditionality. The choice between parties, as revealed in the literature by Raik (2004) and Bideleux (2001), was not a choice between alternative programs but between the best candidates to listen to and to execute the EU's orders. With Bulgaria already in the EU, some Bulgarian citizens now wanted this to change; they wanted to get back to democratic process, they wanted their parties back. They partly blamed the EU for the current situation and obviously expected the EU to allow the parties to be different in order to reflect their social priorities.

Disillusionment with some social identifiers. A few Bulgarians, we saw this in the section about the stable trajectories, identified with their social and political roles indirectly, through their larger social identifiers, linked to their family history or to other factors that occurred later in life. As far as these identifiers remained strong, these people felt confident to reaffirm their way of participation without change. When disillusionment occurred, this process was put in danger; people felt lost, without orientation, in need of withdrawal in order to make their mind. In Bulgaria, there were acts of disillusionment that related to ethnic background and party affiliation. For some, e.g. "Ivan", taking part in politics under any form made sense only within a polity where the ethnic group they belonged to constitutes a majority within the general population and thus had legitimate

power within democratic political process. These people would not vote if they were given the chance to emigrate and to be naturalized abroad. To sum up, for such Bulgarians, being political made sense only in Bulgaria and as long as Bulgarians represent the ethnic majority. The presentation of statistical data that showed the inevitable decline of ethnic Bulgarians within the country acted as a powerful inhibitor for these people's political action. Some of them might blame EU integration for being co-responsible for this demographic crisis, by offering economic opportunities to young people to go abroad and by insisting on redistribution of national resources toward underprivileged ethnic minorities. Disillusionments with another strong identifier - political party - might also lead to growing cynicism, and therefore to political apathy. In Bulgaria, such disillusionment occurred on both the political left and right. On the left, for example, the Communist successor party suffered in the 2009 parliamentary elections because of its strategic political alliance with the ethnic *Turkish Movement of Rights and Freedoms*. People with strong identification with this party felt betrayed by the party leadership and simply refused to cast ballots, e.g. "Luba" and "Janet". The EU could have been associated with this alliance because it was presented to the public as having the EU's blessing on the final stretch before the EU membership.

Fear of ethnic minorities. The previous mechanism was partially linked to the fear of ethnic minorities. Bulgarians had uneasy relations with Turks and Roma, and Macedonians with Albanians, as we could see from some street graffiti presented in chapter III. Under some conditions, witness the trajectory of "Alex" and "Ivan", such fear could have led, at least temporarily, to an increased politization. In fact, there was no indication that this would always be the case in either country. On the contrary, in

Bulgaria some people, e.g. “Balkan” and “Christine”, would consider turning their back to politics and/or to their country because of the fear that the country was not “their” country anymore; in Macedonia, the fear of minorities, e.g. by “Petko” and “Jordan”, led to more social mistrust. In the latter case, the role of EU integration was explicitly reported in some individual interviews; the Union was presented as a malicious external force that divided society by forcing on it special obligations to protect minority rights; “Jordan” asked a rhetorical question: “If they (the EU) ask so much from us now (he referred to the right of minorities to use their languages), just to begin negotiations, what would they ask later, in exchange for joining the Union?” Without this feeling of unfair EU interference and conditionality (“Petko” affirmed: “Nobody asked Poles or Czechs to make similar concessions”), these individuals reported that they would feel much less fearful and therefore much more ready to contemplate acts of cooperation with local Albanians. As in the discussion of “the game is over” mentality, the informants showed that fear, as a powerful emotion, was not indisputably linked to either increased or decreased level of democratic culture. Informants could use it as an instrument that inhibits or boosts significance of political participation.

V.3.d. The relative influence of each trajectory. An interactive approach

People report the influence of EU integration on their thinking and behavior as they see it. They cannot, however, report the relative influence of their own understanding in comparison with the other possible trajectories, some of which they are unfamiliar with and some of which they strongly reject or feel indifferent to. They are

culturally very present within their respective subcultures where their trajectories look like the most, if not the only logical consequences of their particular circumstances. Yet, this research would not be complete if I do not try to put each trajectory within the larger context of other trajectories, each opinion within the sea of interacting opinions. The goal is not to show which one is numerically more present within society. Quantitative methods, which are not part of this research, would be more powerful in answering this type of question. I would like to present some results that show, in real life interaction, which trajectories appear to be becoming dominant and which ones are marginalized or transformed.

One way of producing such results, using qualitative methods, would be to organize focus groups. Each group would include participants who have originally fallen in different cultural trajectories. The discussion would show which opinion becomes dominant, and which one is subordinated or marginalized or transformed. For the purpose of this research, it would not have been appropriate to organize a textbook version of focus groups. If people who confidentially gave their opinions were made to defend these opinions against other informants I would break the promise of confidentiality that was given toward each individual participant. If new people were contacted to form focus groups, that would extend the time of gathering information without necessarily producing any additional information. Another major disadvantage of this technique, the focus group, would have been its inherent artificiality; people may change or modify their opinions simply because they do not feel comfortable outside their usual social habitat. Recall that the individual interviews were conducted taking into account the specific wishes of each participant regarding the time and the place. It would be impossible to

accommodate all participants within a focus group by finding equally suitable place and time, which, finally, would have given unfair preference to some of them.

To solve this methodological problem, I used two other techniques that I found appropriate for this particular research. First, I used additional findings gathered through non-participant observations in both Bulgaria and Macedonia. This information came from my notebook and was not part of the formal interviews. Second, I used information that was gathered through a new set of individual interviews with some of the previous interviewees; these meetings sought intentionally to provoke reactions as if interviewees and myself were a focus group that reproduced the dynamics of different discourses. In other words, I confronted my interlocutors with arguments that I knew would be considered as opposed to theirs.

Two events during my field trips to Bulgaria and Macedonia gave me the hint to use this quasi focus group technique. The first occurred on my bus drive between the two capital cities, Sofia and Skopje in 2010. The bus of 50 seats was almost empty; no more than 10-15 passengers were present, almost all Bulgarians. At the Macedonian border and customs control some of the passengers became nervous because about the long time of waiting that was not warranted for any obvious reason. They started to discuss whether such waiting, *ceteris paribus*, could have occurred in Germany. The passengers divided into two camps. The first argued that German border and customs officers were simple bureaucrats that followed written instructions; the second, on the contrary, argued that all frontier and customs officers around the world were equally corrupt, that all they wanted was to find paper irregularities or illegal merchandise in order to take personal profit out of it. The waiting time was long and discussion went further and further, each side

provided new arguments, personal experiences, and gossip. The discussion ended when all those, except one, who defended that German officers would not be as corrupt as their Macedonian and Bulgarian colleagues accepted the opposite view. The interaction confirmed which discourse was dominant, that all officers around the world were corrupt. The only person who kept his minority position decided to abandon discussion without however accepting his opponents' arguments. This was a good example of a focus group without moderator; two positions were clearly identified before coming into clash; arguments were provided for each one of them; the interactive dynamic produced a dominant discourse.

The second event took place a week later, in Skopje. I met at a lunch table with four persons, political cartoonists, whom I had individually met before. They did not fall into the group of Macedonian informants. The reason I met them was to seek their comments on some of their political cartoons, which were with or without any link to the dissertation project. These people knew each other well and knew the reason of my staying in Macedonia. They also knew that I had spoken in private with each one of them. What they did not know was what the others had told me during their private meetings. The common meeting was planned as a friendly chat, outside my research, but in the Balkans a friendly chat has two necessary requisites: a cup of coffee and a discussion on the domestic and international political situation. During this lunch, as a foreigner, I had a good excuse not to get too involved in Macedonian domestic political topics. My four hosts, on the contrary, without been asked, used the chance to present again their general political views. I already knew that two of them were close to the center-right nationalist government and that the other two were close to the center-left ex-communist opposition.

Again, as in the bus, their views collided on a whole spectrum of issues, beginning with the rights of Albanians to put their flags on public display to the prospects of changing the name of the republic. The center-right cartoonists quickly monopolized the nationalist card and their opponents found it harder and harder to put up new arguments against their colleagues. As in the bus, as an outside observer, I saw how one discourse became dominant; the euro-skeptics won against the euro-optimists. This victory, as in the bus, had nothing to do with numerical superiority of its supporters; they simply put their opponents on the defensive and occupied the symbolic center of social normality. Pending new arguments from the dissidents that could convince everybody and produce a new dominant discourse, the old dominant discourse remained dominant.

