Elite Discourses on Democracy in Bulgaria and Romania:
Cognitive Socialization in Candidate Countries?

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Introduction
When the European Union (EU) made its first enlargement eastwards in May 2004, this grand
organization took on responsibilities not only of an economic and political nature. It meant also
stepping over a historical and cultural line in incorporating into the community nations carrying
with them radically different post-war experiences of totalitarianism and authoritarianism from
many of those already members. The challenges for the European Union to manage diversity
became suddenly larger than ever. The first Eastern enlargement involved the eight post-
communist countries who were believed to have developed the most democratically and
economically. These were furthermore all states with extensive Western commercial contacts, to
a large degree favoured by their embeddedness in the geopolitical sphere of the West. None of
them carried the burdening legacy of a patrimonial Communist rule, but ranged from the most
liberal nationalist-accomodative Communist regimes (Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, Lithuania) to
more repressive bureaucratic-authoritarian (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Latvia, Estonia) (cf.
Kitschelt et al, 1999). However, none of the 2004 countries carried with it a patrimonial
Communist legacy. The next “eastern” or “southeastern” enlargement happened just a few
months ago. Bulgaria and Romania became member-states on the 1st of January this year, after a
bumpy accession process filled with temporary halts, threats of total postponements combined
with the usual huge efforts on the parts of the candidate countries to comply with demands of
every thinkable type. If the EU through the first wave of post-communist states opened up for
greater historical and cultural diversity than before, that is even more the case today. Bulgaria and
Romania, with their partly different cultural legacies, their fairly ambivalent pre-war experience
of democratic rule, and their comparatively speaking painful Communist-time experiences
coming close to patrimonialism under Ceausecsu and Zhirkov have already during the accession
processes constituted challenges to
the Union.¹ When processes of either full-blown enlargement or arrangements of the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) or Stabilization- and Partnership Agreements type now continues towards the Balkans, Turkey and Ukraine, it means the tying together of culturally, politically and economically of even more divergent regions, sometimes what Huntington would call different civilizations since we then cross over from varieties of Christianity to Islam and the Muslim community.

The successful construction of organizations, including the EU, implies the creation of adequate formal institutions that are determinate enough to influence behavior. The Copenhagen criteria of 1993 are a codification of basic principles that in turn require strong supporting institutions: democratic rule, market economy, rule of law. However, formal institutions are far from enough to breathe life and soul into a constructed edifice such as the EU and turn it into the desired community everyone rhetorically speaks about. For that, informal institutions, culture and shared identities are essential building blocs which need to develop in order to weave the invisible yet necessary fabrics that tie people and, in the case of EU, entire nations together. From other strands of human life we know that culture in the sense of shared value patterns and identities are reproduced by processes of socialization over generations (Eckstein, 1992), by societal and maybe individual socioeconomic conditions during the formative years of childhood and adolescence (Inglehart, 1997, Inglehart & Welzel, 2005), and by the way formal political and societal institutions are designed and function (Kumlin & Rothstein, 2005, Bennich-Björkman, 2006, 2007). Considering the remarkable undertaking of building a unified Europe through an

¹ However, it is important to notice that both Romania and Bulgaria are members of the Euro-Atlantic Community NATO since 2004. Although the accession processes to NATO are not covered here the organization clearly promoted liberal democratic identities through ambitious socialization efforts in the candidate countries which may have affected not least discourses on democracy (Gheciu, 2005).
organization of diverse member states, mechanisms of socialization and institutional transfer have also been pointed out as crucial in the process of creating a community.

A number of questions arise as a consequence of the on-going processes that contribute to re-mould the EU but also, or so we could assume, affect the candidate and new member states. One such question is to what extent there exist today so profound cultural differences as to undermine any shared meaning of the idea of the EU? Another is if the policies of compliance (conditionality) and internalization (socialization) by which EU attempts to influence the accession and neighborhood countries both behaviorally and attitudinally appear to have resulted in the construction or re-construction of resembling discourses cross-nationally regarding such a core notion as democracy? A third, and not least important, question is whether cognitive cohesion within the national political elites of accession countries is affected in the sense that the on-going processes of Europeanization create a specific “EU-oriented” segment within the larger elite?

**Purpose of the paper**

This paper represents a first attempt\(^2\) to analyze these questions by focusing on the discourses on democracy within the political elite in the then candidate and now fresh member states of Bulgaria and Romania. These countries have just experienced a pro-longed accession process of both “hard” pressure through the conditionality criteria and “soft” Europeanization in the sense of numerous and continuing personal encounters in committees, parliamentary groups, twinning programs and more. It has been stated that an important mechanism by which EU and its institutions and informal networks influence the integration process is through elite socialisation

\(^2\) The discussion presented here is indeed work in progress and thus presented at a very early stage. Please do not cite.
(Pridham, 2005, Laffan, 2004, Lewis, 2004). Sometimes called a “soft” form of Europeanization as opposed to the “harder” forms of policy and institutional transfer, it refers to “a psychological process, a process of framing and socialization” (Vermeersch, 2005, 76). “Soft” mechanisms of Europeanization should be particularly crucial in enlargement processes involving states with authoritarian legacies who are going through not only institutional transformation but, even more important, changes of mentalities and deep-rooted ways of thinking, like the large group of former Communist countries incorporated in 2004 and to an even larger extent the countries focused in this paper. While institutions can be replaced quickly, culture in the sense of norms, values and “habits of the heart” is much more tenacious and continues to be influenced by political cultural traditions and legacies from the past (cf. Eckstein, 1988, Ekiert & Hanson, 2003). A third country, Ukraine, is included in the broader analysis of which this paper forms a part, but will not be focused on here in the same systematic manner as the other two. Ukraine is today part of the EU Neighborhood policy program and as such enjoys rather a forefront position. Not least under the former “Orange” government, Ukraine nurtured ambitions to join the EU and recently, or at least before the constitutional crisis in April this year, the Union indicated a renewed interest in intensifying contacts with the country. In contrast, however, to the two Balkan countries, Ukrainian political elite has not been exposed to personal socialization processes of the same degree.

