Who is governing the government between elections?

An Alternative Model of Executive Accountability:
The Case of Bulgaria and the Shadow Case of Russia

Gergana Yankova, PhD Candidate, Harvard University

The paper proposes a new critical approach to the study of democratic accountability. Instead of focusing on electoral mechanisms of executive responsibility, as conventional models do, it examines government accountability in the period between two elections. I propose a multi-dimensional model of accountability which seeks to answer three questions: first, does non-electoral accountability exist, and how important is it?; second, which mechanisms for non-electoral accountability are most effective and why?; third, is there a trade-off between efficiency and fairness of non-electoral mechanisms for accountability? My approach is an interdisciplinary crossover between media and accountability studies. It allows me to introduce two new theoretical concepts—“public explanatory accountability” and “second-order accountability.” I test the model with an original database encompassing media accountability in Bulgaria and Russia.
Introduction

My dissertation seeks to establish the determinants of government accountability. It introduces three innovative ways of examining executive accountability. First, I focus on government accountability in between elections. This approach contrasts with the dominant paradigms which consider elections to be a primary mechanism for holding a government accountable. Second, I define accountability as investigations and punishments for alleged government misconduct or incompetence. This definition differs from the common perception that accountability is synonymous with the durability or quality of democracy. Third, I gauge the relative rather than the absolute effectiveness of accountability mechanisms. Most studies focus on only one mechanism for holding the government accountable. Legislative scholars concentrate on the ability of the legislature to punish and investigate the executive, students of the judiciary examine the effectiveness with which the courts and the prosecutor persecute ministers, and public opinion scholars examine how public disapproval affects government actions. The problem with this approach is that it systematically misestimates overall government accountability. That is why I examine each of these channels of accountability in relation to one another.

Given these three caveats, the main question that the study poses is: what determines the relative effectiveness of various mechanisms for holding the government accountable for alleged incompetence or misconduct in between elections? To answer this question, I compiled an original database of newspaper allegations leveled at high-ranking government officials. I differentiated between allegations of incompetence and allegations of misconduct and corruption. I then examined which of the following accountability mechanisms took actions to examine these accusations: legislative committees, votes of no-confidence, legislative questions, prosecutor, courts, governmental committees. I also noted the drop or rise in public approval in response to such accusations. Finally, I tracked down what sanctions the government faced: reverse or modify policy decision or dismiss or demote a high-ranking or low-ranking government official. I selected Russia and Bulgaria as my case studies because they represent two post-communist countries with a parliamentary and a presidential constitutional design. I have gathered roughly 420 accusations at the government in Russia in the period between 1995 and 2005 and about 940 accusations at the government in Bulgaria in the period between 1990 and 2005. I hereby present the findings on mainly on Bulgaria, with some references to Russia for comparison.¹

My findings show that the institutional design, parliamentary or presidential, affects the form and effectiveness of investigations and the form of punishment of the executive. I establish that that the presidential Russia is more likely to hold government members accountable than the parliamentary Bulgaria. This finding contrasts with the wide-spread wisdom, which purports that presidential regimes lead to less executive accountability because they institute a conflict between the president and the legislature which leads to deadlocks (Linz 1990, Riggs 1997, Stepan and Skach 1993). These studies use quality of democracy as the main criterion for accountability.

¹ For a discussion of selection bias issues, please refer to page 26 of this paper, point 9.
I show that, when we define accountability as the intra-electoral investigations and punishment for alleged misconduct or incompetence, presidents are often more flexible to impose sanctions than prime ministers who often must consult with numerous and often contentious MPs. At the same time, I make two caveats. I establish that the effectiveness of two new forms of accountability in Bulgaria compensates for the ineffectiveness of the traditional forms of accountability that conventional studies have in mind. “Public explanatory accountability” is a new form of accountability, born out of the media age, which requires the incumbents to respond to journalistic and public concerns in public. This form of accountability used to be reserved for institutionalized forums of debate, such as the legislature or courts. “Second order accountability” also arises from the intersection of media and accountability studies. It posits that public media disclosure of the intention to use institutional mechanisms of accountability can be more effective than the actual use of such mechanisms.

I also show that much of the effectiveness of the presidential regime in Russia comes at the expense of the fairness of the investigative process. By contrast, the government in Bulgaria faces less sanctions but the investigative process is more thorough. By thoroughness, I mean that there are more people involved in the deliberations what criteria and evidence to use to decide whether the government is gullible or not.

**Does non-electoral accountability exist, and how important is it?**

Current studies of accountability underscore the importance of elections as the primary source of executive accountability (Przeworski/Manin/Stokes 1999). Electoral outcomes are believed to influence incumbents’ behavior mainly by affecting their chances for reelection (Ferejohn 1986; Fiorina 1981). In reality, however, politicians often lose political power in many ways that are not related to elections. The archetypical example of losing political power without the involvement of elections is the Watergate scandal. But the likes of Watergate replicate themselves every day on various scales. One example is the downfall of the first post-communist Bulgarian president Mladenov. During an anti-communist rally in 1989, Mladenov was caught on tape saying to his entourage, “it is best if the tanks came now [to attack the crowd]”. The tape was shown on national TV. Although the president denied having uttered the fatal words, the public discontent grew and the president resigned.

Electoral mechanisms have recently been deemed a “blunt” (Fish 2006) instrument for controlling the government for the following reasons. First, some countries are authoritarian despite the fact that they hold regular elections (Schedler 2006). Second, elections cannot sanction specific ministers. Third, they are an untimely sanction as they take place infrequently. Finally, people are deemed incompetent to judge past government performances due to disinterest (Di Pama 1970), incomplete information (Baron 1994, Helpman 1996) or strategic campaigning of the parties (Brock 2004).

---


4 Schedler, Andreas. 2006. “Electoral Authoritarianism,” Lynne Rienner Publishers
I suggest two further reasons why electoral control is a necessary but insufficient aspect of executive accountability. I challenge the concept that accountability is an all or nothing game. Between losing and winning the elections, there is a wide array of options for limiting government power. Various forms of investigation and punishment of the government are systematized in the table below.

Table 1: Non-electoral forms of investigation and punishment of the government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voluntary</th>
<th>Involuntary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early resignation of the prime minister/president to appoint the incumbent’s favorite to the interim position</td>
<td>Failure to win parliamentary approval for new or existing government due to public disapproval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Votes of confidence</td>
<td>Votes of no-confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary resignation of individual ministers to reaffirm support in their policies or as an act of protest</td>
<td>Reversal of policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Verbal reprimand, Fines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rotation of ministers</td>
<td>Former incumbents face legal sanctions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restructuring of ministries</td>
<td>Incumbents renounce decisions of previous governments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arrest and prison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parliamentary committees and questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prosecutorial and legal investigations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Government policies can be renounced or repealed. Key ministers can be dismissed. Non-electoral accountability captures these forms of controlling the executive. One possible critique is that the government remains the same as long as the same political power supports it. Once elected, governments are assumed to be equally accountable. I challenge this assumption because it prevents the researcher from distinguishing between any degrees of accountability in an elected democracy. Let’s take one simple example: the wife of the French president, Cecilia Sarkozy, who recently helped broker the release of the Bulgarian medics imprisoned in Libya, will be questioned by a specially created committee of the French parliament. She would have to explain the exact terms of the agreement with Libya and address rumors of a secret arms deal. The creation of such a committee means that the French presidency faces more stringent accountability constraints than a counterfactual case where such a committee was not created. Thus differentiating between the non-electoral forms of investigation and punishment of the government creates a better idea of the degree of accountability in democratic states. This study seeks to address precisely these more subtle but nonetheless equally important nuances of accountability.