These two events made me browse my notebooks for other similar exchanges of opinions in both countries, directly observed on the streets or on the radio and TV talk shows. I found that in Bulgaria, several spontaneous discussions had occurred between people who defended two extreme positions on the issue of whether it was worth voting within a political system where the vote could change the government but not the policies. The results were that those who advocated political apathy always took over by silencing those who advocated pro-active social and political positions. The victory of this a-political position was even more conspicuous if I put on the balance the fact that this position ran against the official state discourse of encouraging political participation. The key mechanism that explained this victory was the shaming of the opponents. Optimistic political discourse disappeared when it was confronted with facts or rumors of international conspiracies and the universal nature of state corruption that made people powerless and defenseless. My observations in Bulgaria showed that people who publicly

advocated a-political behavior in Bulgaria seemed to have the wind in their sails; the reason why some people could still behave as political animals in Bulgaria was probably due to the fact that they lived in relative cultural isolation from other discourses that advocated a-political behavior. In Macedonia the picture was quite different. Spontaneously developing political discussions among people who initially defended a-political and participatory positions ended up exclusively in favor of those with proactive political and social positions. The mechanism, ironically, was the same, shaming the opponent; this time the shame came from the inability of some Macedonians to be ready to take their share of the common national burden. Appearing treacherous in Macedonia in the eyes of friends and family was equally unacceptable as appearing politically naïve and subservient in Bulgaria.

These observations made me plan a third field trip to Bulgaria in 2011, which had to clarify the question of the internal discursive dynamic. As I had to keep the confidentiality of my informants, the quasi focus groups that I organized, were in fact interviews where I had to defend positions opposed to those of my interviewees. Instead of using the format of ethnographic interviews where the interviewer guided through the topics but tried not to confront the interviewee, this time I had to increase the emotional temperature by risking that the informant cut the interview. By observing that shaming was one of the key mechanisms of exchange between discourses, I had to use it myself abundantly. For example, those who defended EU integration as a civilizing project had to be called “naïve” and “indoctrinated”, those who withdrew from politics or planned to leave country had to be called “traitors” and “fugitives”. These were my initial plans. In fact, once I faced my “opponents” I had no courage to be as aggressive as I planned. My

informants had opened to me their hearts and minds and I could not cross a line that would make me appear in their eyes as ungrateful. So instead of attacking them personally, I attacked their positions using information that I could easily provide from other sources. Instead of saying “You are so naïve, on the contrary, I think that...” I could simply say “But how about an opinion that obviously contradicts yours”, and then cite an opinion, which represented my informant as “naïve”. My interlocutors felt the heat, but did not consider it as a personal attack coming from me. To save face, they had to find arguments, if not to defend their opinions then at least to keep up the conversation. In this way I interviewed seven persons from the pool of my previous informants; four of them, “Plamen”, “Rumi”, “Tosho” and “Anette”, were initially classified as people who had become or had remained a-political despite or because of the symbolic presence of EU integration; the other three informants, “Kamen”, “Cyril” and “Mira”, were people who were classified as politically more active, more competent and ready to contemplate new forms of collective action because of EU integration. In these interviews, after a brief introductory section in which I double-checked that they were still standing by their previous positions, I introduced the alternative views and listened to their reactions.

The first group of informants, the a-political people, comfortably held firm their previous positions despite the presence of an alternative pro-active political discourse that I tried to maintain to the best of my abilities. Their common points were that criminals ruled Bulgaria and that taking part in such a system was shameful. They also pointed out the fact that as a Bulgarian living abroad for many years I had lost touch with Bulgarian reality, a reality which was much worse than the one that appeared to foreign tourists. “Plamen” several times said during the meeting “the things are different (translation:

worse) from what people say and they get worse with each day passing... there is no point to try to change them". "Rumi" said "you in Canada live so well that you cannot understand how we struggle here... we are so desperate that nothing can change for better"; "Tosho" immediately embarked on international conspiracy theses: "I know well that all these rosy fairy tales are fabricated abroad and aim to destroy the Bulgarian nation." "Anette" built her line of defense by repeating the phrase: "Can't you see yourself how bad things are here". Instead of being shamed for their lack of enthusiasm, this group of people tried in turn to shame me for being too enthusiastic, for even listening to enthusiastic discourses. As an instrument of shaming they used the obvious fact that I was living abroad for many years and therefore could not have objective understanding of the situation in my native country. None of them seemed to contemplate any change in his or her position.

The informants of the second group, in which two people were currently civil servants and one a NGO employee and a former civil servant, were seemingly more nervous to defend their positions facing open opposition. They, however, never used in defense the fact that I was living abroad to discredit the alternative discourse that I was maintaining. They also never tried to defend their positions by pointing out that facts were clear and spoke for themselves. To the contrary, they tried to present their positions as too complicated to be part of a public discussion. They usually made a clear distinction between themselves and ordinary people. According to "Cyril", "Bulgarians are misinformed and therefore cannot make good judgment on EU integration and on all the good things that come along with it." "Kamen" took a condescending view on his compatriots: "It is irrelevant what people say, because at the end they will obey new laws

as always.” “Mira” was less optimistic on this point; therefore she suggested: “We need a new totalitarian state; people need a strict master whom they should fear, not endless discussions”. Unlike the first group of informants who associated themselves with civil society, with the normal ordinary people, the second group looked at themselves as being above society and above doubts regarding the future course of social development. “Cyril” never thought that as a Bulgarian too he could also be misinformed; “Kamen” never thought that what he was thinking was irrelevant; “Mira” never thought that she would be subjected to the same totalitarian state as the ordinary people. Their views were not supposed to be put to democratic discussion. “Cyril” complained that “people talk too much, but we need to work”; “Mira”, in harmony with her totalitarian dreams, added that “We seem to have too much democracy and too little order”. To sum up, this second group of informants, when felt endangered, challenged the right of their opponents to have independent opinions. Contrary to Pridham’s pro-democratic expectations (2005, 115), these informants did not use their EU democratic know-how in order to replicate it in their domestic actions. EU integration made them politically more active, but they were ready, when they felt in danger, to negate the democratic rights of their fellow citizens. In agreement with Raik (2004) and Bideleux (2001), these informants, as former and current members of the extended political executive, used EU integration to detach themselves symbolically from the local society and its specific interests. They could maintain their specific views as long as the state they were so deeply identifying with remained relatively autonomous from society.

V.4. Some tentative conclusions

Regarding the main research question, this chapter's main conclusions are, as follows:

- EU integration did indeed influence political culture in both countries. This influence was not uniform, going in one direction only; it could take shape as a booster to or as an inhibitor of political action, in general, and of democratic action, in particular. It could also help some people keep steady on all points of political culture: participation, competence and collective action.
- Within each trajectory, either positive or negative, the process of EU integration was also not uniform; some informants might have experienced an increase or decrease in one only cultural element, but remained static in another.
- Variations of trajectories paired with variations of causal mechanisms. These mechanisms might have acted predominantly either on the emotional level, e.g. fear of ethnic minorities and acquired new sense of security, or on a rational level, e.g. acquired new sense of teamwork and post-materialist sense of freedom.
- As far as causality was concerned, my interpretative approach showed that there was no stable link between signifiers and significances. Certain factors, such as fear, could be part of two opposing mechanisms, one of which that motivated and another that inhibited political action. Economic independence also meant

- different things in Bulgaria and Macedonia. In Bulgaria being independent meant staying away from politics in general; in Macedonia it meant to be within politics but outside partisan quarrels.
- Regarding the existing literature, the findings in part confirmed several arguments from each of the existing camps, euro-optimists and euro-skeptics; the positive trajectories provided good illustrations to the euro-optimist approach and the negative trajectories to euro-skeptic approach. Nevertheless, when it came to the euro-optimist approach, this confirmation was conditioned upon some preexisting cultural matrices, which were not part of EU integration itself, such as the belief in the Marxist idea of economic progress as an unidirectional development or the emotional comfort with a communist-era paternalistic state that taught, guided and cared for society. As far as the euro-skeptic literature was concerned, I did not find the need of such preexisting cultural matrices. Even if it was not my goal to compare the relative scientific value of each general approach to EU integration on post-communist democratization, my findings showed a relative superiority of the institutionalist branch of euro-skeptics, Raik (2004) and Bideleux (2001).
 - The two case studies, Bulgaria and Macedonia, demonstrated some interesting phenomena that did not accord with the diachronic logic of EU integration's influence over post-communist democratic culture development. Macedonia was not following on the footsteps of Bulgaria; it moved in a different direction despite the identical foreign source of the asymmetrical power relation, the EU,

and despite the existence of zones where the EU influenced, as expected, the strategic choice of domestic actors. Some of the difference between the two countries could be attributed to the different starting points as far as their political culture was concerned. For example, Bulgarians were socially less trustful and politically more cynical than their Macedonian counterparts. Some of the differences, however, could not be explained with this initial difference. People with similar starting conditions evolved in different directions; political trajectories in Bulgaria, outside the group of those directly influenced as part of the chains of communication that linked the EU and Bulgaria, were predominantly negative; people became politically less active, less competent and even less trustful as a result of EU integration. In Macedonia, where the process of integration was still at a much earlier stage, such negative evolution was the only possible direction of change. When put within the framework of dynamic interaction, Bulgaria and Macedonia showed very different outcomes; Bulgarians as a nation became less motivated to take part in the political process unless they withdrew from democratic process into elitist technocratic projects; Macedonians, on the contrary, became more politically motivated. The clash of a similar bipolar set of political views in both countries gave dominance to different discourses within political culture.