How is democracy interpreted, understood and conceptualized in the new member states? Even though EU has been accused of suffering from a democratic deficit, reinforcing executive powers to the detriment of the legislative ones in the member and candidate states, there is no doubt that at the core of the Union’s identity lies at the same time the promotion and safe-guarding of Western democracy. Often termed as liberal democracy, this is a discourse that strongly embraces
formal institutions, human rights including particularly strong safe-guarding of minorities, respect for civil and political rights, tolerance and rule of law to mention just some aspects. For the sake of simplicity we can call it the liberal constitutionalist discourse (Dryzek and Holmes, 2002, 255). But however familiar this conception of democracy may seem to a Western observer, this is only one possible discourse of democracy out of many not least when the post-communist part of Europe is concerned. “This richness suggests immediately that applying a one-size-fits-all template of what constitutes democracy is inadvisable, still less that such template should be applied to the evaluation of democratic development across all countries” (Dryzek and Holmes, 2002, 255). Democracy and understandings of democracy is the focus of this paper that will investigate discourses on democracy within the political elite in Bulgaria and Romania. The discourses on democracy investigated here are intended to reflect not only superficial notions but deeply rooted patterns of thinking and believing.

Both for EU as such and for these newly democratized countries, the understanding and meaning of democracy and democratization is of significant importance. However, it is not only of significance how elites (and the public) think about democracy but also if democratic norms are being practiced – or not. Behavior and values may of course differ, and affect each other in complex patterns of interaction. Even though individuals state that they are committed to democratic ideals, they may behave otherwise. Nevertheless, in this paper the focus is on elite conceptions and not on elite behavior. Finding out how individuals among the political elite perceive of democracy and whether their perceptions come close to, or differ considerably from, each others and the dominant perceptions in large parts of Europe is important. Even though we must recognize the possibility of the elite’s being sensitive to what is perceived as politically and socially correct, it is still interesting information in its own right whether the democratic “norm”
in the very recent member states of Bulgaria and Romania coincides today with liberal
democratic perceptions or adheres to the more nationalist, communist or socialist views of
democracy that are predominant in for example Ukraine.

Research on Europeanization
A growing strand in the literature preoccupied with cognitive perspectives is the formation of
European and alternative identities where institutional socialisation processes and identity-
building on the elite level are focused and where ideas similar to the ones presented here have
Robyn (ed) 2005). Systematic research and comparisons are however still very much lacking.
The on-going Eastern enlargement and its effects on the post-communist countries has so far also
mainly been approached by studying institutional and policy transfer in particular fields
(Papagianni, 2003, Vermeersch, 2005, Verdu & Croci (eds), 2005), by more general and broad
studies of democratic consolidation (Pridham, 2002, 2005) or party system change (or non-
change) (Lewis, 2004, Dauderstädt, 2005, Hough & Handl, 2004). The literature on post-
communist elites has mostly been biographically and sociologically oriented (Steen, 1997,
concerned with subjective opinions of the elites, most often surveys have been used. Here, three
strands of literature are brought together, on integration, enlargement and elites, at the same time
as relating the effects of EU to the broader literature of socialisation and political culture.

Two fields of research focus more intensively on questions of what has been called
Europeanization, processes of construction, re-construction and adaptation of EU norms and
values.3 Scholars dealing primarily with the EU (European Studies) such as Pridham (2005), and
Flockhart (2005) represent one line of research. International Relations (IR) has also come to
focus on processes of international value diffusion and socialization and represent another one.

3 The concept of Europeanization is contested (see e.g. International Organization, Vol. 59, Issue 4, 2005). I reserve
it here for processes of institutional transfer, policy transfer and the more subtle cognitive “transfer” that is related to
the EU, not to other organizations on the European level such as the European Council of Human Rights.
Checkel (2005), Gheciu (2005), Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2005) are some examples to be mentioned. IR scholars have aside from the EU paid attention to socialization effects of another internationally predominant organization, NATO (Gheciu, 2005).

The idea of some kind of process of Europeanization that results in adaptation presupposes that some kind of “misfit” between institutions, policies or cultures, maybe all three of them, predominate in the EU and in the candidate country or countries. If no such discrepancies exist, adaptation processes are simply not needed. As the EU over the last decades and in particular in the 2000s has enlarged towards parts of Europe that have for example very limited experience of democracy or market economy and who have been shaped under radically different ideologies than the liberal democratic one, adaptation institutionally, policy-wise and culturally have come to appear as highly crucial. Issues of this kind remained less salient in earlier enlargement processes towards for example Denmark, Britain, Sweden or Finland.⁴

That adaptation needs to take place in order for the EU to function properly is not to say that diversity can not be incorporated. On the contrary, institutions, policies and cultures vary between member states and national interpretations of core principles may actually in reality differ. However, as long as nobody makes an issue out of it, or try to establish once-and-for-all principles, this kind of pragmatism is in reality the recipe for organizational success (Gustavsson, 2006). For example, it was only when the principles already practiced were put on paper in the proposed Constitutional document for the EU that protests were voiced. Nevertheless, there is

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⁴ Spain, Portugal and Greece in 1986 are different matters since they carried with them authoritarian experiences. However, their experience of market economy and rule of law where more salient than what has been the case with the post-communist states of Central and Eastern Europe.
still, and always will be, a limit to diversity. An European identity may build on diversity as one pillar, but must also embrace some notion of common identity.

One central question in Europeanization studies is what mechanisms that are important in the process of adaptation to some, admittedly often vague, EU norms, what here is called Europeanization.⁵ Mechanisms are often divided into two categories, rationalist ones and sociological ones.⁶ Rationalists presuppose that Europeanization leads to domestic change “through a differential empowerment of actors resulting from a redistribution of resources at the domestic level” (Börzel and Risse, 20??). Sociologists imply development of new identities and norm internalization through more soft processes of socialization and collective learning processes. Logics of rational and sociological “adaptation” in reality often occur simultaneously or during different phases in the Europeanization processes.