My empirical evidence supports the thesis that non-electoral accountability is wide-spread. In the period between 1990 and 2005, there were fifteen governments in Bulgaria which made a total of forty-four ministerial changes. Two whole governments, those of Zhan Videnov and Philip Dimitrov, resigned half-way during their mandates. Another dimension of non-electoral accountability pertains to the reversal of government decisions. This accounts for more than 10% of all consequences to media allegations against government officials. A third form of non-electoral accountability is the imposition of fines on the incumbents and public verbal reprimand. Pecuniary and verbal punishments of incumbents make up 2% of all reactions to media...
charges in Bulgaria. In total, more than one out of every ten incumbents who are criticized by the media are either dismissed, reprimanded, fined or have their policies reversed. Because non-electoral changes account for an important percent of executive turnover or limitation of executive power, it needs to be studied in depth.

**Accountable to Whom? A multi-dimensional model of non-electoral accountability**

My dissertation addresses the gaps left by the conventional model of accountability by introducing the concept of “non-electoral accountability.” Non-electoral accountability denotes the capacity and practice to investigate and/or sanction the government in ways other than elections. It includes the impact of the public, the legislature and the judiciary to affect government personnel and policies.

Conventional studies argue that accountability is mainly institutional or public, but they rarely consider the two forms jointly. In addition, institutional mechanisms for controlling the government are treated as separate and independent. To use Robert Keohane's metaphor, “the literature on political accountability reminds its student of the old story about the blind man and the elephant. Each man felt a different part of the elephant’s body and had a different impression of the whole animal… There is little awareness shown in many of these works of the other dimensions of this “elephant” (Keohane 2002).

This one-sided view of accountability presents a problem. Let’s take, for example, a case where the independent council starts investigations against a corrupt minister, while the legislature behaves passively. The prime minister dismissed the alleged incumbent. Students of legislative politics would conclude that accountability is low, while students of the judiciary would say that accountability is high. Thus a one-dimensional model systematically overestimates or underestimates accountability.

A multidimensional model of accountability is best suited to capturing the joint effect of institutions and the public to affect the government. It assumes that institutions and the public compete and cooperate to influence the incumbents, and it is from this interdependence that non-electoral accountability arises. Pujas captures this regularity:

Rather than emerging from any one of the media, judicial, political or corporate arenas, scandal always results from conflict and cooperation between them. In many senses interdependent, these arenas are also in constant competition over relative power, influence and legitimacy in the public sphere. In complex societies, such conflicts of power and legitimacy are inevitable. 5

A few pioneering studies of non-electoral accountability underscore the multiplicity of mechanisms for controlling the government. Ackerman refers to the simultaneous effects of the control of the procuracy, the ombudsmen, audit offices, administrative and ordinary courts, constitutional tribunals, the presidency, civil society groups and the European Union (Ackerman 2005). The graph below summarizes four

---

5 Veronique Pujas in *Scandals in past and contemporary politics*, John Garrard/James Newell, Manchester University Press 2006, p.33
older studies of multi-dimensional accountability.⁶

⁶ The graph is copied from Flinders, Mathew. *Accountability in the Modern State*, 2001
The analyses overlap in distinguishing four major branches of accountability: judicial, legislative, administrative and public. Public control is the most democratic way to demand accountability from the executive, but it is very hard to organize and coordinate great numbers of people on a regular basis. I suggest that public control is maintained not only through strikes and referenda, but also through public opinion. In this case, even if the public just holds an opinion, without actively expressing it, it exerts a form of public control of the executive. The catch is that the opinion can potentially be expressed at any point of time. Judicial oversight refers to investigations by the independent counsel or the prosecutor general. The jurisdiction of the supreme administrative and constitutional courts to overturn government decisions and policies also comprise part of judicial accountability. Legal checks have the advantage of being rational and apolitical, but they are allegedly less democratic because judges are not elected (Flinders 2001). Legislative control denotes probes by investigative committees and inquiries by members of parliament. Parliamentary control presumably defends the interest of society but it often falls prey to party politics. Bureaucratic accountability, or internal governmental control, introduces technical know-how but it is often adopted by government officials as a way to avoid accountability from external bodies.

Building on these models, I introduce a multi-dimensional model of non-executive accountability that captures the multiplicity and interdependence of the various mechanisms that influence the incumbents:

Graph 1: An interactive multi-dimensional concept of political accountability
Accountable for what? Media scandals as a methodological approach to a multi-dimensional model of accountability

If a multi-dimensional model of accountability has so much analytical and explanatory potential and it has existed in the past, then why has it not been tested and applied widely before? I believe that the model has been understudied because of the lack of analytical instruments that can capture the dynamics and interdependence of multiple accountability codes. Previous measures of non-electoral accountability include the parliamentary powers index (Fish-Kroenig 2006) and a theoretical study defining nine dimensions of the concept (Schmitter 2004). Another measure of accountability refers to the extent to which governments keep their campaign promises (Volkens 2002). All of these studies, however, concentrate on only one dimension of accountability - legislative control. The key to utilizing a multi-dimensional model is finding an appropriate analytical approach.

I suggest that media scandals, defined here as media accusations against the government, present a unique analytical approach for examining non-electoral government accountability. Publicly exposed behavior can turn every situation into a “hot potato.” If a government minister behaves in two identical situations in two identical ways, but in one situation his behavior is made public and in the other it is not, then the minister would resign in the public situation and would not resign in the other one. Here is one example: On May 5, 1995 three policemen were shot dead in the center of Sofia in Bulgaria. On the same day, national TV showed the interior minister Lubormir Nachev having good time in the company of two catwalk models at a Beauty Pageant party. The minister told the journalist: “Pretend that you haven’t found me!” After this episode was made public, the minister had to resign. Arguably, in a counterfactual scenario where the minister behaved in exactly the same way, but his behavior remained unpublicized, he would not have resigned.

The situation of a scandal presents an invaluable advantage because they resolve the principal-agent problems so common for accountability chains. Once the news is published, the prime minister, the public, the legislature and the judiciary get exposed to the same information automatically, equally and simultaneously. Publicizing the accusations eliminates informational asymmetries between the four accountability channels. Informational asymmetries are a main impediment to studying multiple levels of accountability and that is why eliminating them presents a big analytical advantage. The researcher can answer two questions that cannot be answered in any other way: what is the relative effectiveness of the legislature, the judiciary, the public and internal governmental bodies in pursuing media accusations and how do they compete and cooperate to investigate and sanction the executive? In a non-media scandal related situation, at least one of the four accountability codes is missing. Media scandals make sure that accountability takes place with the knowledge of the public, and that all institutions know that the public knows. Thus the situation of a “scandal” is particularly suited to uncover the simultaneous workings of the four accountability codes.