- These different outcomes in Bulgaria and Macedonia were outside the range of possibilities for influence within the traditional literature that made foreign influence contingent upon the transfer of institutions or of the domestic strategic

choice or of any combination between them as part of the logic of rational choice neo-institutionalism. A complex factor grouping beliefs, such as the place of religion in politics, attitudes, for example toward external factors, and emotions, such as fear and shame, set in motion different national trajectories, and different sub-national trajectories within each country, which constantly defied both institutional and rational choice paradigms. The cultural level of social reality, the symbols and meanings that were not firmly attached to formal institutions or interests, was relatively autonomous and created its proper logic of social development, relatively independent from both formal institutions and instrumental rationality.

- Despite the confirmed influence of the EU influence on the intersubjective level, which revealed the existence of stable sub-cultures, in both Bulgaria and Macedonia, another conclusion of this research pointed in a different direction. EU integration could create steady cultural trajectories that were able to withstand social questioning, but this process required additional requisites that were not part of integration itself, e.g. a culture of relative state autonomy vis-à-vis society. Both Bulgarians and Macedonians who experienced change under the EU integration process became either silenced or at unease when their new visions were confronted with the views of their unchanged compatriots, cynical and apolitical in Bulgaria, patriotic and xenophobic in Macedonia. The positive or negative changes that some individuals in either country really experienced and readily reported when asked under protection of confidentiality were both located

near the very surface of political reasoning. They lacked deepness and conviction; they found it hard to withstand political discussion of even small intensity; they needed constant comfort within a friendly cultural environment in order to thrive. Unless the EU, in the process of integration, helped not only create but also maintain these new political cultures, at the same time pro-active and pro-democratic, its influence on democratic cultural development would be short lived.

VI. A statistical validation of findings

In the previous chapters, I demonstrated, using qualitative methodology only, the way EU integration affected the political systems of two post-communist countries through symbolically influencing the relatively autonomous domain of political culture. For reasons of parsimony, political culture was presented as a combination of only three key elements having to do with the intersubjective symbolism of taking part in politics, acknowledgement of feeling civically competent, and considering taking part in different forms of collective action. I showed how different causal mechanisms, intertwined for informants with desirable or disagreeable symbolic outcomes, affected their presence or absence within the zone of politics. For example, some informants in Bulgaria symbolically linked EU integration with the signifiers of economic independence, independence from social groups and political authorities. For these informants, the EU (re)activated a mechanism that ultimately led them to be willing to move outside politics as a specific social relation. On the contrary, again in Bulgaria, other informants symbolically linked EU integration with a new sense of teamwork and made them more willing to move toward political action of different forms, within the national and/or the EU political system.

Within a qualitative research design, the triangulation of different techniques helped me to reach a satisfactory level of internal acceptance or internal validation of the key findings; internal acceptance was the level of agreement between the meaning attributed by the researcher to the findings and the plausibility of this interpretation by the informants. The return to the field and the repetitive interviews with some informants showed that they accepted the way I interpreted their narratives. Within the circle of

qualitative researchers that look for revealing possible meanings of particular social event or process, this internal acceptance would naturally represent the final point before proposing the findings for external confirmation by their peers. Social sciences, however, are far bigger than the circle using hermeneutical techniques. The dominant positivist philosophy regarding social ontology and epistemology, coupled with the significant presence of quantitative methods (Mitropolitski 2010) may make the current research look incomplete within the larger scientific community. The goal of this dissertation is not just to be accepted as a valid set of true statements within the interpretative branch of political science; the goal is to be accepted beyond it. One of the ways to enlarge my appeal is to provide here statistical validation for some of the findings.

There is, certainly, a theoretical problem for attempting such statistical validation. On the one hand, this dissertation is based on a hermeneutical premise that each social fact is subject to different, sometimes contradictory interpretations. The statistical analysis, on the other hand, is based on a positivist premise of fixed assignment of meanings for social facts, a necessary step before coding them within one instead of another group of social facts. Nevertheless, there are certain prospects that allow using statistical data in order to confirm some elements of an interpretative study. These prospects come from the fact that this study combines elements of both interpretative and positivist philosophical paradigms. Social actors may assign different meanings and act differently upon social facts and nevertheless agree on the positive presence or existence of these facts. For example, social actors may agree on the fact that there is a low level of trust within a particular society, but they interpret this fact differently, from the need to find mechanisms for increasing the trust, to accepting this fact as natural or even as

desirable for their particular social action. Furthermore, social actors may agree that the EU loses its influence on a particular society but disagree on the interpretation of this fact, including its desirability and consequences for political action. The statistical validation, therefore, will look for data that independently confirms these positivist elements within the interpretative research.

This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first, I present statistical data for Bulgaria and Macedonia from the World Value Surveys (WVS) in order to show the presence of public beliefs, perceptions and attitudes toward important social and political institutions, but not necessarily as a part of the direct influence of EU integration. In the second section, I use data from Standard Eurobarometer surveys in order to show some public attitudes and perceptions linked directly with the process of EU integration. Finally, in the third section, I discuss the data in view of my findings.

VI.1. World Value Survey

Since 1981, the World Value Survey (WVS) has been a global research project that explores people's beliefs and values, perceptions and attitudes; it studies how they change over time and what social and political impact they may have. According to most recent data from WVS, both post-communist countries, Bulgaria and Macedonia, are confined to the quadrant of Secular-Rational / Survival values, together with most other Orthodox and ex-communist countries on the cultural map within the WVS (Inglehart and Welzel 2005, 63; Inglehart and Welzel 2010, 554). The changes for both countries between the survey wave of 1999-2004, reported in Inglehart and Welzel (2005), and the wave of 2005-2008, reported in Inglehart and Welzel (2010), are mainly due to slight

erosion of survival values (from -1.5 to -1 for Bulgaria; from -1.3 to -0.8 for Macedonia). As far as the level of secular-rational values is concerned, they remain without change (at 1.1 for Bulgaria and at 0.2 for Macedonia). I can comfortably link this information with my findings. As my informants from both countries show, most of them symbolically live in societies still dominated by values of physical survival instead of individual self-expression. Only very few of them, e.g. Bulgarian informants “Mira” and “Radoi”, seem to live symbolically close to a self-expression cultural pole.

The following paragraphs, using the Fifth Wave of WVS (2005-2008) for Bulgaria and Forth Wave of WVS (1999-2004) for Macedonia, show the presence of statistically significant beliefs, perceptions and attitudes toward institutions and other social signifiers. Regarding important social identifiers, such as the family, most respondents in Bulgaria (89.6%) considered the family as very important. Even among the youngest respondent (15-29 years) this perception was very high (84.6%). Not surprisingly, approximately 90% of Bulgarians also completely trusted other family members. For Macedonia, positive attitudes toward the family were even higher (98.1%). At the other extreme, only 7.1% of Bulgarian respondents considered politics as very important in their lives, again with rather small fluctuations due to age differences. For Macedonia, the people who considered politics as very important in their lives were twice as many (14.1%) as in Bulgaria. Less than a quarter of Bulgarians and Macedonians declared being ready to trust most people; this negative attitude gradually increased for the youngest generation in Bulgaria (27%) and remained without age-correlated change in Macedonia. Bulgarian public opinion, much as my informants showed (“Konstantin” vs. “Iakim”), was polarized on the issue of whether marriage is an out-dated institution.

Among older persons (50 and more years) 82.5% would disagree with such a statement and only 17.5% would agree; among the youngest generation (15-29), people were split relatively equally (45% agree and 55% disagree). In Macedonia on the contrary, people (e.g. “Spiro”) still strongly supported marriage as an institution and only 18.3%, with small fluctuations due to age, agreed that it was out-dated.

Regarding different forms of political action, most Bulgarians declared being rather inactive, much more inactive than their Macedonian counterparts, which corroborates with the information gathered from my interviews. 60% of all Bulgarian respondents but only 33% of Macedonians would never consider signing a petition; 80% of Bulgarians but only 46% of Macedonians would never consider joining in boycotts; 52% of Bulgarians but only 39% of Macedonians would never even attend lawful/peaceful demonstrations.

Almost 70% of all Bulgarian respondents and more than 70% in Macedonia believed that it was a good thing to have a strong political leader; 75% of Bulgarians and 85% of Macedonians believed that it was a good thing to have experts make political decisions. Interesting enough, these beliefs do not contradict the views of almost 90% of respondents in Bulgaria and 91% in Macedonia that having democratic political system is a good thing. This support in the abstract for democracy, however, does not automatically translate into confidence for specific democratic institutions in each country. Confidence in parliament and in political parties in Bulgaria and in Macedonia did not exceed 20%; confidence in government in Bulgaria and in judicial system was less than 35%, in Macedonia confidence in government was barely 9%.

