

# **The Union of Democratic Forces in Bulgaria: a case study of political party formation in a post-socialist state.**

## **Abstract**

The thesis examines the transformation of the Union of Democratic Forces in Bulgaria from a loose umbrella-group of anti-communist forces in 1989 to its present state as a small right-of-centre political party. This process parallels other anti-communist protest movements in Eastern Europe but took considerably longer in Bulgaria than elsewhere. Its study illuminates the process of post-authoritarian party formation and also highlights the particularities in post-authoritarian politics in Bulgaria that brought about such an extended development.

Studies of political parties that take into account internal party organisation as a factor in their development are a growing part of the academic literature on Western European parties. In the developing body of research into post-authoritarian parties and party systems in Eastern Europe there is a paucity of such studies, an omission that this thesis attempts to rectify in part.

In the process it seeks to address some conceptual issues about political party analysis. Firstly, recent developments in organisational theory stress the inter-dependent relationship between organisations and their environment and

the impact of the internal workings of organisations on that relationship. Thus the thesis suggests that parties face a fundamental duality, the need to take optimum advantage of the opportunities that their environment, the party system, provides, balanced by the need to maintain the inner life of the coalition that is the party, and that this latter imperative may over-ride the demands of external circumstance.

Secondly, recent research on the impact of historical continuities on contemporary political circumstances postulates that long-standing continuities do shape programmatic and structural choices that parties make.

Thus the thesis traces the dynamics that shape party formation and change within the context of post-1989 Bulgaria, focussing on the balance between external stimuli from the party system or other sources, historical continuities, and intra-organisational factors.