While rational adaptation is supposed to occur in an interaction between self-interested political actors who adjust to changing institutional incentives embodied not least by the conditionality policies launched by the EU, the mechanisms behind socialization could be the presence of “norm entrepreneurs” persuading others to redefine their interests and identities. Another mediating factor could be informal institutions that function as consensus-building (Börzel and Risse, 20??, 2). While the first mechanism points out socialization as quite a deliberate and active process, the second one portrays something more indirect and subtle that is generated by the influence of cultures as such, for example a specific EU-culture. Both interpretations however suggest some kind of personal interaction within the framework of institutions. A combination of

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⁵ The concept of Europeanization is contested.
⁶ In the International Relations-field (IR) the term “constructivist” is more common than is “sociological” but basically they refer to similar phenomena (Zürn and Checkel, 2005).
rationalist and constructivist approaches in order to explain how institutions can have a socialization effect is presented in a special issue of *International Organization* (4, 2005). Empirically, what does the literature say about support for any of these theories of Europeanization? Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier draw the conclusion that socialization have no importance for candidate countries in the accession processes. The authors conclude that the EU has had a tremendous impact on candidate countries in Central and Eastern Europe because of conditionality, but the question is what will happen after accession when those material incentives and the instruments of conditionality no longer exists. Socialization effects may then become stronger, among other factors as a result of active participation in EU policy-making (227). Writing on the Balkans, Kavalski (2005) reaches another conclusion. He develops a thesis that in particular the presence of Euro-Atlantic organizations has led to socialization of elite actors in the region.

What about developments at the national level? There is agreement in the literature that the national level, and not only the European, is of importance in discussing Europeanization (Zürn and Checkel, 2005, p. 1054). Flockhart for example found that the Danish political elite is much more positive towards the EU than the public in general. The national elite, in contrast to the people, socializes with other national elites at the EU-level and thereby takes part in other, and more EU-positive, discourses. Similar results have been found in Sweden, where previously EU-skeptics on the elite level after Sweden’s accession in 1995 have been shown to become much more EU-friendly as they join the EU-parliament, participate in Council meetings, or take part in the large number of preparatory committees and networks. The necessary exposure and participation at the EU-level that followed accession are most probably causes for such a sea change. National elites are thus much more directly involved in and exposed to the kind of processes of personal or institutional socialization that are of interest here.
The literature indicates that socialization on the national may play an even larger part in forming frames of mind and cognitive maps, for example through social discourses (Risse and Maier, 2003). Hence, a conclusion is that more focus has to be put on investigating processes of socialization on the national level and how these interact with the European institutions and processes of socialization. In some instances, national-cultural discourses could contribute to reinforce and simplify what is believed to be some level of necessary cognitive adaptation. In other cases, however, predominating national-political discourses, not least on democracy, may hinder such cognitive convergence to occur.

**Why Elites?**

Why should we be interested if there is developing a “unitary mind-set” of democracy on the elite level? Aside from the general truth that even though democratic government has spread worldwide political elites continue to play crucial roles, there are a couple of particular preconditions which justify the focus on elites when EU (and the post-communist states) is concerned. The European Union is a “polity” still in the making even though it looks back at an over fifty year long existence. Its geographical borders are not settled, its constitutional foundations are unclear and the demarcation lines between Union authority and nation-state authority regarding policy areas are constantly floating as a result of changed practices. That clearly indicates that the European Union is a dynamic entity, but it also emphasises characteristic elements of change and transformation. The importance of elites becomes greater than usual in times of institutional and cultural change as a bulk of literature on for example democratic transitions and revolutions show. Furthermore, ever since the beginning of the 1990s there have been accusations of a “democratic deficit” within the EU. Through its institutional construction the EU thus gives too much power to political elites and too little to citizens to exercise control. This has often been formulated as a, admittedly understandable, critique in times of democratic euphoria that the European Union in particular on the political level is an “elite project”. Whether we think that is desirable or not from a normative perspective it is hard to by-pass the fact that the political, judicial and professional elites populating the European institutions possess great powers in influencing choices and decisions vital for the future of the Union as well as for increasing or
decreasing the popular support for Union existence and policies. The point of departure in the proposed research project is thus that it is precisely because of the elite character of the EU that there is a demand for increasing knowledge about the cognitive aspects of the political elites and the forces contributing to forming these characteristics.

This Study
Returning now to the present study, it is an exploration of the discourses on democracy within the political elite in the previous candidate countries and new member states of Bulgaria and Romania. The study was conducted in the fall of 2006, and there are thirteen subjects in each of the national parliaments that have participated in a Q-sort ranking (soon to be explained in more detail). That elected politicians from applicant countries are drawn into different kinds of cooperative formal structures like the Joint Parliamentary Commissées (JPC) in the European Parliament already at an early stage in the accession process could be interpreted as an EU strategy for increasing political learning and in the longer run strengthening European identity-building. Of course, the entire parliaments could be regarded as exposed to socialization in one form or another from the EU during the accession process. But by participating in the JPCs the exposure to personal interaction should be more intense. JPCs are identified as the EU institutional framework within which potential socialization of either an arguing (actor-driven) or social influence (structure-influences) type could be assumed to take place. Participating in the JPC implies regular personal meetings for selected members of parliament from accession countries with EU-parliamentarians from member states. JPCs usually hold meetings twice a year, once in the accession country and once in one of the working places of the European Parliament (EP). The purpose of the JPC is to promote contacts and discussions between the EP

7 In Romania’s case, approximately ten more individuals are included in the final analysis but have not been incorporated here.
and the parliaments of the Associate States.\textsuperscript{8} Here, there are thus opportunities to discuss about issues of relevance to politics, democracy, institution-building and so on. Inter-parliamentary delegations, especially JPCs are regarded to have a socializing effect on third countries because candidate countries become familiarized with the work of the EP. Another point is that the JPCs are a way of letting parliaments get involved in foreign affairs issues, which could be expressed as a parliamentarization of foreign policy.\textsuperscript{9} Furthermore, the Ministers of the EP are often ranked highest in their degree of European socialization when compared to officials from other EU institutions which means that the interaction between non-EU countries and the EU on the EP-JPC level is highly relevant in respect of Europeanization. It has for example been claimed that the JPC institution play a crucial role in the more “soft” Europeanization processes here in focus (Pridham, 2005). Including members of parliament from the two then-candidate countries of Bulgaria and Romania that did participate in JPC and those that did not makes it possible to inquiry into whether their discourses on democracy differ (cf. Haverland, ).