7 24 Chasa, 05/05/1996 Nachev- out of the government, Начев вън от правителството
Another advantage of using “media scandals” as a unit of analysis is that they establish a stick-yard for comparing the effectiveness of multiple accountability codes. Admittedly, institutional reactions to media allegations comprise only a small part of overall institutional accountability. For example, members of parliament regularly question incumbents in parliament. Only a small percentage of these questions are asked as a follow-up to media allegations. Concentrating on media scandals limits the study to this select sample of questions, and omits the rest. I believe that this “omission” is regrettable but it is necessary because scandals establish a basis from which the researcher can compare the responses of the four accountability codes. Knowledge that, for example, in the course of a government’s mandate, parliament created a total of three committees to investigate the government and the independent counsel conducted a total of four inquiries, gives little information, because we do not know how many accusations were made in the first place. Thus media accusations present a limited view of government accountability but they also present a comparative perspective.

How much do incumbents account? Extent and types of non-electoral accountability in Bulgaria and Russia

I define non-electoral investigative and punitive accountability as the respective investigations and sanctions following media accusations. My findings show that total investigative accountability for media accusations of government corruption is more than two times bigger in Russia than in Bulgaria (66% and 26% respectively). For allegations of incumbents’ incompetence, the disparity is even higher. Charges of incompetence are investigated in 80% of the cases in Russia and in only 21% of the cases in Bulgaria. In Bulgaria, investigative accountability for corruption charges is slightly bigger than investigative accountability for incompetence charges. In Russia the situation is reversed as incompetence accusations get pointedly more investigations than corruption accusations.

Overall punitive accountability is also bigger in Russia than in Bulgaria. Investigations of government corruption produce sanctions in 45% of the investigations in Russia and in 25% of the cases in Bulgaria. The same regularity holds for sanctions stemming from investigations of public charges of incompetence. The latter get punished in 68% in Russia versus 19% of the cases in Bulgaria. We can specify that the two biggest findings are:

Finding: Investigative accountability for media accusations is consistently higher in Russia than in Bulgaria.

Finding: In Russia, investigative and punitive accountability is higher for incompetence allegations, and in Bulgaria investigative and punitive accountability is higher for corruption allegations.

---

8 I introduce the comparative findings for Russia in order to put the results for Bulgaria in comparison.
9 The public disclosure of government blunders requires the investigating bodies to take some action. This action should include investigation for sure, and sanctions, depending on the circumstances.
Table 2: Investigation and Punishment for Corruption Allegations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>Bulgaria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Investigations of accusations</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctions of investigations</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Investigation and Punishment for Incompetence Allegations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>Bulgaria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Investigations of accusations</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctions of investigations</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not only overall accountability, but the forms of non-electoral accountability also differ. The graphs below allow a juxtaposition of the most widespread forms of punitive accountability in Russia and Bulgaria.

Graph 1: Overall rate of punishment for various categories of scandals in Bulgaria

---

11 Accusations consisting of just one article are deleted. For presentational purposes, the category of no-sanctions is decreased with 10 percent.
In Bulgaria the most widespread mechanism to oppose the government is to reverse its policies. The role of the Supreme Administrative Court is central in this aspect. The reversal of incumbent’s decisions is the most preferred type of punishment, regardless of the type of charges. The second most used type of punishment in Bulgaria is the dismissal of high-ranking officials. In Russia, punishment varies much more than in Bulgaria. For various offenses, Russian government officials face different sanctions. Corruption allegations most often end up with demotion of high-ranking officials or re-appointments to equally-high ranking positions. Re-appointments ensure that allegedly corrupt incumbents do not lose political power. Instead, they just change the type of resources that they manage.

Allegations of incompetence in Russia mostly entail changes in the legislation. This type of punishment means that incompetence is attributed more to the objective circumstances than to the capability or willingness of the official taking a decision. Dismissals of lower ranking officials are the most likely punishment for accusations of incompetence in situations of emergency, such as terrorist attacks. This is an interesting finding. Emergency situations show the incumbents’ incompetence just as much as other policy decisions, but emergency situations lead to the punishment of lower ranking officials, while all other incompetence situations lead to changes in the legislation. In all cases, media allegations of incompetence do not concern the positions of high-ranking ministers in the Russian administration.

It is interesting to note that two categories set non-electoral accountability in Bulgaria and Russia apart. The category of exoneration of government officials is not represented in Russia but it is present in Bulgaria. In Russia, investigations are more likely to end without a conclusion than by exonerating the government officials. At the same time, the category of imprisonment of former incumbents is present in Russia, and is non-existent in Bulgaria.

---

12 The data are presented as a percent of all scandals within the category.
**Finding:** In Bulgaria, the most widespread punishment for incumbents is reversal of policy decisions, while in Russia the most widespread policies are re-appointments of high-ranking officials, followed closely by dismissal of ministers and reversal of policy decisions.

**Finding:** “Arrest and imprisonment” as a category of punitive accountability is non-existent in Bulgaria, while it is well-represented for corruption and incompetence charges in Russia.

**Why do the incumbents account so much? Which mechanisms of non-electoral accountability are most effective in Bulgaria?**

My findings establish that the following means of controlling the government between elections are most effective in Bulgaria in the order of their importance: a lawsuit against the government, a prematurely terminated lawsuit against the government, a lawsuit against the government that has reached a Supreme Court, a law-suit against the government that has reached a lower court, internal governmental investigations, suggestion for a vote of no-confidence and public approval of the government. The position of the accuser, the tactics of the accused, parliamentary questions before the media publication, parliamentary questions after the media publication, parliamentary votes of no-confidence, public threats for a suit, presidential involvement, international commission and prosecutorial investigations are not statistically significant.

Table 4: Ranked effectiveness of various mechanisms for non-electoral accountability.

| Independent Variables | Coefficient | Std. Err. | z     | P>|z|   | [95% Conf. Interval] |
|-----------------------|-------------|-----------|-------|-------|---------------------|
| 1. media coverage of an ongoing suit | 1.316305 | .1694694 | 7.77 | 0.000 | [.9841509, 1.648459] |
| 2. prematurely terminated suit public | 1.144142 | .2880246 | 3.97 | 0.000 | [.5796239, 1.70866] |
| 3. supreme court | .9399142 | .298086 | 3.15 | 0.002 | [.3556763, 1.524152] |
| 4. internal department | .9220425 | .2849721 | 3.24 | 0.001 | [.3635075, 1.480578] |
| 5. lower court | .855793 | .3390676 | 2.52 | 0.012 | [.1912326, 1.520353] |
| 6. suggested vote of no-confidence | .488034 | .1703591 | 2.86 | 0.004 | [.1541364, .8219316] |
| 7. public approval number of articles | -.0219812 | .0065684 | -3.35 | 0.001 | -.034855, -.0091073 |
| parliamentary committee | .0230049 | .0109798 | 2.10 | 0.036 | .0014848, .044525 |
| type of scandal | .001121 | .0076683 | 0.15 | 0.884 | -.0139085, .0161505 |

Ordered probit estimates: Number of observations = 938, LR chi2(20) = 244.34, Prob > chi2 = 0.0000, Log likelihood = -226.83667, Pseudo R2 = 0.3501
### Legal Accountability

Four of the seven most effective mechanisms for sanctioning the government are legal. However, they do not represent the powers of the prosecutor-general or the courts directly. Quite astonishingly, it is the public threats for taking an incumbent to court or the consequences of prematurely terminated lawsuits that are more effective than the actual suits. This is what I call **second-order legal accountability**.