Regarding trust in people of another ethnicity or religion, Bulgarians were split almost equally between trusting and mistrusting; the same ambiguity applied when answering the question whether ethnic diversity eroded a country's unity or enriched one's personal life. Among the people most Bulgarians and Macedonians would like to live away from, the following groups were judged as particularly repulsive: drug addicts (84.8% and 71.3%), heavy drinkers (69.1% and 63.8%), people who have AIDS (54.1% and 52.1%) and homosexuals (52% and 53.5%). To put this data into comparison with attitudes toward members of other racial, ethnic or religious groups, only less than 20% of Bulgarians would not like to have a person of a different race, ethnicity, religion, foreign nationality, or language as a neighbor; in Macedonia, only 19% of respondents would not like to live with a person of a different race, and 26% would not like to have Muslim neighbors.

Significant difference between the two countries is shown on the scale of autonomy index that measures distribution of population between the poles of personal independence and obedience. This index is calculated by taking the average of four different questions regarding the importance of teaching children obedience, religious faith, personal independence and determination/perseverance. Most Bulgarians (53% against 15% with 30% intermediate cases) were coded as belonging to the pole of independence/perseverance; most Macedonians (almost 60% against 40% without significant intermediate shades) were coded as obedient.

VI.2. Eurobarometer

Statistical data for Bulgaria and Macedonia used in this section is provided by Standard Eurobarometer surveys (*Eurobarometer* 62, 63, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 74, and 76), conducted between 2005 and 2011 for EU member states and for candidate states. These surveys aim to show the opinion of the average Bulgarian or Macedonian citizen versus the average European citizen regarding perceptions and attitudes toward the Union in general as well as toward specific questions of public interest at the time of each survey. The Standard Eurobarometer surveys began to include Bulgarian respondents in the pan-European sample since 2004, and Macedonian respondents since 2007.

For Bulgaria, all pre-accession surveys (before 2007) showed that the EU had a very positive image. Bulgaria was ranked in the 4th position among all EU members and candidates with 60% of population having positive image of the Union (*Eurobarometer* 62, 2005 and 63, 2005). Not surprisingly, a similar percentage of Bulgarians (54%) considered EU membership as something good. Above 50% of Bulgarians thought that EU membership would improve the economic stability (64%) and political stability (57%) of their country as well as their personal security (64%). In the months immediately preceding EU membership this optimism reached 70% of the Bulgarian population (*Eurobarometer* 66, 2006). Pre-accession surveys in Bulgaria also showed an overwhelming outpour of positive feelings toward the EU. Feelings of hope and trust regarding incoming EU membership, shared respectively by 60% and 25% of Bulgarians, outweighed feelings of anxiety, shared by only 15% of respondents (*Eurobarometer* 63, 2005). Approaching the date for EU membership, the Bulgarian public became overwhelmingly supportive of membership (85%) (*Eurobarometer* 66, 2006). This data

corroborates with my informants' retrospective observations about their high expectations and largely positive feelings regarding EU membership. Among these informants, only a very limited number of people, usually members of the Socialist, former Communist, party, showed deep-rooted skepticism regarding any potential positive impact of EU membership on economic and political development in Bulgaria.

The causal mechanisms that contribute toward either increased or decreased political presence, described in Chapter V.3.a. and Chapter V.3.b., also find significant statistical support. The first benefits of the EU for most people among my informants, the freedom to travel, study and work anywhere in the EU, are also the top benefits of the EU in surveys. 45% of Bulgarians associate the EU with this personal freedom, before economic prosperity (38%), peace (34%) and social protection (29%); the paramount association of the EU with the freedom to travel will persist in the period after joining the Union (*Eurobarometer 70*, 2008). This association of the EU with social protection was part of one of the symbolic mechanisms (the sense of security) that explained the increased political presence of some of the informants. The association of the EU with economic prosperity, however, was part of the symbolic mechanism of economic independence from society and political system, a mechanism that led to withdrawal from political life. According to a pre-accession survey (*Eurobarometer 63*, 2005), EU integration was directly linked to an improved democratic regime (25%) and to greater cultural diversity (18%). Within the sample of my informants it was easy to localize these opinions of an improved democratic regime and to greater cultural diversity in the group of young professionals with split loyalties between Bulgaria and Europe and also in the group of people with alternative sexual lifestyles who looked at EU membership to

legitimate their choices. Pre-accession surveys in Bulgaria showed remarkable opposition between positive attitudes toward democracy in the EU and negative attitudes toward democracy in the country; *Eurobarometer 63* (2005) showed that Bulgarian satisfaction with EU democracy was twice as high (46%) as satisfaction with national democracy (20%); *Eurobarometer 66* (2006) and *Eurobarometer 72* (2009) showed further drops in satisfaction with national democracy and political institutions, with the exception of a short period of few months immediately following the parliamentary election of June 2009. These numbers correlate well with information provided by my informants; for a few among them, dissatisfaction with national democracy was a symbolic reason to politically or socially detach from society, to become marginalized (Chapter V.3.a.), or to accept a position that links withdrawal from politics with showing politicians mentality (Chapter V.3.c.). This opposition between the better functioning of EU democracy and worse functioning of national democracy is also part of an active political trajectory in which some informants are switching identity and loyalty from the national to the European level. According to surveys (*Eurobarometer 63*, 2005), Bulgarians also showed mistrust in national political parties (83%), this attitude correlates well with a decrease in political activity among some of my informants due to disillusionment with some social and political identifiers, such as parties (Chapter V.3.c.). Overall, many Bulgarians in pre-accession surveys of Eurobarometer believed that the EU could play a positive role in solving key social and political problems that their country faced, such as unemployment (39%), the economic situation (48%) and criminality (63%) (*Eurobarometer 63*, 2005). In this sense, quite a few Bulgarians before 2007 associated the EU with the mechanism of a better vision (Chapter V.3.b.) that increased the sense of being present in political

life. It is interesting to note here that in the months that immediately preceded EU membership, reflected in *Eurobarometer 66* (2006), Bulgarians showed relatively high numbers of personal satisfaction with their lives; from 25% in 2004 this satisfaction has increased to 36% in late 2006.

Immediately after joining the EU in January 2007, public opinion in Bulgaria started to cool down vis-à-vis the EU and the high expectations that EU integration might solve some of the most acute social and economic problems of the country. *Eurobarometer 67* (2007) showed that positive perceptions of the EU were waning, with 4% of respondents shifting from positive to neutral perceptions; in late 2008, for the first time, the overall support for the EU membership fell below 50% (*Eurobarometer 70*, 2008). These findings corroborate with my informants' statements about the gradual loss of interest in information regarding EU matters immediately after membership in early 2007; they also corroborate with my observations of public neglect of some artifacts symbolically linked to the EU, e.g. EU info points in Sofia. Despite still high numbers of trust in the EU, this positive attitude also started to wane after the membership (*Eurobarometer 67*, 2007); the downward trend was still present in 2010 (*Eurobarometer 74*). With trust and positive perceptions gradually waning, the surveys for the first time showed a right-left cleavage toward the EU; these findings were confirmed in *Eurobarometer 70*, 2008. In agreement with my findings, Bulgarian right-wing citizens showed much higher positive attitudes toward the EU than their left-wing compatriots; private company managers and students were much more positive toward the EU than the pensioners and unemployed. The first post-accession survey of Eurobarometer in Bulgaria also showed that the positive feelings that the country was gaining from the EU

membership were more moderate than immediately before the accession; in late 2008 these feelings put the country on the bottom of the EU ranking (*Eurobarometer 70*, 2008). Also, the feelings of personal safety, political and economic stability, which were associated with EU membership, were becoming less pronounced. In 2008, Bulgarians reported for the first time a drop in trust toward the EU (*Eurobarometer 70*, 2008). Bulgarians were the only EU country in early 2007 where most people were dissatisfied with their lives; social optimism remained among the lowest in the EU. Joining the EU raised concerns about the impact of EU membership on inflation in Bulgaria (*Eurobarometer 70*, 2008). More than 50% of Bulgarians were concerned in late 2008 with rising prices that approached the average EU prices within the common market. There is a sharp contrast between pessimism regarding the economic situation in Bulgaria (80%) and optimism regarding the economic situation in the EU (54%), which explains some of my informants' strategic orientation to look for employment in the EU. An interesting phenomenon, reported in 2008, was the drop in public mistrust toward the European Commission as a result of some unpopular measures taken against Bulgaria; according to survey's authors these measures included suspending financing of several EU programs in Bulgaria (*Eurobarometer 72*, 2009). Some of my informants, especially young people who were environmentally concerned, with right-wing political opinions, reported this period as a time of increased symbolic attachment to Europe and detachment from national community.