\textbf{Q-methodology: Interpretation informed by Statistical Analysis}

Q-methodology, the method of analysis used here, has been developed in order to capture as far as possible individual human subjectivity on particular topics (Stephenson, 1953, Dryzek and Holmes, 2002, Aalto, 2001). Concretely, it is conducted in the field by asking selections of individuals, in this case members of parliament in the three states, to rank a number (here 64) of statements on democracy from the ones they agree with most to the ones they agree with least and in between those they are indifferent about. The result is a “map” in the form of a pyramid of


the individual’s thinking about democracy and how to understand democracy, often closely connected to the particular situation or country. These so called “Q sorts” (the pyramids) are then analyzed quantitatively through factor analysis in order to search for determining factors influencing the discourse in each country. In determining these factors, qualitative interpretative work is of course needed. The method has several advantages when the purpose is to study complex phenomena in various contexts. It is a context-sensitive method, not presupposing pre-decided statements or understandings regardless of locality. On the contrary, the statements (in this case 64 in all countries) are generated through discussion groups in the specific countries.

Very simplified, Q combines elements from quantitative techniques (factor analysis of rank orders by individuals) with qualitative interpretation of factors: “So while statistics inform and constrain our interpretations (and so are included in the presentation of results), they do not determine these interpretations. If statistical tests (such as the scree test) point in different directions than interpretive plausibility, we are guided by the latter” write Dryzek and Holmes who used Q in their valuable study Post-Communist Democratization covering no less than thirteen countries (2002, 29). Their study has been inspiring the present one, and has not only methodologically been used but also as a point of comparison when possible.

I indicated above that an essential advantage of Q-method is the strive for context-sensitivity in contrast to the survey method that often uses statements or questions regardless of context (cf. World Value Surveys, WVS, which has received considerable critique on this particular aspect). This study utilizes the statements on democracy generated through a process of nation-specific focus and discussion groups in the work by Dryzek and Holmes instead of collecting nation-specific statements once again. This needs to be commented upon. Their focus groups, as their selections of respondents, do not belong to the political elite but are ordinary individuals from a
broad spectrum of society, professionally, age-class- and gender wise. In the case of Ukraine regional belonging also proved to be a crucial characteristic. Furthermore, these groups met already in 1997 producing a large number of initial statements (around 300) that then were reduced to a “mere” sixty-four. However, that makes the statements a bit old. Ideally, focus groups should have been re-arranged today for the purpose of this study, preferably with representatives of the political elite from different parties (and even regions). However, judging from the great difficulties we encountered in getting access to elites in these three countries, focus group discussions with elite groups are unlikely to have succeeded in these contexts even today. An alternative would then have been to arrange focus groups either in the way done by Dryzek and Holmes, that is putting together “ordinary” people from various strata, or concentrating on political parties and their representatives. The last alternative, if to carry such a study out once more, is to prefer. In Ukraine, focus groups on democracy with ordinary citizens were arranged in three parts of the country, Donetsk (East), Kyiv (Central), and Lviv (West). However, since the Ukrainian Q-study started already in May 2006 and the focus groups were conducted in August 2006, the results are only used in order to compare and interpret findings of the Q-study.

Four research assistants, Kasper Andersson (Ukraine), Tihomira Trifonova (Bulgaria), Cristina Vasile and Madalina Voican (Romania), deserve gratitude for their zealous work in tracing down and actually managing to get very busy members of parliaments in Kyiv, Bucharest and Sofia to sit down for one hour to rank 64 statements into a pyramid ranging from -6 to 6. To facilitate their ranking, a cloth had been prepared with 64 squares and the statements had been put onto ordinary playing cards. As the Romanian assistant commented: “To present the interview as a card game and to construct a pyramid is an excellent idea. This way senators became informal and more relaxed and, as a consequence, more sincere”.

In Kyiv, Ukraine, four MPs agreed to meet for additional interviews with me and Kasper Andersson in October; Mr. Shkil, Mr. Bondik, Mr. Arkemenko, Mr. Golub. Their comments regarding statements and their interpretation of them proved quite informative, as did the extra commentaries provided by many of the Romanian MPs. Through the valuable help of Professor Anna Krasteva, New Bulgarian University, in Sofia, Bulgaria, I had the opportunity to interview members of parliament from various Bulgarian parties during a one-week stay in September, 2006. These interviews have also contributed to contextualize my understanding of the Bulgarian discourse. Henrik Winterstam was the fifth assistant in the project, working with data bases, literature reviews and contacts with the field. Needless to say, I appreciate his work as much as that of the others and could not have done without it.

The focus groups were competently conducted by Svitlana Tuchynska in August 2006.
As a consequence of the time lapse, it is clear that some statements appear somewhat antiquated. Furthermore, some of them are framed in the categories of people versus elite which may sometimes have harder to catch on among elites themselves. Taken as a whole, however, the statements definitely have relevance in their particular contexts.