*Finding:* When the media reports about a suit against an incumbent that is filed and then prematurely terminated, the likelihood that an incumbent is sanctioned increases.

*Finding:* When the incumbent is threatened publicly that he/she will be taken to court, the likelihood that the incumbent would be sanctioned increases.

The second finding is explained with the power of the Supreme Administrative Court. Compared with other legal options for challenging the competence or integrity of the government, the Supreme Administrative Court stands out as the preferred forum for overturning government policy, and it is much more effective than parliament or the prosecutor. A telling example is the parallel decisions of three big parliamentary parties\(^{14}\) to sue the government for its decision to introduce an election lottery in the administrative court in 2005. The motivations of the political powers differed. Some argued before the Administrative court that the government’s decision to increase the budget for the elections’ lottery was “unlawful”. Others contended that the policy makers had not consulted the Central Election Committee and that the policy gave plenipotentiary powers to the foreign minister to determine the election bureaus abroad.

\(^{14}\) The three parties were Coalition for Bulgaria, Democrats for a Strong Bulgaria, and the United Democratic Forces.
The Socialist party motivated its decision to file a suit by saying that “the government deliberately creates conditions to sabotage the elections outcome.” The government policy was discussed in parliament, but it was also brought to court. Although the complaints were eventually denied by the court, the important point is that the main political parties independently chose the court, in addition to parliament, to challenge the government policy.

In a similar example, in 2003 the party coalition for Bulgaria, threatened to sue the government if it did increase the budget for health-care with 150 million leva. The effectiveness of the court vis-à-vis the parliament is the reason why punitive non-electoral accountability in Bulgaria is heavily skewed towards “reversal of policy decisions” than to “dismissing people.”

Second order legal accountability is effective even when the actual institutional capacity to seek accountability is ineffective. Legal mechanisms for holding the government in Bulgaria accountable are ineffective for various reasons. Suits against the government get delayed endlessly, sometimes up to five times. In many cases the court terminates a suit without the necessary justification, and in some cases the plaintiffs themselves give up pursuing their claims. The biggest problem of non-electoral legal accountability is that there are not any settled mechanisms for enforcing court penalties for the incumbents. The table below provides some examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanisms to diminish the importance of court sanctions</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suits are delayed five or more times</td>
<td>The interior minister Petkanov delayed a suit against him five times in the period between December 2002 and January 2005.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Dismissed people come back to work and to get fired again. Cycles of dismissals and reappointments repeat several times. | Example 1: In 1993, the heads of the Privatization Agency are dismissed by the minister of trade, Valentin Karabashev. The Supreme Court repeals Karabashev’s dismissals but the trade minister dismissed them again. This cycle repeated three times.  
Example 2: In 2004, the head of the agency for communications sued the state for his dismissal. The court returned him to work and fined the government. Upon his reappointment, the person in question was dismissed again. This cycle repeated three times. |
| Ministers refuse to fulfill court decisions | Example 1: In 1993, the Plovdiv factory “Vyzhod” won a suit against the minister of the economy Rumen Bikov. The court required the ministry to pay its dues to the factory. Mr Bikov refused to pay the debt with the motivation that the dues belonged to the already non-existent Ministry of Industry and Trade.  
Example 2: In 1993, the Supreme Court ordered the National Historical Museum, which is under government control, to vacate a building in central Sofia. The government did not relocate the museum under the pretext that it could not find a new place.  
Example 3: In 2001, the court ordains that the national license given to the private channel NTV violates the Law for Long-Distance Communications. Despite that decision, NTV continues to broadcast. |
| The court terminates | In 1992, miners filed a suit against the prime minister Philip Dimitrov for not fulfilling his promises. |

15 24 Chasa, 02/06/2005 Румен Петков: Правителството иска някой да касира в  
16 Lev is the Bulgarian currency
a suit against the government.

The court, however, terminated the suit for a “lack of legal interest.” The miners protested the decision to no avail.

Private people retract their complaints against the government from court

Example 1: In 1995, the Thracian union sued the government of Reneta Indjova for allegedly reneging on a Greek-Bulgarian Treaty for reimbursement of Thracian immigrants. The complainant was withdrawn five months later.

Example 2: In 2003, the Public Committee for Clear Educational Planning lodged a complaint in the Supreme Court of Cassation against the minister of education, Atanasov. The committee alleged the minister of not fulfilling the decision of the Supreme Administrative Court in regard to matriculation exams. Three months later the suit was terminated.

Example 3: In 2005, the foundation “Program for Access to Information” filed a suit in the Supreme Administrative Court against the government for withholding information. The complaint was withdrawn almost immediately.

My findings show that the prosecutor in Bulgaria is an ineffective figure in holding the incumbents accountable ($z = 0.65$). The first Bulgarian prosecutor after the fall of communism, Tatarchev (1992-1999), is famous for saying, “Only God is above me.” However, the godly powers of the Bulgarian prosecutor are very much in question. Prosecutor Filchev is currently prosecuted for corruption himself. Tatarchev’s first task when he came to power in 1992 was to “sweep with the red broom”, which is the journalistic jargon for dealing with the former communist incumbents. Tatarchev filed suits against the former head of state, Todor Zhivkov, the ex-prime minister Andrei Lukanov, the head of the interior ministry and the former vice-president Atanas Semerdjiev. In addition, the following post-communist government ministers came under prosecutorial investigation: Alexander Bojkov, a former minister of the economy for abuse of office and for making a deal that disadvantages the state economically; Ventsislav Byrbanov, former minister of agriculture, for abuse of office; Vasily Chichibaba, minister of agriculture for abuse of office; Georgi Tanev, minister of agriculture in relation to the “American maize”; Neicho Neev, minister of transportation for not applying the international embargo on Yugoslavia; Vilhem Kraus, minister of transport for abuse of office; Boiko Noev, minister of defense for making a deal with the firm “Markoni S.P.A.” that disadvantages the state; several deputy ministers: Edit Getova, Zdravko Velichkov, Marin Marinov, Monio Manev, Maria Bozukova, Kiril Zochev, Plamen Radonov for abuse of office.

The ineffectiveness of the Bulgarian prosecutor is explicated in the fact that none of these investigations led to any punishment of government officials. Some of the investigations never reached court, others reached court but were held till the end of the government’s mandate, and then were forgotten. Equally unsuccessful was the prosecution of the former mayor of Sofia, who has four suits hanging over his head, but he is now a MP in the European Parliament. Only the former prime-minister Andrei Lukanov stayed in prison while an investigation against him was under way but then Lukanov sued the Bulgaria in the International Court in Strasbourg, and the state was convicted to pay the equivalent of 40,000 French francs to Lukanov posthumously. In this way, the prosecutor’s only successful imprisonment actually backfired. To this day, there is only one minister, Bojkov, who was convicted for the privatization of a firm in

---

17 *Capital*, 30/01/1999, Tatarchev died away like a fairy tale, Татарчев отшумя като приказка

18 The data is extracted from a report by the Office of the Procuror-general
Zalatitsa in 1998. Mr. Bojkov was sentenced on probation, however, so he went on to assume other important state positions afterwards. Only one case testifies to the strength of the prosecutorial office. An MP, Tsvetelin Kynchev, was sued, convicted and actually served his sentence.