For Macedonia, which is still waiting to be invited to begin accession negotiations with the EU, all surveys showed perceptions, attitudes and expectations of the EU as an external entity. Unlike Bulgaria, which became a EU member in 2007, there was no

comparable watershed political event for Macedonia regarding its relations with the EU. Nevertheless, the surveys confirmed some of my observations regarding Macedonia's increased skepticism regarding the prospects of EU membership, the high expectations that this membership may improve the situation in the country, and the positive image of the EU. *Eurobarometer* surveys 68 (2007) and 69 (2008) showed that despite still predominantly high numbers of positive attitudes toward, expectations from, and prospects about EU membership, the citizens in Macedonia started to become more skeptical. Between late 2007 and early 2008 those who perceived EU membership as a good thing for their country decreased from 76% to 72%; the percentage of those who have positive image of the EU decreases for the same period from 69% to 67%. Another significant difference between Macedonia and Bulgaria, also confirmed by my informants, was the much higher trust in Macedonia of national political institutions (40% in 2008), even if the trust in EU institutions was even higher (63%). All *Eurobarometer* surveys in Macedonia showed that the attitudes toward the EU and toward eventual EU membership remained ambivalent. On the one hand, the vast majority of people (85%) approved that their country should be part of the EU (*Eurobarometer* 71, 2009); on the other hand, however, two thirds of Macedonians (63%) considered the EU as an institution that did not take into consideration the voice of their country.

VI.3. Discussing statistical data

This brief discussion concerns significant differences between public opinion in Bulgaria and Macedonia that may affect their different cultural trajectories; this section may also discuss changes occurring over time in one of these countries.

Between 1999, reported in WVS, and 2009, reported in Eurobarometer, there was a shift toward rise in public opinion confidence in Macedonia toward national political institutions. There was no parallel rise in the confidence in Bulgaria regarding its national political institutions; it remained low. Both countries reported higher levels of confidence toward the EU in general and its institutions. Most people in both countries also reported that the EU did not take into consideration the voice of their country. In Macedonia, the combination of high confidence in national institutions and the belief that the EU did not take into consideration their country's voice lead to frustration and skepticism as reported by some of my informants. In Bulgaria, the combination of low confidence in national institutions and the belief that the EU did not take into consideration their country's voice lead to siding with the EU against their own country or to a-political behavior following the "game is over" mentality, reported in Chapter V.3.c.

WVS showed differences between Bulgaria and Macedonia, especially between the youngest people between 15 and 29, regarding their attitudes toward the institution of marriage as one of the key social identifiers. The Macedonians were accepting of this institution as a pillar to measure their attitudes toward other important institutions, while half of young Bulgarians were distancing themselves from marriage and may use EU integration to justify their choice of an alternative lifestyle.

Eurobarometer surveys showed paramount association in both Bulgaria and Macedonia of the EU with the freedom to travel, work and study in other EU countries. In this respect, these two countries do not differ from most EU nations. Having two different attitudes toward their national political institutions, higher in Macedonia and lower in Bulgaria, leads to different meanings of the right to travel, work and study. In

Bulgaria many see this right as an easy and legal way to escape from their country; in Macedonia, this expected new right may add to the quality of life.

Eurobarometer surveys clearly showed that in Bulgaria the date of joining the Union (2007) was a watershed regarding public enthusiasm and high expectations. Understanding EU integration as a one-time effort to get inside was reported by some informants on key administrative positions in accession negotiations. It was triangulated by political cartoons and non-participant observations. The Bulgarian public really believed that something extraordinary, if not extra natural, might happen in their life by the simple reason of Bulgaria being a EU member.

Regarding interethnic relations, most Bulgarians and Macedonians were not feeling acute fears against representatives of other ethnicities, religions, and races. Their fears were much more frequently associated with marginal individuals within their own ethnic and religious groups, such as homosexuals, heavy drinkers and drug addicts. However, the trend of moral relativism in Bulgaria, symbolically associated with the EU, made these alternative lifestyles gradually part of the accepted social norm. It was different in Macedonia, with its still strong attachment to traditional social identifiers, such as marriage; therefore, outside the national minorities these marginal social groups may become the only natural social base for pro-European political action.

Conclusion

This research started when I realized that the existing literature on post-communist democratization could neither reach consensus nor at least establish a minimum set of common criteria in order to evaluate the role of EU integration. I realized this when I was evaluating different theoretical approaches of post-communist democratization. This lack of common criteria for evaluation hit me in comparison to the well-established theoretical and methodological corpus of other approaches, looking at different pre-communist and communist legacies, post-communist institutional choices and post-communist politicians' actions and worldviews. Despite their common interest in the role of foreign factors, especially of EU integration, vis-à-vis post-communist democratization, these authors created the impression of not speaking to each other, as if they were studying completely different phenomena. To use the Indian parable of blind men and elephants, applicable also to the context of studying international organizations, such as the EU (Puchala 1971), they appeared to be blind persons approaching an elephant and touching it in an effort to discover what the beast looked like. Everybody touched a different part and obviously arrived at different conclusions. The result was that no one made an accurate description of the animal. Yet, each of them gained enough evidence to cause disbelief among his or her fellows and to maintain a lively debate about the nature of the beast.

As a person as blind as my predecessors, I had to struggle with the same enormous beast and tried not to fall into the same trap. My first task was to choose among different theoretical paradigms that dealt with this or other similar topics. A possible

choice would be to follow exactly on the footsteps of a research design that was already part of the post-communist literature. For example, I could have chosen Vachudova's euro-optimist model (2005) and re-evaluated it on the basis of new findings or on the basis of new analyses of her findings. Such an approach would be quite traditional; publications in political science, as far as sheer numbers are concerned, are largely dominated by studies that either confirm or reject old theories or complex theoretical models (Mitropolitski, 2010).

I chose a different path that went outside the dichotomy between structure and agency, or transferring institutions through learning as opposed to transferring norms and values through instrumental interests. Such an alternative approach was constructivist and interpretative; it put an emphasis on culture, where culture was no longer just a set of institutions or interests, but an intersubjective and dynamic reality, which included, of course, but was not limited to instrumental interests and learning. This alternative approach did not eliminate what had been already done in the field. It did not cancel out the relative value of the previous research but rather put it into its proper, meaning relative, context.

The new theoretical framework had to meet certain criteria. It had to allow interpretative arguments in addition to positivist ones, it had to allow different possible trajectories of EU integration for different countries and within a particular country, it had to allow the use of different techniques, and finally, it had to be inductive and open-ended, thus allowing that new findings change conclusions as the research went on. For this reason I had to search for an alternative theoretical model, outside the theory of socialization and rational choice neo-institutionalism, two paradigms that despite their

disadvantages were good at falsifying hypotheses and at using hypothetico-deductive analysis.

One such alternative model was inspired from constructivist approach toward transformation in political culture and conceived the asymmetrical relation between the EU and candidates or new member states as a form of cultural hegemony. McFalls used such a model of asymmetrical relations for explaining the cultural modalities of German reunification (McFalls, 2002). According to the model of cultural hegemony, the structurally dominant class directs or guides but does not command subordinate classes by proposing but not imposing a new interpretation of social reality. By articulating its opposition in terms of the dominant class's proposition, the subordinate class subjectively (re)produces its subordination even if and even as it contested its subordination. Indeed, as McFalls points out in his research, the ruse of cultural hegemony is that it simultaneously creates the subjective conditions for both objective social domination and resistance and thereby allows for both social reproduction and change.

I used this model in a slightly different context of power relations. Originally, it had to apply to interclass relations; McFalls made it apply to relations between the two German states that were merging under the leadership of one of them, West Germany. In both cases the dominant side had an administrative apparatus at its disposal in order to enforce its will and to make its proposals more credible. In the case of the EU, it was different; the dominant side, the EU, had relatively limited administrative resource, which reached ordinary citizens only via the filter of a nation-state. The subordinated side could always, on paper at least, back off from this asymmetric relation of integration, something that neither subordinated classes nor East Germany after reunification could

do. Yet, no post-communist country used this liberating option. It was the EU that threatened not to open negotiations and imposed extended periods of pre-negotiations and negotiations. The post-communist candidate countries remained within this relationship as if it was as material as the intrastate class relations or the relations between federal center and provinces in the case of united Germany. For this reason, I willingly embarked on the project and used this theoretical model in the case of EU integration.

The theoretical model developed by McFalls turned out to be benign in terms of methodological liberty, the choice of techniques and the range of potentially interesting information. The research could not be limited only to formal institutional transfer or to instrumental rationality. I could freely use an interpretative approach, qualitative methods of analysis and ethnographic techniques. The results of my field studies were assembled in chapter III and there would be no need to repeat them here. I would like, however, to present some additional information that was not until now included among the reported findings because of its repetitiveness. It, however, confirmed the validity of the main findings. For example, I looked at the image of Europe in Bulgarian society and at the dichotomy Bulgaria-Europe by studying Bulgarian movies produced after 1989.