Q as a method relies on a small number of individuals since it is an intensive research technique in contrast to surveys. To be able to capture and understand existing discourses it is not a representative sample that is crucial, but that the individuals selected varies in essential features such as age, socioeconomic status, profession, maybe region if that is important, sex. In this study, the group focused is members of parliament who are then defined as belonging to the political elite (that does not imply that they are the only ones or that there are not other important elite groups aside from the political one). Within the parliament, I strove firstly for variation in personal exposure to European contacts, networks and institutions. In other words, I wanted to have some difference in the extent to which different individuals had been influenced by what the literature calls processes of socialization or soft Europeanization. This distinction is mostly relevant for Bulgaria and Romania, where participation or non-participation in the Joint Parliamentary Comitées or not formed the basic line of division. For Ukraine, I tried to establish exposure through less institutionally clear-cut ways without much success. It is clear that some of the Ukrainian MPs are more “Europe-embedded” than others, but it is hard to draw any distinct conclusions about it. Furthermore, crucial in the political environment in which this study took place is partisanship. Variation in partisanship was thus sought out, most systematically in Ukraine where individuals of all major parties in the Verkhovna Rada are represented.
**Elite Discourses on Democracy**

**Bulgaria**

In contrast to Central European countries such as the Czech Republic, Poland or Hungary, the historical and cultural preconditions speaking in favor of a successful democratization after the fall of the Communist regime in Bulgaria were fewer. For several centuries, Bulgarian territory was part of the Ottoman Empire and heavily influenced, and oppressed, by the Turkish rulers. It has been claimed that the prolonged history of subordination created among Bulgarians a mentality of passivity and non-autonomy that has been hard to overcome. “The mentality of slaves” has sometimes been referred to by Bulgarians themselves as a way to describe their outlooks. The centuries under Turkish rule were partly brutal and violent and ended in an exceptionally bloody attempt by the Turkish government to combat a Bulgarian rising in 1877.

Democratic experiences during the interwar period were quickly abandoned, and Bulgaria allied, although forcibly, with the Axis during the War. The local Communist Party created after the War took power in 1946 and after severe in-fighting, cleansings and executions, the party came to be ruled for decades by Todor Zhirkov until his forced demise in 1989. The Zhirkov years transformed Bulgaria into one of the most Moscow-loyal satellite states and the country was sometimes termed the sixteenth Soviet republic. Although with a popular appeal, Zhirkov ruled Bulgaria through hard repression, thus preventing any organized attempts of resistance or embryonic “second society” to surface. When democratization started in the late 1980s, there had been no preceding liberalization period such as in Poland, Hungary, Estonia and Slovenia (Gerner, 2003). Bulgaria lacked any prepared alternative elite to the ruling Communists and many of the new opposition leaders who united in the United Democratic Front (UDF) did not
have any experience of economy, democracy or decision-making. As a consequence, the 1990s became witness to many miscalculations and mistakes in economic policies being made, leading up to severe economic crisis in 1997.

However, from another side Bulgaria did have legacies of a more favorable kind to build on as well. Already during interwar time, its economy to a certain extent relied on small-scale entrepreneurs who thus embodied an individualist spirit quite compatible with democratic (and capitalist) norms and practices. Since its symbolic independence in 1878, Bulgaria also carried with it a constitutional tradition that came to play a decisive role in the transition to democracy in the beginning of the 1990s and genuinely constrained political actors. Despite the severe crisis of the Bulgarian economy, Bulgarian democracy for example survived this ordeal without resorting to authoritarian solutions or proclaiming a state of emergency. That in itself can be regarded as quite remarkable against the background that legitimacy not least for a new democracy rests on economic performance and that the 1990s in Bulgarian politics was characterized by fierce animosity between two ideological forces, UDF (the anti-communist opposition) and the reformed, or half-reformed, Communists, Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP).

After the two-force polarization of the 1990s, the political scene is today more fragmented not least since the liberal, populist party headed by the former king, Nacionalno Dvizenie Simeon Vtori, National Movement of Simeon II, (NSDV) was established in 2001. While the UDF has lost ground, the BSP continues to play a prominent role as one of the governing parties in Koalicija za Balgarija, Coalition for Bulgaria. Presently, seven parties are represented in the Bulgarian parliament.
Thirteen subjects were included in the Bulgarian part of the study which was conducted during fall 2006. Bulgaria was then in the final stages of its accession process to EU and entered the Union as new member state on 1st of January 2007. Important to add is that Bulgaria in 2004 became member of the Euro-Atlantic organization NATO. The thirteen members of parliament (in two cases previous ones) belonged to five of the dominant political forces; Democrats for Strong Bulgaria, National Movement Simeon II, Union of Democratic Forces, Coalition for Bulgaria, and Attack.

There are a large number of statements (around thirty) which the subjects agree on more or less, either negatively or positively. All reject strongly that it is better with dictatorship, and that the present situation of Bulgaria is the result of a global plan and policy from outside, that politicians in the National Assembly only quarrel, and that no one can earn enough money from honest labor today. All more or less agree that equal treatment of people from various ethnic groups is a basic part of democracy, that democracy must include free movement of labor. There is also agreement on descriptions of Bulgarians as used to someone else doing their thinking for them, and used to acknowledging problems without fighting to solve them. This indicates that the elite discourse is fairly coherent, and dominated to a strong degree by one factor regardless of political belonging:

In line with Dryzek and Holmes the findings are somewhat simplified labeled under the title

*Democratic optimism.*

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12 Those were Ekaterina Michaylova, Eliana Masseva, Stela Bankova, Makelia Kassabova, Assen Agov, Borislav Vladimirov, Hristo Kirchev, Ognian Gerdjika, Petya Gegova, Petar Dimitrov, Krastanka Shakliyan, Gergana Grancharova and Nicklay Mladenov. The latter two were not part of the present National Assembly but had been the the previous ones and also taken part in the Bulgarian JPC.

13 In this version I have not included the statements or the factor loadings. However, that is of course to be done in the final version.
The discourse *defines democracy* in a classic, liberal, way as the respect and observation of the rights of everyone in society, and that it is a way of thinking that requires civic loyalty, tolerance, and acceptance of other perspectives of the world. It is not the best form of government but better than all others that exist. Furthermore, democracy ensures that even though majorities are not always correct, it is the decision that the majority prefers that will be adopted. Democracy is a matter of freedom and equilibrium in society and the regulating mechanism that maintain this equilibrium.