There are not any inherent impediments to prosecutorial effectiveness. The findings about the ineffectiveness of the Bulgarian prosecutor are in great contrast with the effectiveness of the Russian prosecutor, especially for corruption allegations. In Russia, prosecutorial investigations are the second most effective mechanism for imposing accountability on the government after the president. For the sake of comparison, I enclose the results of some preliminary findings about Russia in the table below:

Table 6: Effectiveness of various mechanisms for non-electoral government accountability in Russia, 1995-2005 (Dependent Variable: Government Accountability for Corruption Allegations)

| Explanatory Variables: Types of investigation | Odds Ratio | z  | Std. Err. | P>|z|  | [95% Conf. Interval] |
|-----------------------------------------------|------------|----|-----------|------|-----------------|
| President's ratings                           | 0.963774   | -2.87 | 0.0124 | 0.004 | 0.939775 - 0.988388 |
| Presidential investigation/involvement        | 24.32958   | 2.69 | 28.91063 | 0.007 | 2.369513 - 249.8101 |
| Prosecutor                                    | 7.402023   | 2.59 | 5.717258 | 0.01  | 1.628883 - 33.63652 |
| International commission                      | 0.7189426  | -0.24 | 0.992715 | 0.811 | 0.048013 - 10.76546 |
| Who makes accusation                          | 1.015721   | 0.14 | 0.117199 | 0.892 | 0.810137 - 1.273476 |
| Duma committee                                | 2.381684   | 0.92 | 2.252134 | 0.359 | 0.373236 - 15.19796 |
| Duma inquiry                                  | 1.69452    | 0.62 | 1.431489 | 0.532 | 0.323573 - 8.874029 |
| Court review                                  | 8.382587   | 1.82 | 9.799846 | 0.069 | 0.84774 - 82.8884 |
| Internal department                           | 4.764909   | 1.85 | 4.022622 | 0.064 | 0.910867 - 24.9261 |
| Audit chamber                                 | 1.393995   | 0.23 | 1.974353 | 0.815 | 0.086832 - 22.37902 |
| Tactics of the alleged minister                | 0.8697612  | -0.92 | 0.13223 | 0.359 | 0.645642 - 1.171678 |

Given the relative ineffectiveness of non-electoral prosecutorial accountability in Bulgaria, the question is why people resort to it in the first place? I suggest that some prosecutorial investigations are important, but only the second time around. I call this second order accountability. Second order accountability occurs when the actual punishment is relatively unlikely or unimportant, but the publicly suggested possibility of such punishment is effective. Although I have not made a specific category for second order prosecutorial accountability, I establish that the media disclosure of an ongoing suit against the government or the termination of a publicly disclosed suit against the government increase the probability of a punishment (table four: coefficients 1.31 and 1.14 respectively).

I believe that second order accountability occurs because incumbents consider prosecutorial involvement to be similar to Hollywood engagements. Nobody believes that Hollywood engagements would lead to a wedding, but the publicity of engagements creates a publicity “buzz”. Similarly, nobody believes that prosecutorial engagements will lead to punishment of the incumbents, but the “buzz” is worth it. In
Second order prosecutorial accountability goes two ways. The prime minister can resort publicly to the prosecutor to investigate one of his ministers and vice versa. For example, in 2000 prime-minister Kostov announced publicly that he would give a folder with documents incriminating the leader of the Bulgarian negotiating team for accession to the EU, Bojkov, to the prosecutor. Shortly thereafter, Kostov fired Bojkov. This particular suit against Bojkov never saw the light of day, but the prime minister acquired more credibility to dismiss the minister.

The reverse form of second order prosecutorial accountability is when the prosecutor publicizes the misdeeds of a minister to convince the prime minister to sanction him. Here is a simple example: in October of 1998, the prosecutor announced in the media that the finance minister Radev was hindering the audit of the customs’ finances. This announcement prompted minister Radev to go out of his way to help the audit.

Another role of second order prosecutorial accountability is to manage the blame in the public eye. The fight between the prosecutor Tatarchev and the minister of internal affairs Bonev in the period 1997-2001 is a case in point. The two had a prolonged and public personal disagreement which many observers interpreted as an attempt to shift the blame about the criminality in the country.

Legislative Accountability

Legislative accountability encompasses three mechanisms: parliamentary votes of no-confidence, parliamentary investigative committees, and parliamentary questions asking the incumbents for explanations. I establish that parliamentary questions which served as a pretext for a media accusation as well as parliamentary questions asked as a follow-up to a media publication have negligible effect for imposing non-electoral executive accountability in Bulgaria. Parliamentary committees seem to be most effective in sanctioning the government, although their influence is on the border of statistical significance (z=1.74). When a parliamentary committee is appointed to investigate a media accusation, the likelihood of affecting a government sanction increases by .55. Parliamentary committees and questions are relatively ineffective because of the lack of mechanisms for forcing the incumbents to cooperate.

I suggest that the cooperativeness of the incumbents determine the extent of non-electoral legal accountability. The incumbents’ repertoire for avoiding legal investigations is rich. Government officials can decline to respond under the pretext that the information is classified or that it comprises national security secret. Alternatively, incumbents often refuse to appear for questioning or delay responding to the committee’s and parliamentary inquires. In 1993, a parliamentary committee sent a letter to the deputy prime-minister Karabashov, when it investigated him for corruption. Mr Karabashev never replied and until the mandate of the 36th Bulgarian Parliament expired.

The government’s lack of cooperation is not unique for Bulgaria. Russian ministers also often ignore Duma requests, or delay answering them until the case is forgotten or more opportune political circumstances arise. One example is the response
of the first deputy prime minister Oleg Soskovets. He was summoned by the Duma to account for allegations that he abused his office to benefit the presidential campaign. Instead of showing up, Soskovets sent a letter saying that he thought it was "pointless" for the Duma to examine the issue.\textsuperscript{19} As a result of several non-appearances of government members, the Duma deputies were so discouraged that they wanted to introduce monetary fines for incumbents who do not attend the required plenary sessions.

**Parliamentary votes of no-confidence** present the most surprising finding regarding non-electoral legislative accountability. The puzzle is that votes of no-confidence are ineffective but when a parliamentary party announces in the media that it intends to introduce a vote of no-confidence, the likelihood of a dismissal or other punishment increases with .48. Surprisingly, even if the vote of no-confidence does not take place, the regularity still holds. I conceive this relationship as a case of second-order legislative accountability. It is explicated in the fact that the suggestion for a vote of no-confidence is more important and effective than the actual vote of no-confidence. Suggested votes of no-confidence or resignations rank fifth in effectiveness in comparison with other mechanisms for non-electoral accountability.

Parliamentary votes of no-confidence are ineffective in and of themselves. There were twenty-one actual votes of no-confidence in the Bulgarian parliament in the period between 1990 and 2005. Although eight of the biggest thirty-six scandals are related to actual votes of no-confidence and nine of them resulted in suggested votes of no-confidence, government dismissals rarely ensue after such votes. Sometimes the prime ministers, whose government’s destiny is at hand, do not even show up for the parliamentary debate and the vote. For example, prime-minister Kostov did not attend the no-confidence vote of his government on May 11, 2000. The only case when the government as a whole fell after a vote of confidence (not vote of no-confidence!), suggested by the prime minister himself, is the government of Philip Dimitrov on October 28, 1992.