Two movies, “Bai Ganyo went to Europe” (1990) and “Mission London” (2010), stand out to epitomize the Bulgarian ideas for identity change vis-à-vis Europe in this 20-year period. The first story took place in the late 19th century, immediately after Bulgarian independence from the Ottoman Empire. A Bulgarian merchant of rose oil, Bai Ganyo, traveled to Europe (Budapest, Prague and Vienna) to sell small quantities of his precious good. He met with other Bulgarians and non-Bulgarians in comic situations and usually showed his oriental manners (not paying bills in the restaurant, not paying rents,

selling rose oil without permission on the streets, etc.). This movie, just like in the political cartoons of earlier post-communist period, established two different identities, European and Bulgarian (personified by Bai Ganyo himself), the first was synonymous with high civilization and good manners, the second was synonymous with semi-barbarism and stupidity. There was a thick line separating them; a Bulgarian could cross this line only at the price of complete de-nationalization. For example, Bulgarian students in different European cities who wore European clothes and felt very uncomfortable in the presence of their compatriot, Bai Ganyo, epitomized this transition from Bulgarian to European. The second movie, “Mission London”, narrated a story of Bulgarian diplomats in the British capital who organized a false reception of the false Queen of Britain in order to increase their standing vis-à-vis the wife of the Bulgarian President who desperately wanted to meet the Queen in person. The false reception was organized with the help of British actors who portrayed different living famous persons, including royals. In “Mission London”, as in some recent Bulgarian cartoons, the dividing line between Bulgarians and Europeans completely disappeared. These two identities had a common denominator; it was the criminal gene found in both of them. Bulgarians, therefore, despite or perhaps because of their criminal genes, became Europeans by default. The movie ended with an episode in which the British fakers prepared their next big show, this time in Moscow, inspired by and apparently with the help of their new Bulgarian partners.

This dissertation created an interpretative dimension of all main concepts, including the key ones, EU integration and the democratization. I was interpreting the findings and my informants were interpreting their life experiences. Without such an

interpretative dimension most of my findings would have been lost if they had ever been found at first place. For example, I could have missed the counterintuitive findings that integration meant so many different things to different people, from the need for a radical social change to the comfort that no change was needed; from bold free associations such as “Bulgaria is to become like Germany” to very different others such as “Bulgaria is to be like Greece, Portugal and Southern Italy”. This integration could be synonymous with a threat to economic standards, or, on the contrary, to a promise for a bright economic future. Democratization was also a good material for different, sometimes contradictory interpretations by my informants. Some apparent democrats went so far as to suggest totalitarian measures to increase the civilizational level of the people; others refused to go beyond their ethnic boundaries to contemplate collective action.

This interpretative richness helped me to make a new evaluation of the existing theoretical approaches on post-communist democratization, which I presented in chapter IV. As it turned out, the conventional approaches to the research question, institutional and strategic, had their good arguments, which, however, could not be understood when looking only at the informants’ socio-economic status; the process of understanding required an additional and relatively autonomous interpretative dimension. For example, for the institutional model, a key material factor for success was establishing direct administrative chains of communication and control between Brussels and the ordinary citizens of candidate countries. Only those who interpreted being part of such chains as an opportunity for individual empowerment, for better vision of the road ahead, could benefit from this process and become more democratic; those who saw in it only additional administrative burdens were doomed either to withdraw from political life or

to contemplate plans for foreign migration. Similarly, for the strategic model, a key material factor for success was the actors' involvement in different strategic games vis-à-vis Brussels and other civil society actors. Only those who interpreted such involvement as beneficial in its totality could benefit from this process and become politically more active, competent and ready for collective action; those who could not see such new opportunities but only a decreased and decreasing bargaining power vis-à-vis Brussels could also withdraw from political or social life. Therefore, the conventional models, institutional and strategic, were partly confirmed, but the interpretative analysis helped put some necessary limitations to their scientific value. These limitations came from the already existing or in the process of construction values that helped some but inhibited other informants in taking full profit from the conventional paradigms of change. Which were these cultural obstacles or boosters to democratic political culture? I answered this question, en passant, in the last chapter where I presented an alternative model of change.

I will not here repeat the causal mechanisms that impeded or stimulated democratic culture. It should be sufficient simply to mention that these factors, existing on the symbolic as well as material levels, were themselves facts that in turn asked for additional interpretation; in that sense they were not Durkheimian social facts. For example, the concept of economic independence meant different things to different people in these two post-communist countries. Some informants might symbolically associate this independence with the sentence "bye-bye boss", others with "at last nobody tells me now what to do and how to live" or even "bye-bye society". Being a proletarian in countries such as Bulgaria and Macedonia was much more than performing certain tasks within a certain time for a certain payment. It was rather to join an asymmetric

personal relation without clear boundaries and a ceiling of what had to be done, where the other, the boss, might indeed represent Hell, to paraphrase Sartre. 25 year-old “Tonka”, to illustrate the level of exploitation at work, told me that her boss told her to change a flat tire of his huge jeep; this woman did not weigh more than 50 kg. Having attributed different meanings to it when this personal relation was present, people also attributed different meanings when they were liberated from its oppression, if they felt oppressed in the first place. They could feel at last free to be themselves, to do what they wanted and with whom they wanted it, but they also could use this freedom to be left alone, to live away from the others. For them liberty, in Isaiah Berlin’s (1969) terms, could be interpreted as either positive or negative. Therefore, this mechanism, quite simple from a positivist point of view, could lead either to a more active political position or to withdrawal from any political and social activity or from partisan politics only. The same interpretative richness went with the fear, e.g. from ethnic minorities or for losing social status. Far from being indisputably “devitalizing” emotion (Tarrow, 1998), it could inhibit as well as stimulate political activity. Finally, any element of the Hirschman’s (1970) classic triangle exit-voice-loyalty asked for an interpretative analysis. People meant “exit” when they changed their party support, changed their country, or shifted their political activity from national to supranational level; informants meant “voice” not only when they threatened to leave their traditional party support, but also when they boycotted politics by withdrawing into their private lives; being loyal, surprisingly, meant at the same time remaining positively attached to a previous relation and trying to change it. Those informants who sided with Bulgaria and Macedonia against EU pressures and those who were ready to side the other way around could equally invoke their loyalties to

their homeland. It went without saying that all these different interpretations led to different outcomes as far as democratic political activity was concerned.

The starting point of this research was that the existing literature on post-communist democratization could neither reach consensus nor at least establish a minimum set of common criteria in order to evaluate the role of EU integration. Therefore, I could not present an alternative model to understand this integration without confronting different hypotheses that were part of this literature. Without being a goal per se, this confrontation helped me to see the good points of each approach, euro-optimist and euro-skeptic, and also to point to some limitations of each of them. Without repeating these arguments, I would here like to stress the importance of some counterintuitive findings. While I was discussing the euro-optimist literature (Pridham, 2007; Vachudova, 2005; and Levitsky and Way, 2005) I found that even when its hypotheses were confirmed, preconditions for this confirmation were the existence of strong beliefs in the Marxist idea of linear economic and social progress and also beliefs in paternalistic role of state. These ideas were shaken to the ground in the first years of post-communism, leading many people to lose themselves in the new social system. It was only with EU integration that some people could again find their place on the map. In other words, these people had to be as much as possible ideologically indoctrinated and had to be conformists in order to understand, accept and promote new democratic worldviews that went as part of the EU integration. Such preconditions were not sufficient conditions, but without them these people would have kept withdrawn from social and political life or would not have accepted in the same way the norms of political activity and personal empowerment that came along with EU integration.

This dissertation answered its main question without providing clear-cut solutions or recommendations. Being unequivocally clear might be a virtue that might apply to other human domains, but certainly not when the advancement of social knowledge is concerned. Max Weber in his lecture “Politics as a Vocation” in 1919 made it clear that every research had to be considered as imperfect, as transitional, as a level of understanding asking to be overcome. The questions that I left, the questions that were not answered because they fell outside the initial research question, might eventually find their answers, only to raise other questions in turn. This conclusion therefore would not be complete if I refrained from tracing some of the new avenues where my unfinished work might lead me in the years to come.

Methodologically, I would certainly be interested in providing new examples of how beneficial for social knowledge the use of qualitative, and especially ethnographic methods can be. Such new research would not need to be inspired necessarily by the post-communist social context. On the contrary, answering questions from other areas, including Canada and Quebec, could be given priority. Such research would call for reconsidering the role of political ethnography within the large spectrum of interpretative qualitative methods. Political ethnography starts from the premise that social reality represents a complex phenomenon; traces of significant actions can be found anywhere within this system of relations. Putting an accent on the formal institutions and strategic behavior, therefore, would not necessarily be the only way or even the best way to understand the political process. On the contrary, putting an accent on particular phenomena, institutional or procedural, could produce the negative consequences of the “Hawthorn effect”; knowing that particular elements within the system were of particular

interest for research through observation or other techniques, might lead to artificial bending of these elements in order to present them as falling within particular group. To be more concrete, knowing that democratic development was strongly influenced by minimalist procedural definitions and that monitors observed the presence or absence of free and fair elections as the key indicator for democratic development might lead to manipulation of these particular elements in order to make a country be classified as democratic. Political ethnography, by triangulating the results coming from very different, apparently unrelated domains, would not allow such political manipulation of information in order to present a particular political regime as democratic unless there was a corresponding democratic ethic; the presence of procedural elements within a system where there was no choice, political or social, or where the elected politicians use their democratic legitimacy to justify authoritarian behavior (Kubicek 1994), would not qualify the country as democratic.