Concerning the *prospects of democracy* the democratic optimism discourse emphasizes that what first need to change in order to achieve stable democracy is the way of thinking, at the same time as there is no belief in that only people brought up in a democratic spirit can embrace democracy. Young people must in a democracy believe that their future rely on performance and merits. This is a discourse rejecting strongly pessimistic interpretations of democracy as bringing lawlessness and being the lack of law and order such as many say that murders, robberies and break-ins are what constitute democracy or that you can write what you want today but are afraid to walk the streets.

This factor takes a strong position in favor of non-isolation and international dependence of Bulgaria, *rejecting* that Bulgaria can be economically independent and exist without foreign assistance, or that democracy has to build itself and cannot be imposed by certain individuals and foreign influence. *Economically*, the discourse is in favor of that the market should be the only mechanism allocating property rights, and rejects that the market economy of democracy is only the black market. Negative *nationalism* is rejected, while equal treatment of people from various ethnic groups is a basic part of democracy. Finally, in relation to the *former Communist elite*
there does not seem to be much resentment at all. If anything, a rejection of a view that former
Communists continue to hold strategic positions is manifested.

The above description of the dominant factor in Bulgarian politics today partly resembles and
partly is in contrast to Dryzek and Holmes’ categorization of the then-dominate factor (in 1997-
98) in Bulgaria which they chose to call “New Democratic Thinking”. What they found was not
only a factor incorporating strong elements of civic and plural ideas as is even more obvious
today, but also a factor at the same time expressing strong beliefs in the importance of mass-
psychology to achieve democracy and a lack of confidence in Bulgarians’ capacity to think
democratically. In other words a liberal democratic factor combined with certain elements of
pessimism and lack of national self-reliance. These latter elements are not strongly present in
today’s Democratic Optimism and specifically not in comparison with ten years ago, but there are
traces of it. For example, the agreement that Bulgarians as a people are used to someone else
doing their thinking for them demonstrates a view of Bulgarians as fairly passive. But the belief
that things can change for the better is at the same time more articulated in today’s discourse,
probably as a result of actual experiences of democratic consolidation, EU-accession and market
stabilization during the last ten years.

The elite coherence just identified tells us something both of the lack of ideological divisions in
Bulgarian politics, and of the boost in democratic confidence and optimism that the EU (and
probably also NATO) accession brought to Bulgaria. There is today a dominating understanding
of the beneficial role played by international co-operation and very little support of ideas about
isolationism and nationalism present in 1997-98, even though the representative of the Ataka
party expresses stronger views in this direction. Not least the optimism and the unequivocal
commitment to democratic norms and practice are striking for the Bulgarian subjects. Striking is also, that even though Bulgaria has been exposed to at times hard pressure from EU, the elite discourse is not informed by bitter sentiments of Bulgaria’s greatness or unjust means from the international community.

Romania
Romania emerged as an independent state at approximately the same time in history as did Bulgaria, 1878. The beginning of the break-down of the large Ottoman and Habsburg empires provided room for state-building efforts in the Balkans. The Constitution from 1866 which continued to be in force was mainly a liberal constitution. Greater Romania was created in 1919 and rested on a democratic Constitution until 1938 when democracy succumbed in the face of a royal coup, resulting in the Romanian Kingdom. Romania’s interwar period could thus be characterized as primarily democratic while the years from 1947 until 1989 were dominated by a Communist authoritarian regime of a growing patrimonial or even sultanistic kind (Nilsson, 2002, 51-52, Linz & Stepan, 1996, Kitschelt et al, 1999). The dictator Ceausescu and his family ruled in the decades preceding 1989 all the more arbitrarily, enriched themselves in a clan-like manner while isolating Romania from the international economy in order to create a totally self-supporting nation with no external debts. The notorious security police efficiently controlled any attempts of collective resistance or opposition to take root and there thus existed no alternative elite structures outside the Communist party at the time of the revolution in 1989. Opposition came from within once it manifested itself. In contrast to Bulgaria, Romanian nationalism has historically been more militant, and still plays a more considerable role politically. During the 19th century, and culminating in the creation of Greater Romania 1919, the leading vision was to unite all ethnic Romanians in one state. Articulated elements of anti-semitism were prevalent in
the efforts to cement a specific Romanian identity. The dream of a Greater Romanian state resulted in the new state of 1919 that incorporated not only ethnic Romanians but various ethnic minorities constituting almost thirty percent of the population. Today, there also exists a Greater Romania party devoted to the issue of nationalism and national identity. Culturally, the Romanians became dominated by the orthodox branch of Christianity as the Bulgarians although they were not a Slavic people but linguistically belongs to the Latin branch.

The transition from Communist rule in Romania was even less clear-cut than in Bulgaria. Furthermore, it was violent since the dictator Ceaucescu and his wife Elena were executed after summary trials when fleeing from Bucarest. The National Salvation Front, set up by the old communists under the leadership of Ion Iliescu, ruled Romania with support from the national parties Romania National Unity Party and the Greater Romania Party until the mid 1990s (Dryzek & Holmes, 2002, 190). Although committed to establish a new order for Romania, the methods used were not fully democratic and the regime was to some extent internationally discredited.

Romania has followed a trajectory similar to Bulgaria during the late 1990s and 2000s. The country became a NATO-member in 2004, and entered the EU in the 1st of January 2007. Hence, it could correctly be stated that the years since 1997-98 (when the Dryzek and Holmes’ Qsorts were collected) have been dominated by accession processes to core organizations of Western cooperation politically and economically.
In the Romanian Senate\textsuperscript{14} Q-sorts have so far been conducted with thirteen subjects from practically the entire range of represented parties.\textsuperscript{15} Greater Romania Party, Party of Social Democrats, National Liberal Party, Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania, Hellenic Union of Romania and the Democrat Party are all ‘represented’ by one or more subjects. As in Bulgaria, it is fair to say that, and in contrast to Ukraine, there is one factor which is quite influential on the Romanian elite regardless of party belonging. However, it has not the same absolute domination as the “Democratic Optimism“ factor in Bulgaria, so here I have opted for presenting two factors but bearing in mind that Romania comes close to having a dominant factor pattern as well.