Some dismissals of ministers take place after the votes of no-confidence but this temporary sequence can be misleading. For example, the minister of trade Kiril Tsochev was dismissed officially on January 26, 1996, which is seventeen days after the vote of no-confidence against the Cabinet of Zhan Videnov. However, when Tsochev was interviewed by journalists later, he explained that he resigned several days before the vote took place in parliament.\textsuperscript{20} Such political bargains may be known to the leaders of the political parties even before they are disclosed to the public, and this can influence their vote.

I find that, contrary to the established wisdom that votes of no-confidence are meant to topple the government, their effect comes mostly before not after the vote. Votes of no-confidence are preemptive. For example, on June 23, 1993 the prime-minister Berov dismissed the ministers of justice, foreign affairs, transportation, culture and education. Just several days later, on July 15, 1993, his government successfully passed the vote of no-confidence. The tables below illustrate the reverse relationship between government dismissals and votes of no-confidence (reverse in the sense that votes come before the actual votes) and the positive relationship between the suggestion for a vote of no-confidence and government dismissals.

\textsuperscript{19} http://www.friends-partners.org/friends/news/omri/1996/02/960226I.html

\textsuperscript{20} http://www.novinar.bg/?act=news&act1=mnenia&mater=MTc2OzM1
Table 7: Reverse relationship between government dismissals and votes of no-confidence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of government changes</th>
<th>Date of Introducing Vote of No-Confidence</th>
<th>Prime Minister</th>
<th>Dismissals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 23, 1993</td>
<td>July 14, 1993</td>
<td>Berov</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 22, 2001</td>
<td>February 4, 2002</td>
<td>Saxe-Coburg</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 11, 2002</td>
<td>November 22, 2002 and November 25, 202</td>
<td>Saxe-Coburg</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Relationship between suggestion for a vote of no-confidence and government dismissals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Media Publication of Suggested Vote of No confidence</th>
<th>Date of Dismissal</th>
<th>Prime Minister</th>
<th>Number of Dismissals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 20, 1996</td>
<td>January 23, 1996</td>
<td>Videnov</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 30, 1999</td>
<td>December 21, 1999</td>
<td>Kostov</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 4, 2002</td>
<td>December 18, 2002</td>
<td>Saxe-Coburg</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings about the effects of no-confidence votes are both interesting and informative. Traditionally, the effect of no-confidence motions is measured by their capacity to topple governments. It turns out, however, that governments adjust their personnel and policies in expectation to pass or even avoid such votes.

**Internal governmental accountability**, defined here as the investigation of government ministers by other ministers, governmental bodies, the prime minister or by experts appointed by the prime minister, is the fourth most effective mechanism for imposing non-electoral accountability in Bulgaria. My findings show that internal investigations are likely to increase the probability of punishment by a co-efficient of .99. Internal accountability in Bulgaria is relatively less prevalent than in Russia, where government involvement increases the likelihood of punishment with 3.37.²¹ My findings show that internal government investigations are the second most important determinant of non-electoral accountability under Putin.

In Russia, accountability is internalized mainly by the president, while in Bulgaria this internalization takes many forms. The Audit Chamber is quite active, along with the “economic police”, the ministry of justice’s anti-corruption committee, and experts’ committees that are formed on a case by case basis. Another form of internal governmental accountability is for all ministers to convene extraordinary meetings in response to allegations of incompetence. These are more subtle forms of accountability, and are generally viewed as normal workings of the Cabinet. However, they show the

---
²¹ See appendix 5.
capacity of the executive for self-correction in response to external stimuli. For example, in 2000 the council of ministers met specifically to make a new policy for the procedure for admitting students into elite secondary high-schools, because many applicants protested and demanded the dismissal of the education minister.  

Of all forms of non-electoral accountability, internal governmental investigations are most likely to be abused. The reason is that the agent is the same as the principal, to which it is supposed to report. Incumbents do not have any external constraints to sanction them and have a hidden motive to preserve the wholeness of the government. That is why the creation of internal investigative bodies is often a form to avoid accountability, not to maintain it:

When the government wants an inquiry into events that took place under its predecessors, it holds a public inquiry presided over by a judge. But when it is forced to hold an inquiry into events for which it is responsible, it holds an inquiry in private behind closed doors and presided over by a Whitehall insider who spent his whole working lifetime as a civil servant.

Internal government accountability can be sabotaged in many ways. Similarly to sabotaging legal accountability, a government committee may avoid reporting the progress of its investigations citing reasons of privacy or national security. It can choose to announce the result of the investigation too late or never. It can throw the blame on lower ranking officials instead on the higher-ranking incumbents. In 1999, the prime-minister Kostov massively dismissals deputy ministers in order to preserve the ministers. Another practice that thwarts internal accountability is rotating the ministers from one high-ranking position to the other. The rationale is to give the appearance that the government holds its members accountable without actually losing the personnel.

Even if internal investigations establish the guilt of the ministers, there are not any legal mechanisms for enforcing the sanctions. In 2003, the prime-minister Saxe-Coburg appointed an internal commission to find out whether several government ministers acquired state property illegally. The committee headed by the deputy minister of justice, Miglena Tacheva, reported that the ministers should either return the property or pay the full price for it. It turned out, however, that there are not any legal mechanisms for doing this.

**Public Accountability:** Public accountability, in my theory, can be punitive and explanatory. I argue that punitive public accountability has two stages. First, media accusations against the government impact public opinion and second, the decreased public approval of the government affects the government’s behavior. My findings show that public approval is the second most effective mechanism for holding the government accountable in the period between two elections. Its effect is relatively small (−.02), but it is statistically significant (z=3.35). This means that a decrease in the public approval

---

22. *Chasa*, 28/07/2000 Kostov admitted the mistake with the admission policy, Костов призна за гафа с приема в гимназите
26. *Chasa*, 01/04/2005 Miglena Tacheva: Paying the apartments in full depends on the local governors, Миглена Тачева: Доплащането на апартаментите зависи от областния
increases the likelihood of government punishment either by effecting ministerial
dismissal or by effecting policy changes.

The first stage of punitive public accountability, the relation between
media accusations and public approval of the government, is less strong in Bulgaria than
in Germany. As the graph below shows, media accusations relate to declines in
government approval and increases in public support for the opposition.

Graph 3: Media accusations against the government and government approval in
Germany

Graph 4: Media accusations against the government and government approval in
Bulgaria

Despite the relatively weak link between media accusations and public
approval, media charges still affect government sanctions. I attribute this to the strong
link between public approval and government sanctions. This is the second stage of
punitive public accountability. It is usually hard to ascertain that governments undertake
or restrain from certain in order to salvage their approval ratings. Such a connection
requires personal admissions of the incumbents, and incumbents are unwilling to make
them because they can be accused of populism. The pioneering study of

26 I am yet to compose and run detailed regressions testing this relationship.
Dewan/Dowding establishes complicated calculus that government use to determine whether to dismiss ministers in response to media accusations.28

In my work, I ascertain the link between approval ratings and government sanctions indirectly by showing a strong effect between media accusations and government sanctions and a relatively weak link between public opinion and media accusations. Critics can say that the public opinion cannot hold governments accountable because it is inactive. I argue that the public is active even when it does not express its opinion. The public is an active principal in the accountability chain in the sense that the existing opinion can erupt at any moment. The potential for expressing public discontent is always rife. Governments often consult their public opinion ratings. Political capital is sometimes a more valuable commodity than formal institutional power. In fact, it is probably very hard to maintain formal power without the public rating to back it up.