Theoretically, I would favor research based on interpretative approach, based on the premise that culture is a relatively autonomous level of social reality that might or might not perfectly align with its economic or institutional dimensions. I share in this dissertation an understanding of culture as a world of meaning that provides us with clarity in the world we live in, with a stable mental structure to stand firm and act, with a roadmap to make sense of our movement (Geertz 1971; Dittmer 1977). It is not a simple aggregate of stable individual attitudes toward the political system (Almond and Verba 1960) that can be mechanically measured through the use of quantitative methods. En passant, attitudes, as all other signifiers, are also subject to multiple interpretations. The cultural dimension is therefore a complex phenomenon, all elements within it affect all

other elements and are affected by them in a process of interpretative interaction; e.g. the significance of voting can be related to the significance of so many other phenomena for which each society has established intersubjective conventions, such as being good, loving, active, strategic, individualistic, responsive, responsible, caring, convinced, intelligent, patriotic, brave, secured, and sympathetic; it might have fairly stable relations to some and less stable relations to other signifiers. Such stability of relations signifier-signified are a double-edged sword for an interpretative research, because it creates the impression that social reality represents indeed a multitude of Durkheimian social facts that speak for themselves without a need of interpretation. Different cultures as holistic entities of relations between signifiers and signified, however, present different, sometimes quite counterintuitive, connections between these elements. In Bulgaria, for example, voting behavior, within different social groups, meant either being intelligent or its opposite. Some of these elements acted predominantly on the level of rational comprehension; others reflected more emotional and sentimental status of individuals. Behind the acts that needed interpretations, therefore, I looked for relatively stable cultural complexes that needed to be revealed in order to understand the cultural evolution as part of the larger social picture. Understanding these complexes helped solve different types of research questions. Obviously, it revealed specific cultural traits of societies where political behavior defied the simple transfer of western-produced or top-down theoretical models, such as the models based on different facets of institutionalism or rational choice.

Appendix 1

Literature review classification

Table 1. I classify the authors according to their attachment to institutionalist or strategic approach, as well as to their expectations regarding the impact of EU integration on post-communist democratization, positive (+) or negative (-).

Institutionalist

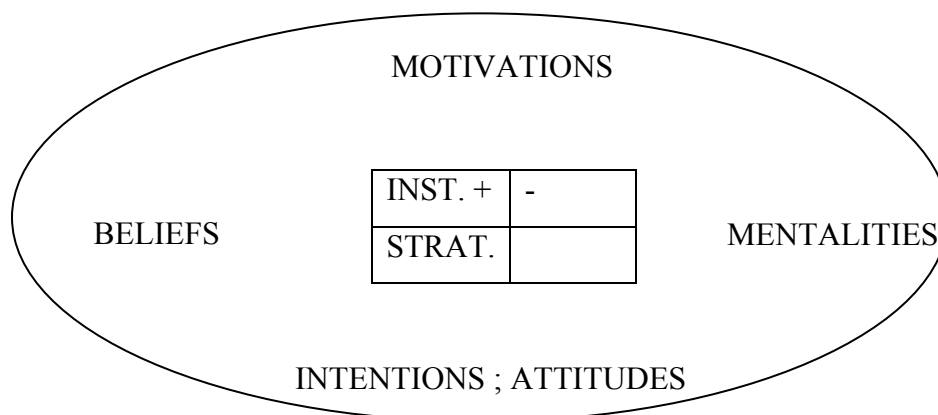
+

-

Levitsky and Way		Raik; Bideleux
Pridham		
	Kolarska-Bobinska	
Vachudova	Dimitrova	Gallagher
Mansfield and Pevhouse		

Strategic

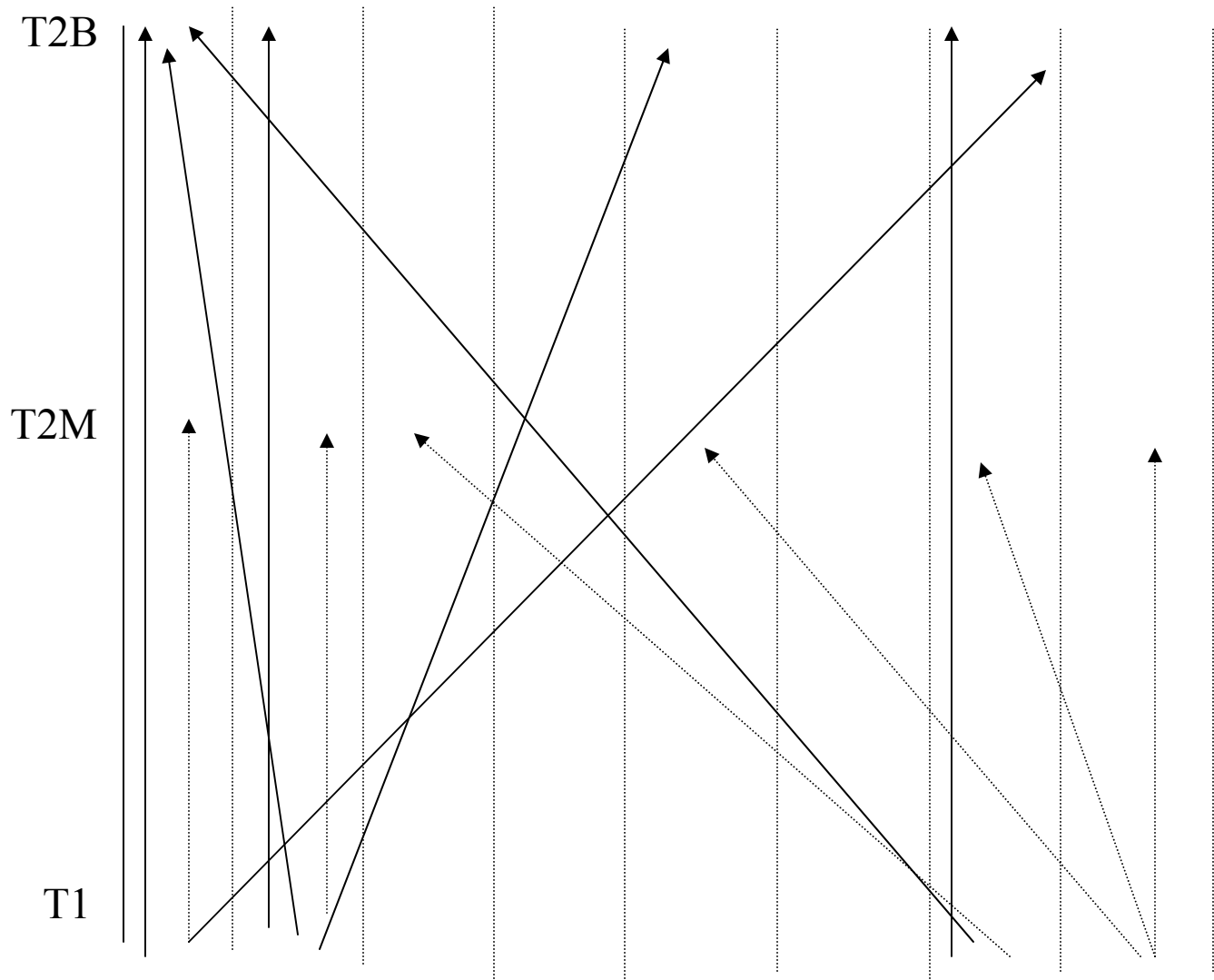
Table 2. This table represents my vision of the relative place and size of conventional institutionalist and strategic research, presented in table 1, within the larger sphere of alternative approaches.



Appendix 2

Political culture trajectories in Bulgaria and Macedonia

On the graph below, T1 shows the time when the EU identifies the membership of each of both countries as a political goal, which represents the symbolic starting point of EU influence. T2M and T2B represent the present time for each country; the lines for Bulgaria are longer because they want to represent a longer time of EU influence; the dashed arrows represent the Macedonian political culture trajectories, the uninterrupted arrows – the Bulgarian political culture trajectories. The three-sign symbols on the bottom represent the combination of elements within the political culture; the first represents the symbolic acceptance of democratic procedures; the second – feeling of civic competence, and the third – willingness for collective action; therefore, for example, the combination “---“ means having no symbolic reason to vote, not feeling civically competent, and not willing for particular symbolic reason(s) to take part in collective action.