That is also emphasized by the many statements (33) that do not differentiate strongly between the senators and where they then more or less agree on agreeing, disagreeing or being indifferent/neutral. Out of these, several concerns the meaning and understanding of democracy such as there can be no democracy without a legal system set up in the interests of the free individual because otherwise there can be no limits to political power, that democracy is a balance between minority rights and will of the majority, that private property strengthens competition without which there can be no democracy. Furthermore, almost all reject a perception that democracy is meaningless for those who do not have power or that democracy means a social contract whereby people vote and then leave it to leaders to solve their problems. The rejection of such a view indicates that an elite-oriented discourse does not dominate Romanian politics. There is also a fairly clear-cut rejection of Communism as being a better

\textsuperscript{14} Romania is a two-chamber system.
\textsuperscript{15} Those are Valentin Dinescu, Train Dobre, Nicolae Vlad Popa, Eksterin Kovacs, Vasile Puscas, Ion Stan, Sotiris Fotopolos, Mihai Ungheanu, Nicolae Marian Iorga, Bogdan Duvaž, Verginita Vedinas, Mihail Sireteanu, and Carol Dina.
alternative to democracy, for example in achieving equality. However, even if the consensus points in fairly optimistic directions, there are agreement on that Romania is a democracy but of very low quality, and that the Romanian type of bureaucracy is incompatible with democracy.

The most important factor dominating the discourse on democracy in the Romanian elite is what also Dryzek and Holmes call *Liberal Democracy*. It is a factor resembling Democratic Optimism in Bulgaria, as democratically committed but less future-oriented. For example, one of the most clear-cut rejections is of the perception that democracy should be given up in a crisis.

Democracy is defined as the right of the people to choose society, and as the separation of powers and the existence of a multiparty system. This factor emphasizes that democracy need a legal system set up in the interests of the free individual because otherwise there is no possibility to limit political power, and democracy furthermore requires citizens who are tolerant and actively aware of their rights. There is an individualistic and economic touch to democracy according to this way of conceptualizing since democracy is mobilizing in order to achieve something for yourself and in a society where individuals can not have private material autonomy, democracy can only be upheld through artificial means. Compromise is believed to be an essential feature of society.

This factor only strongly rejects most disillusioned or cynic views of democracy, such as that democracy means that the majority does what it wants, and that in authentic democracy civil society and political sphere is fighting all the time. Democracy is not considered meaningless for those who do not have power, and people are not always tools for those with power, regardless if it is democratic or undemocratic rule. *The relation to the past* is unsentimental: communism is not regarded as being better in providing equality and it was not more democratic in the
Romanian kingdom during the interwar period (considered by nationalists as an important manifestation of Romanian statehood).

The Liberal Democratic factor found here very closely resembles the factor already present in the previous analysis by Dryzek and Holmes. They state, based on their Q-sorts from 1997, that: “The discourse is committed to the market economy, private property, individual rights, minority rights, equality of opportunity (but not of reward), constitutional government with a separation of powers, representative multiparty democracy, and a politics of compromise” (2002, 200). Their summary captures the essence of the discourse described of today’s elite as well. But while Dryzek and Holmes found two more distinct discourses in their material that they labeled Civic Fundamentalism and Deferential Collectivism, the conclusion here is (so far it should be added) less certain. Basically, the liberal democracy discourse is a dominant factor within the Romanian elite. However, one more discourse that plays a much less crucial role but still has some influence will be described. This is a discourse that in certain, and crucial, aspects bears strong resemblance to the liberal democracy discourse but is less individualistic and capitalistic oriented, demonstrating more respect to achievements made during Communism. At the same time, the commitment to democracy as such is unequivocal: In a crisis democracy as a system of government should not be given up. This discourse is however not as institutionally oriented as liberal democracy but more oriented towards the importance of values. While institutions and procedures are of importance: No democracy can survive without the legal system set up to protect the individuals and democracy is the balance between minority rights and the will of the majority, at the same time democracy must be subordinated moral values and it is not easy to think that democracy will survive without value consensus. The discourse reveals a more ambivalent view on conflict and harmony in society since democracy also is stated to require
tolerance, multiculturalism and multi-nationalism. Compromise is regarded as an essential feature of democracy.

The Civic Fundamentalism discourse found by Dryzek and Holmes are not identical to the discourse portrayed here. They chose to term it fundamentalism because the discourse they described interpreted democracy as not in need of compromise or tolerance of disparate viewpoints. Believe in God was then an essential feature of what was believed to be democracy, and all in all they draw the conclusion that this discourse was non-pluralist deep down. This is not the case with the discourse identified today. Whereas there are implications suggesting that it is a discourse emphasizing the cultural foundations of democracy over the institutional ones, there is no trace of fundamentalism to be found. This discourse resembles what in political philosophy has been called republicanism. We can thus label it Romanian Republicanism.

Conclusions
This preliminary analysis of elite discourses on democracy in the two brand new member states of EU has portrayed two countries where the political representatives express commitment to democracy culturally. I already touched upon the issue of behavior and practice in the introductory parts of this paper. Clearly, even though the method of rank ordering a large number of statements makes it more difficult for respondents to stage politically correct answers than simple survey questions, stating that you interpret democracy in a “western” and liberal manner is not equivalent to acting in such a way. But even if what is captured here is mostly staged images of shrewd politicians wanting to comply with western norms, it is also essential how they perceive of what the norms are and that it is of importance to adapt to these norms. In Ukraine,
the norms of liberal democracy are not even spread, which says something about value diffusion as a constraining force. The understanding of democracy in Bulgaria and Romania is a conception that Western Europe knows quite well: Liberal democracy with its core values of majority rule with minority rights, tolerance and ethnic pluralism, compromise and pragmatism, and respect for legal institutions and private property. If anything, it may even be surprising the extent to which such values have become rooted. At least in Bulgaria’s case we have good reason to believe that they constitute part of the cultural legacy of this country which since its de facto independence in 1878 has been systematically constitutional in its attitude.