Two of the biggest cabinet reshuffles in Bulgaria took place when the government approval was very low. The prime-minister Saxe-Coburg dismissed seven ministers on July 17, 2003 when government approval was a mere 13% and the disapproval rating was 72%. In a similar effort to save the credibility of his government, prime-minister Kostov dismissed eleven ministers on December 21, 1999. The public support for the government then was 28% and the disapproval rating was 51%.

I introduce a second type of public accountability called explanatory public accountability. I argue that new technology made the media easily and universally accessible and thus changed the democratic nature of accountability. From mediated, parliamentary and institutional accountability became direct, public and non-institutional. Under direct public accountability, politicians use the media to defend their actions and explain their policies directly to the people. Media technology enables the incumbents to participate in a public dialogue with the masses, the way the Athenians were engaged in direct democracy. Government spokespeople and press attachés meet the press regularly and are considered an invaluable part of the administration. Talk shows, impromptu interviews and press conferences, sometimes specially convened to address an allegation, replaced parliament and the court as the exclusive forum of explanation.29

I have determined that incumbents respond to 44% of media allegations in Bulgaria and to 62% of media allegations in Russia. This means that officials in Bulgaria respond to every second allegation reported in the media. My findings show that incumbents are more likely to respond to allegations of corruption than to allegations of incompetence both in Russia and in Bulgaria. Only in Russia do the incumbents defend and explain their position more in cases of incompetence than in cases of corruption. In Russia, incumbents are more likely to take sick leave or go on a business trip as a pretext to avoid responding to media accusations.


29 This type of accountability is different from the conventional role of the media as a watchdog. In the conventional paradigm, the media chases the politicians. Now the politicians are after the media. Instead of hiding away from the media, the incumbents look for its medium to portray their problems, defend their position or gain credibility, instead of hiding away from it.
Even if the government officials respond to the allegations, the responses are not always informative. In such cases, the real “information” conveyed to the public is that the incumbents are unwilling or unable to provide the necessary explanation. For example, when an MP alleged prime-minister Kostov of nepotism in 1998, the prime-minister said, “we live in a small country and we are all some sort of cousins.”³⁰ Public explanatory accountability also exposes well inconsistencies between words and actions of the government members. In 1993, the deputy prime minister Neev gave the following

³⁰ 24 Chasa, 11/04/1998 Emilia Maslarova: the friendship circles are more dangerous than the friendship circles. (Емилия Масларова: родинските кръгове са по-опасни от приятелските)
answer to a journalist, asking him whether he had resigned, “No, absolutely no [I haven’t resigned under pressure]. First of all, do I look to you like a person who could be put under pressure and who would yield to this pressure? I do not seem like such a person and this must be noticed.” On the same day, the minister resigned. So Mr Neev’s behavior did not look consistent with his words.

One possible objection to conceiving incumbents’ responses to media allegations as a form of explanatory accountability is that the public is passive. Critics could say that the principle of accountability is inapplicable because accountability is premised on a relationship between an agent and a principal, and in this case, the public cannot ask specific questions and demand specific explanations. However, the political opposition and the public can influence the political agenda through open letters, declarations, communiqués and press conferences. I found more than seventy cases of public explanatory accountability in just one newspaper during the period between 1992 and 2005 in Bulgaria. Here are a few examples: the local organization of the Bulgarian Socialist Party in the town of Pernik sent an open letter to the president and the prime-minister to accuse the minister of environment that she had allowed the damage of eight historical monuments in 2003. The parliamentary group of Coalition for Bulgaria issued an open declaration stating that it did not support the Bulgarian participation in the Iraq war in 2003. In the meantime, the local student organizations of the party compiled a list of signatures demanding the resignation of the minister of foreign affairs because of his support for the war. In 2004, the non-parliamentary movement “Social Democrats” convened a special press-conference to accuse the minister of infrastructure Tserovski of nepotism and favoritism.

The utility of exposing and shaming the incumbents does not come without a cost to the accuser. Public accusations can come back with a vengeance. Critics pay the highest price for publicly accusing the incumbents in Russia, where the accuser may be sued, threatened and even assassinated. As graphs five and six show, this category of responses barely exists in Bulgaria while it is substantial in Russia. A lesser but still substantial price for accusations is paid when the accused attempts to discredit the credibility or reputation of the accuser. In the majority of cases, the accused incumbent refers to the lack of competence and the poor track record of the accuser. In 2001, the former deputy minister of education Nikolov accuses the acting minister of education Atanasov that he selected his own textbook as a winner of a nationwide competition for high-school textbooks. When a journalist repeated the charges to the minister, he responded: “Please, do not involve me in an indirect conversation with people who have proved their incompetence and corruptibility.”

Incumbents can respond to charging by questioning the personal motivation of the accuser. In 2003, a bomb blew up in one of the buildings of the Supreme Court and the magistrates accused the Interior Ministry of creating a negative public sentiment against them. The response of the head of the national investigative department, Vassilev, was: “Statement like “the police are lying” show, to understate it, a lack of respect. They [the statements] are a blatant example of unprofessional attitude.

---

31 24 Chasa, 03/09/1993, The Vice prime minister resigned. (Вицепремиерът Неев подаде оставка)
32 24 Chasa, 12/08/2001 A minister is accused of promoting his own textbook, Винят министър, че прокарва свой учебник
and a personal spite against the Ministry of Interior”. Sometimes the accused minister alleges the accuser of strategic manipulation in the eve of elections. In 2003, the former deputy prime-minister Paskalev accused the government that it is ruled by the mafia. The government spokesmen responded: “It is clear that the local elections are near, and this group of media fans will continue to hurl slanders. In all categories of responses, government opponents are cautious to put accusations in the public because they can backfire.

A point of further inquiry is whether institutional and public explanatory accountability compete or complement each other. On the one hand, the media deinstitutionalize explanatory accountability and undermine the idea of representative democracy. Public explanatory accountability no longer requires the mediation of judges or parliamentarians. On the other hand, direct public accountability and institutional explanatory accountability do not have to be in conflict. When the incumbents give responses to institutional inquiries, and the media report these responses, the two types of explanations-institutional and public- overlap and reinforce each other.

**What determines non-electoral government accountability?** So far, I have established the following regularities:

- Investigative and punitive accountability is higher in Russia than in Bulgaria.
- In Bulgaria, the most common form of non-electoral accountability is reversing government policies. In Russia, it is dismissing or rotating government officials.
- In Russia, non-electoral accountability is formal and institutional, in Bulgaria it is mainly informal (second-order).
- In Russia, accountability is concentrated in the hands of the president and the prosecutor. In Bulgaria it is divided among the Supreme administrative court, internal government investigations and parliament.