--- +-- -+- --+ -+++ +-+ +++- ++++

Appendix 3

List of interviewees (informants):

- #001 – Bulgaria, male, 24 y.o., unemployed (former seller) “Alex”
- #002 – Bulgaria, male, 35 y.o., IT engineer “Balkan”
- #003 – Bulgaria, female, 37 y.o., teacher “Christine”
- #004 – Bulgaria, female, 35 y.o., EU info-center employee “Diana”
- #005 – Bulgaria, female, 43 y.o., state civil servant “Eli”
- #006 – Bulgaria, female 25 y.o., state civil servant “Fani”
- #007 – Bulgaria, male, 45 y.o., state civil servant “George”
- #008 – Bulgaria, female, 78 y.o., retiree (former state farm employee) “Janet”
- #009 – Bulgaria, female, 82 y.o., retiree (former engineer) “Iva”
- #010 – Bulgaria, male, 41 y.o., state civil servant “Kamen”
- #011 – Bulgaria, female, 45 y.o., private company administration clerk “Luba”
- #012 - Bulgaria, female, 55 y.o., journalist “Magda”
- #013 - Bulgaria, male, 83 y.o., retiree (former architect) “Nicolas”
- #014 - Bulgaria, female, 52 y.o., translator “Olga”
- #015 – Bulgaria, male, 42 y.o., private company (restoration) “Plamen”
- #016 – Bulgaria, female, 39 y.o., painter “Rumi”
- #017 – Bulgaria, female, 41 y.o., unemployed (former translator) “Stasi”
- #018 – Bulgaria, male, 40 y.o., police officer “Tosho”
- #019 – Bulgaria, female, 42 y.o., foreign private company clerk “Julia”
- #020 – Bulgaria, male, 65 y.o., private company boss “Ianko”

- #021 – Bulgaria, male, 55 y.o., journalist and university professor “Andrew”
- #022 – Bulgaria, male, 45 y.o., journalist “Boris”
- #023 – Bulgaria, male, 35 y.o., state civil servant “Cyril”
- #024 - Bulgaria, female, 29 y.o., state civil servant “Darina”
- #025 – Bulgaria, male, 42 y.o., NGO (former state civil servant) “Emanuil”
- #026 – Bulgaria, female, 39 y.o., state civil servant “Fidanka”
- #027 – Bulgaria, male, 44 y.o., IT engineer “Gabriel”
- #028 – Bulgaria, female, 35 y.o., state civil servant “Jivka”
- #029 – Bulgaria, female, 20 y.o., student “Iren”
- #030 – Bulgaria, male, 51 y.o., private company boss “Konstantin”
- #031 – Bulgaria, male, 21 y.o., student “Lazar”
- #032 – Bulgaria, female, 30 y.o., NGO (former state civil servant) “Mira”
- #033 – Bulgaria, male, 44 y.o., university research center “Nako”
- #034 – Bulgaria, male, 62 y.o., retiree (former military officer) “Ognjan”
- #035 – Bulgaria, female, 25 y.o., journalist “Paulina”
- #036 – Bulgaria, male, 39 y.o., business law company “Radoi”
- #037 – Bulgaria, female, 38 y.o., private company clerk “Sasha”
- #038 – Bulgaria, male, 42 y.o., private company worker “Todor”
- #039 – Bulgaria, male, 18 y.o., student “Juri”
- #040 – Bulgaria, male, 27 y.o., student “Iakim”
- #041 – Bulgaria, female, 36 y.o., school teacher “Anette”
- #042 – Bulgaria, female, 45 y.o., worker “Boriana”
- #043 – Bulgaria, male, 32 y.o., worker “Chris”

- #044 – Bulgaria, female, 41 y.o., university clerk “Doroteia”
- #045 – Bulgaria, male, 47 y.o., engineer “Echo”
- #046 – Bulgaria, male, 34 y.o., NGO (former state civil servant) “Fredri”
- #047 – Bulgaria, male, 32 y.o., state civil servant “Ganyo”
- #048 – Bulgaria, male, 44 y.o., NGO (former state civil servant) “Jan”
- #049 – Bulgaria, male, 32 y.o., state civil servant “Ivan”
- #050 – Bulgaria, male, 32 y.o., state civil servant “Kosta”
- #051 – Bulgaria, female, 35 y.o., NGO (former state civil servant) “Laika”
- #052 – Bulgaria, female, 33 y.o., state civil servant “Maria”
- #053 – Bulgaria, female, 38 y.o., worker “Nevena”
- #054 – Bulgaria, male, 34 y.o., IT engineer “Ognen”
- #055 – Bulgaria, male, 29 y.o., small business owner “Pirin”
- #056 – Bulgaria, male, 27 y.o., small business owner “Radko”
- #057 – Bulgaria, male, 61 y.o., university professor “Sever”
- #058 – Bulgaria, male, 37 y.o., actor “Tino”
- #059 – Bulgaria, male, 31 y.o., actor “Juli”
- #060 – Bulgaria, male, 50 y.o., small business owner “Ianaki”
- #061 – Macedonia, female, 45 y.o., NGO manager (former state civil servant) “Ana”
- #062 - Macedonia, male, 43 y.o., NGO manager (former state civil servant) “Borko”
- #063 - Macedonia, male, 27 y.o., NGO intern “Velko”
- #064 – Macedonia, female, 25 y.o., NGO intern “Dobrina”
- #065 – Macedonia, male, 52 y.o., small business owner “Kiro”

- #066 – Macedonia, male, 24 y.o., student “Spiro”
- #067 – Macedonia, female, 25 y.o., European info center “Tonka”
- #068 – Macedonia, male, 61 y.o., retiree (former teacher) “Petko”
- #069 – Macedonia, male, 55 y.o., economic advisor (former state civil servant) “Pavka”
- #070 – Macedonia, male, 53 y.o., architect “Jordan”
- #071 - Macedonia, male, 45 y.o., archeology “Milorad”
- #072 – Macedonia, male, 58 y.o., small business owner “Risto”
- #073 – Macedonia, female, 21 y.o., student “Zvezda”
- #074 – Macedonia, female, 49 y.o., European info center (former state civil servant)
“Mara”
- #075 – Macedonia, female, 35 y.o., University European library clerk “Velichka”
- #076 – Macedonia, male 40 y.o., European commission – Skopje “John”
- #077 – Macedonia, female, 35 y.o., European commission – Skopje “Beth”
- #078 - Macedonia, female, 35 y.o., European commission – Skopje “Claire”
- #079 – Macedonia, female, 30 y.o., PhD student “Tinka”
- #080 – Macedonia, female, 22 y.o., student “Mina”
- #081 – Macedonia, male, 45 y.o., small business owner “Gosho”
- #082 – Macedonia, female, 25 y.o., student “Elena”
- #083 – Macedonia, male, 35 y.o., state civil servants “Branko”
- #084 – Macedonia, male, 43 y.o., state civil servants “Slobodan”

Appendix 4

EU flags at restaurants in downtown Sofia (photograph: author).



Lone-standing Macedonian flags in downtown Skopje (photograph: author)



Appendix 5

Each interview, with findings presented in Chapter III.1, represents a system of relatively autonomous blocs. Each of these blocs has specific goals. I present here their main structure. Depending on informants, the actual interview could either faithfully follow the structure or combine questions from different parts.

Each interview, after repeating the goal of research and reiterating my pledge of confidentiality, started with asking informant to briefly narrate his or her life, with an emphasis on his original familial and educational background. My main goal here was to construct the social and mental world of the informants at the time of their primary (in family), secondary (through school) and tertiary (through work) socialization. Facts of particular interest here might be atypical for either a Bulgarian or a Macedonian family background or upbringing, e.g. having at least one of the parents either from a dominated ethnic minority or from a foreign national group. Atypical education meant, for example, several years of schooling in the Middle East, North Africa or Western Europe, in private or public French or English schools; it could sometimes be an important element in understanding individual cultural trajectories. This part of the interview, as the interview in general, did not represent an uninterrupted life narrative; I frequently asked clarifying questions and brought back informants that strayed too far away from the main frame of conversation.

Unless it was not yet clear enough for me from the first part (in which case I asked additional questions for elaboration), next I focused the interview on the moments in which informants started feeling the presence of EU integration as a part of their lives. I was interested, in particular, of first meetings with EU representatives, of first trips to EU

countries, of first scholarships from and/to EU educational institutions, of first legal/illegal jobs in EU countries or jobs from EU companies in the homeland. In this part, I frequently asked counterfactual questions such as “What if there was no...?” followed by personal episodes of acute feelings of the presence of EU integration in order to understand how informants subjectively assessed its importance in their lives.

Gradually, unless informants did not already mention them (and in which case I simply followed them), I introduced additional conventional interpretations (signifiers) about the role of EU integration in peoples’ lives, such as freedom of movement, freedom of alternative lifestyles, material progress, more public accountability, and a clearer roadmap for social development. The goal of this part of the interview was not so much to make informants take a position in general on these issues as to bring personal stories of how these concepts had been integrated into their personal lives.

Another key part, which could also have been introduced right after the early life narrative, but which I decided to postpone as much as possible, was discussion about current political and social issues that might or might not be directly linked to EU integration, such as current governmental policies on particular issues. The reason for postponing these questions was that many informants became virtually stuck on them; it was very difficult once these questions were introduced to make informants concentrate on a different subject matter. Within this part, I asked questions regarding party preferences, voting behavior, opinions, and capacity to conceive of collective action on particular issues. I also used the information collected in this part to triangulate for the findings collected through other techniques.

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