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Can You Be Patriotic and Oppose the War? Arguments to Co-opt and Refute the Ideograph of Patriotism*Heidi Hamilton*

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This article, focusing on the anti-Iraq war movement in the United States prior to March 2003, performs an ideographic analysis in order to examine the argumentative strategies used by organizations and members within this movement to answer accusations that their actions were unpatriotic. Antiwar protesters used four strategies to characterize themselves: embracing the flag, supporting the troops, defining dissent as patriotic, and distinguishing between country and government. Analysis reveals that redefining ideographs meets resistance when the previous meaning suggests particular actions that the protesters violate. Co-optation of an ideograph can better be accomplished through linkage to other ideographs. Thus the ideograph's power resides in where it falls in the rhetorical terrain of other ideographs.

Rhetorical, Political, and Public Relations Aspects of Candidate Debates during Presidential Election Campaigns in Bulgaria (1991-2006)*Ivanka Maurodicova*

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The presidential institution in Bulgaria has a short history starting with the official approval by the Great National Assembly of the Constitution of the Republic

Rhetorical, Political, and Public Relations Aspects of Candidate Debates during Presidential Election Campaigns in Bulgaria (1991–2006)

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(Adapted for publication by Michael K. Lauer)

Introduction

The office of the presidency in Bulgaria has a short history, starting with official adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria in 1991. Prior to 1990, the governmental and political structure of the People's Republic of Bulgaria was judicially regulated by the 1947 and 1971 socialist constitutions, which were characterized by the establishment of a one-party system and the merger of the Communist Party and the state.¹ But the new constitution that was adopted in 1991 declares that Bulgaria strives to become "a democratic, constitutional and social state"—"a parliamentary republic."² The first two presidents, Petar Mladenov (April–August 1990) and Zhelyu Zhelev (August 1990–January 1992), were elected by the new parliament, not by popular vote. However, in late 1991 a freely contested election in two phases, or rounds, resulted in the re-election of Zhelev to a five-year term. Zhelev and Velko Valkanov emerged from the first round, in which over 5 million people (75% of the electorate) chose among more than 20 candidates. In the second round, held January 19, 1992, Zhelev received nearly 53% of the popular vote to defeat Valkanov. Since that time, elections have been held every five years.³

These presidential election campaigns have always been preceded by debates among the candidates during both the first and second rounds of the election. These debates represent a new rhetorical practice and are part of the new political culture that has developed since 1990 in Bulgaria in the age of democratic change. The debates have been key events and have presented memorable moments from each election campaign (together with other elements for influencing public opinion, such as public speeches delivered at party conventions and on the radio and television), as the candidates try to gain the attention and support of the electorate. Presidential debates have been a significant factor in the process of shaping public opinion, and candidate messages can be a powerful instrument for enhancing the personal image of a political leader. In addition, debate is a dialogue and rhetorical genre that has an effect on the general public; as such, it inevitably becomes part of contemporary political rhetoric in Bulgaria.

This article will describe various aspects of the development of political

candidates for the office of President. Throughout this discussion it is important to keep in mind the simple fact that presidential debates in Bulgaria were and have remained a unique form of mediated broadcast communication that has provided to the nation at large a new kind of uninhibited political rhetoric.

Presidential Elections and the Presidency as an Institution

Debates have been held prior to each of the popular elections. These debates, as well as the presidential campaigns themselves, are relatively well regulated. However, although the legal requirements are explicit and unambiguous, there have been some differences among the campaigns. The second round candidates in these elections are listed in the table below:

Year	Candidates for president	Candidates for vice president	Nominated by	Votes	%
1992	Zhelyu Zhelev	Blaga Dimitrova	Union of Democratic Forces (UDF)	2,738,420	52.85
	Velko Valkanov	Rumen Vodenicharov	Nomination committee (incl. BSP [Bulgarian Socialist Party])	2,443,434	47.15
1996	Petar Stoyanov	Todor Kavaldjiev	Union of Democratic Forces	2,502,517	59.73
	Ivan Marazov	Irina Bokova	Coalition "Together for Bulgaria" (incl. BSP)	1,687,242	40.27
2001	Georgi Parvanov	Angel Marin	Coalition "Together for Bulgaria" (incl. BSP)	2,043,443	54.13
	Petar Stoyanov	Nelly Kuchkova	Nomination committee (incl. UDF)	1,731,676	45.87
2006	Georgi Parvanov	Angel Marin	Nomination committee (incl. BSP)	2,050,488	75.95
	Volen Siderov	Pavel Shopov	Ataka (nationalist party)	649,387	24.05

A Survey of Previous Research on the Presidential Elections and Debates

Research on the presidential debates in Bulgaria is relatively limited, and there are no comprehensive studies into the presidential campaigns and the debates, in particular. The election campaigns in Bulgaria have been discussed by researchers from a variety of academic disciplines, including history; media studies; psycholinguistics; psychology; political science; public relations and political advertising; rhetoric; sociolinguistics; and sociology (see Alexandrova, Burudjieva, Daynov, Evtimova, Hristov, Jordanova, Karasimeonov, Kalinova, and Baeva, Karaivanova, Kutevski, Mavrodieva, Nachev, Pesheva, Raycheva, Rusinova, Simeonova, Stoitzova, and Todorov in Works Cited). One of the

authors who examined the first television debates between Zhelev and Valkanov in 1992 is Alexandrova (1996), who focuses on the staging, the role of the moderator, and the arguments used by the opponents.