The purpose of the paper is to outline a new type of accountability and to determine which mechanisms are most effective in maintaining it. My future research will identify the factors that underline the variation in effectiveness of these accountability codes. I will consider the following factors:


---

33 *24 Chasa*, 31/03/2003, Ivan Grigorov is talking complete non-sense, Иван Григоров говори пълни глупости
34 *24 Chasa*, 29/01/2003 The government is not working for the people, Паскалев: Правителството не работи за българите
2. The system of electing prosecutor-general: The Russian prosecutor is nominated by the president and confirmed by the Federation Council, which is currently under the president’s control. The Bulgarian prosecutor is elected by the Supreme Judicial Council.

3. Strength of the political opposition: Centralized pro-government parties in Russia versus many splintered parties in Bulgaria.

4. Civil society: In Russia, public opinion is used to corruption and incompetence, responds only to grave issues of war, emergencies and wage arrears. In Bulgaria, public opinion is more critical of corruption allegations (?).

5. Topical accountability: Certain types of media accusations, such as marital infidelity, never instigate investigations or sanctions. Others types of media accusations, such as illegal tapping and budget concerns, always trigger accountability mechanisms. In some countries, private matters are not important in and of themselves, but they condition cover-ups, which in turn become the persecuted misdemeanor.

6. Cooperation between the institutions: Some institutions are better suited at instigating charges against the incumbents, others are better suited at bringing the investigations to a close. The cooperation between the parliamentary deputies, committees, public committees, the prosecutor, internal governmental bodies and the president are crucial in this aspect.

7. Another crucial issue is whether the fairness of accountability is in conflict with the effectiveness of the accountability mechanisms. I established that non-electoral accountability is bigger in Russia than in Bulgaria. At the same time, I find that accountability in Bulgaria is shared by several institutions, while in Russia it is concentrated in fewer accountability bodies. The question is whether the multiplicity of accountability mechanisms impedes their effectiveness. The logic behind this argument is that the cooperation between accountability codes is undoubtedly more costly and timely than the workings of any institution separately. At the same time, each accountability code has only one type of logic, and if institutions cooperate, their judgment of the government is more likely to be fair.

8. Finally, we need to ask whether some accountability codes are more effective than others. For example, internal government investigations may punish alleged ministers more quickly than parliamentary and judicial investigations because they do not have coordination costs. At the same time, internal government investigations are more likely to be abused. Once again, but in a different form, we arrive at the trade-off between effectiveness and fairness of accountability.

9. Selection bias: The finding that overall accountability in Russia is much bigger than that in Bulgaria is surprising. It can be attributed to the bias of the media as opposed to the effectiveness of the presidency, the prosecutor and public opinion. Such an alternative explanation would argue that the government deliberately implicates government ministers in order to dismiss them. In this case, media accusations are not the cause but only the pretext for government sanctions and sanctions do not attempt to impose accountability but to settle scores. Although I have made the best possible effort to sample independent Russian newspapers that would publish reasonable accusations, I cannot guarantee that media accusations
are not insinuated by the government to discredit unwanted ministers or policies (in comparison to Bulgaria.) In principle, it is unlikely for a government to want to discredit itself publicly, when it can simply dismiss people, without having to explain its motives, as in the case of Russia. In addition, the findings hold for the period when Yeltsin was in power, when the media were much more independent than during Putin’s mandate. Finally, they hold for allegations of incompetence just as much as allegations of corruption, which are more likely to be biased. The bias in the selection of cases is also reduced by the fact that the findings hold even for cases when non the media, but the private people make the allegations. Therefore, it is likely that when accusations are made, they would deserve to be investigated, and when needed, sanctioned. Still, I would interview journalists in Russia to find out whether they are forced to fabricate accusations against the government.

In conclusion, I believe that the dissertation:

• Offers a new theoretical approach to a critical but under-researched issue in political science. It views government responsibility from the perspective of non-electoral accountability and introduces several theoretical innovations such as “second-order accountability” and “explanatory public accountability”.

• Compiles a comprehensive original database that allows the testing of the multi-dimensional model of non-electoral accountability for the first time.

• Establishes the degree and types of non-electoral accountability in two post-communist countries.

• Determines and compares the effectiveness of multiple mechanisms for holding the government accountable for media accusations.

• Offers explanations why certain accountability codes are more effective and how their coordination affects their effectiveness (this one is in progress).

• Studies corruption as scandals are „corruption revealed“ (Lowi 1988)

• Carries useful implications for accountability in the EU, which currently suffers from a democratic deficit.
Appendix:

1. **The database:** After reading every issue of the biggest daily national newspaper, *24 Chasa* (and alternatively *Trud*, when *24 Chasa* was not available) for the period 1990-2005, I created an original database of more than 942 media charges involving the Bulgarian government. I defined four types of charges: incompetence, corruption, verbal gaffe and personal disagreement. I noted down the nature of each allegation, the position of the alleged minister, the position of the accuser and the responses of the accused. Then I examined judicial and parliamentary records, as well as public opinion trends, to check for the corresponding sanctions and the punishment for the accused incumbent. The institutional reactions were coded as either 1 (if the institution was involved) or 0 (if the institution was not involved). Public support for the government ranged between 0% and 100%. The category of charges against the incumbents is coded in a range from 1 to 4. The category of the responses of the incumbents is coded in a range from 1 to 9. The category of the positions of the alleged minister is coded in a range from 1 to 34. The category of the positions of the accuser is coded in a range from 1 to 12.

Here is a shortened version of the table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who is Accused</th>
<th>What is the accusation</th>
<th>Articles' Titles</th>
<th>Accuser</th>
<th>Public Opinion</th>
<th>Court</th>
<th>Parliament</th>
<th>Audit</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labor Minister</td>
<td>Corruption</td>
<td>Unions</td>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade Minister</td>
<td>Incompetence</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. **The dependent variable:** I code the dependent variable, defined here as sanctions for the alleged incumbent, in two ways. The first category is dichotomous, where 1 signifies the presence of sanctions and 0 signifies the lack of sanctions.

The second type of coding is defined as follows:
- 0 no sanctions
- 1 exoneration
- 2 reverse policy
- 3 create new legislation
- 4 verbal reprimand or fines
- 5 demote a lower ranking official
- 6 dismiss a lower ranking official
- 7 demote a high ranking official
- 8 dismiss a high ranking official
- 9 arrest or prison

Two assumptions are built in this coding of the dependent variable:
Assumption 1: The dismissal of government ministers amounts to more accountability than changing separate policies by government ministers.
Assumption 2: The exoneration of a government minister is a form of accountability, although it does not entail punishment. In this case, exoneration amounts to more accountability than the absence of any conclusion about the guilt of the government.

3. **The statistical model:**

I determined the effectiveness of institutional and public mechanisms for imposing accountability on the executive through an ordered probit regressions of the following equations (Some models show an odds ratio. I have already run first differences and I will run additional models with CLARIFY as well. So far, the results of all models are consistent):

\[
\text{Constant} + \alpha(\text{Legislative Investigation}) + \beta(\text{Legal investigation}) + c(\text{Public opinion}) + d(\text{Internal government investigation}) + \text{Error term} = \text{“Sanctioning of the accused government minister”}
\]