What is quite noticeable is that while the subjects in Ukraine are influenced by three clearly distinguishable factors, there is reason to conclude that both the Bulgarian and Romanian elite discourses are mainly affected by one factor that in relation to all others play an overwhelmingly important role. How could such a picture be interpreted? Could the more coherent elite perceptions on such a core issue as the meaning and understanding of democracy implicate that a process of socialization has taken part during the years that these two countries and not least their political elites have been on their way to the EU? Let me briefly recapitulate the political situation at the time of the previous Dryzek-Holmes study. Ukraine was then in the process of becoming semi-authoritarian under the rule of the then-president Leonid Kuchma who developed politics and privatization into an oligarchic game run by his clan and close partners. In Bulgaria’s case, a deep-running economic crisis had just shaken the country and resulted in the establishment of a currency board in order to stabilize the economy. However, the democratic system had somewhat surprisingly survived the challenge, and continued to do so with improving

16 Unrotated factor loadings in Ukraine show that three of the seven included factors have loadings over one: 6.5, 2, 0 and 1, 0 respectively. Similar figures for Bulgaria are 7,5 followed by 0,55 and for Romania 5, 78 followed by 0, 64. I have still chosen to at times include more than one factor in the discussions concerning Bulgaria and Romania.
results over the years to come. In 1996, Romania shifted governments which marked the end of
the first period of post-communist politics dominated by the National Salvation Front. The
government elected in 1996 was generally considered as more democratically committed and
liberal than the former who under the leadership of Ion Ilescu had attracted international
disapproval for example by suppressing popular demonstrations in the capital of Bucharest and
attempts to silence the media. Even though the discourse analysis of Dryzek and Holmes was
conducted not within the political elite but with citizens, the potential for comparison is still
substantial. Clearly then, the discourse patterns appearing in this study on the political elite
resemble those found already in the material collected in 1997-98, that is almost ten years earlier.
In Ukraine, four discourses were identified at that time, termed Social Democracy, Communist
Nostalgia, Prosperous Contentment and Liberal Capitalism. Bulgaria, however, is described by
Dryzek and Holmes as a country very much dominated by one discourse, New Democratic
Thinking, but where two others, Democratic Nationalism and Populist Isolationism, play minor
roles in how democracy and democratization were interpreted and given meaning. In Romania, a
liberal democratic discourse was important but not considered as so dominant as the New
Democratic Thinking in Bulgaria. Two other factors of less democratic nature affected the
democratic discourses in Romania at that time; Civic Fundamentalism and Deferential
Collectivism.

Today’s elites in both new member states are clearly cognitively coherent, more so in Bulgaria
than in Romania. In Bulgaria there is but one dominant discourse that affects all parties and
individuals; Democratic Optimism. Regardless of party belonging, there is a strong belief in
Bulgaria’s democratic future and simultaneously in the country’s beneficial incorporation into an
international context that prevail. In Romania, the results are similar but not identical. While a
liberal democratic discourse plays a key role across the parties there is one other discourse that puts its mark on Romania, although less strongly. It is the Romanian Republicanism that conceptualizes democracy more culturally than institutionally. Although not described here, the Ukrainian elite discourses differ substantially from the ones in the new member states. There is less discourse coherence, and liberal democracy or democratic optimism is not clearly identified as discourses mattering in Ukraine. Instead, Collectivism, Liberal Capitalism and Collective Nationalism are three discourses dominating today.

What can finally be said about the role played by EU in influencing elite discourses in the new member states? The very direct personal impact assumed by participation in the JPCs or no such participation is not given any support here. All or most subjects adhered more or less to the liberal democratic norms and understandings as we have seen, and there are no systematic differences in any directions between subjects exposed to more intense personal contacts at the EU-level. However, I think it is fair to claim that what we see here is a result of a process of reinforcement by the EU of discourses already prevalent in these societies in the mid 1990s (probably also earlier). In Bulgaria’s case the New Democratic Thinking with its essential elements of liberal democratic nature were dominant in Bulgarian society in 1997-98, but embedded in this discourse was also a pessimism regarding the prospects for Bulgaria to realize those democratic principles. What we find today is that New Democratic Thinking has been transformed into Democratic Optimism while the additional two discourses appear to have faded away. In a similar way, the Romanian discourse on liberal democracy already prevailing in 1997 has now come to dominate the elite’s perception of democracy regardless of party belonging. While there is still one other discourse to be recognized in Romania (in 1997 definitely two more aside from liberal democracy), the second discourse seems to be an amalgamation of the former
two of Civic Fundamentalism and Deferential Collectivism. Termed here Romanian
Republicanism it is strongly liberal democratic, but a little less individualistic, more positive of
previous Communist achievements and far and foremost more concerned with the cultural and
moral foundations of democracy than liberal democracy discourse. But again, a discursive
transformation has taken place so that the fundamental features identified by Dryzek and Holmes
have given way for pragmatism and compromise as important principles. The process of being
socialized into Western core institutions, not least to the EU, has thus contributed to foster elite
discursive coherence, strengthen liberal democratic discourses in both countries, narrow the
discursive field and “purify” already existing discourses and conceptions of less liberal
democratic contents. However, EU socialization has far from given birth to completely new ways
of interpreting and understanding democracy in these member states. The socialization process
has thus been considerably more fine-grained than we might have been led to believe. If that is
ture also for Ukraine remains to be seen.
References (to be completed).