One group of researchers used comparative methods in their studies: Alexandrova (1996) and Pesheva (1992 and 1996). Alexandrova (1996) contrasted the behavior of Zhelev and Valkanov; later she compared Volen Siderov, who is the leader of Ataka, the nationalist party, with the rhetoric of Adolf Hitler (2006). Other researchers have adopted descriptive methods. They mostly deal with verbal elements: ideological terminology, media behavior, the political environment, and political slogans (see Burudjieva, Hristov and Kutevski, Jordanova, Pesheva, Rusinova, and Varzonovtsev). Raycheva discussed political advertising in Bulgaria, particularly on television (1999, 2004, and 2006). Non-verbal elements, as part of the rhetoric of various candidates, were researched by Alexandrova, Evtimova, Pesheva, and Stoichova using quantitative methods to analyze media behavior, particularly the intonation and the tempo of speaking during the TV debates. Three researchers and political analysts (Burudjieva and Koeva-Dimitrova, Daynov) presented the results of their analyses, particularly regarding the political management of the election campaigns, in monographs. Karasimonov (2001) analyzed the role of presidential elections within the democratic process in Bulgaria. Nachev (2001) has chosen a different aspect of elections, including those for president, viewing them as a lesson in political behavior. Simeonova (2007, 11–15) studied the political crisis in Bulgaria during the period 1996–1997, drawing attention to the battle among institutions, the problem-solving strategies, and particularly the role of the president in that complicated situation. On the basis on their analyses of presidential rhetoric, Karaivanova, Mavrodiava, and Rusinova attempted to present a theoretical framework for the debates.

Consequently, it is not possible to identify any common positions among these studies regarding the functions and characteristics of the debate format. In part this is due to the fact that the researchers tend to analyze the debates during and immediately after the election campaigns, considering one or two aspects only, and concentrating on very narrow topics, such as the non-verbal elements of the speakers, the slogans they use, their personal image, or the role of the media in the process.

Basic Terminology, Definitions, and Rules

Two terms will be used repeatedly in this study: *debates* and *presidential rhetoric*. Presidential rhetoric is a type of political rhetoric, and I will use the term in reference to all monologue and dialogue genres (speeches, lectures, papers, presentation, debates, conferences, round tables, etc.) that are utilized during

a president's term in office in connection with his obligations as the head of state and during the presidential election campaign.

As defined by the Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD), debates are an "effective way to inform and involve voters in the political process" (<http://www.debates.org>). In addition, of course, they are a means of building the personal political image of the candidates. As a rhetorical genre, *debate* is implemented through a specific format, with roles, rules, and procedures negotiated in advance and accepted by both sides. The format (staging) includes a moderator, whose role is to introduce the opponents, direct the discussion, and exercise time management. Apart from the moderator there are, of course, the participants in the debate, who argue their programs, ideas, projects, opinions, and proposals and who try to influence the electorate to vote for them. Debates are only one of the forms used alongside political statements, speeches, and media programs that present news in connection with election campaigns, and all these are regulated by law. Debates in Bulgaria are organized according to specific legal regulations, subject to agreements between the party headquarters and the media.⁴

Research Topics

For this study I selected debates broadcast by television companies that are well established in the contemporary media market in Bulgaria. They have high ratings and a record of influencing public opinion in Bulgaria. I used video-taped debates, some texts from the archives of Bulgarian National Television (BNT), and transcripts that were published on the websites of the parties or candidates. The access to such records is limited, which is the reason why only six to seven debates were analyzed. Analysis was focused on three areas:

- Establishment of the presidency as an institution in Bulgaria, the regulatory system governing the conduct of presidential elections, and the role of political parties in nominating candidates, as well as their part in the presidential campaigns
- The various types of debates, formats, and topics for discussion, and the rhetorical methods and argumentation used by the opponents
- The role of the media in organizing and reporting the presidential debates and the role of debates in creating and maintaining a public image in politics

The Organizational Characteristics of Presidential Politics

As mentioned above, four public votes and four election campaigns from 1990 to 2006 were studied. This section will emphasize the features of . . .

situation at the time of the elections. In the beginning of the democratic changes after 1990, when a multiparty system had already been established and civil society was taking its first steps, Bulgarian citizens demonstrated a high level of interest in political activity and participation in political life, both through voting and by running for office.

These were only some of the factors that determined the great number of participants who registered or were nominated as candidates in the 1992 and 1996 presidential elections. Various entities had the right to nominate candidates for president and vice president. These included political parties per se, labor unions, entities known as coalitions, alliances, movements, unions, or forums, and so-called nominating committees. Prior to 2001, the leading political players during presidential elections in Bulgaria were the UDF (Union of Democratic Forces) and the BSP (Bulgarian Socialist Party), which participated not only as independent entities, but also as members of nominating committees. Gradually, however, the process was normalized, the number of the participants decreased, and in the elections that took place in 2001 and 2006 only professional politicians ran for office. The table below shows the distribution of entities that nominated candidates during the four election cycles under consideration:

Nominating Entities	1992	1996	2001	2006
Total	22	13	6	7
Political Party	12	6	4	3
Nominating committee	2		1	4
Coalition		1	1	
Alliance	1	1		
Movement	2	1		
Union	4	3		
Forum	1			
Independent candidate		1		

As can be seen, political entities such as movements, forums, and independent candidates have gradually withdrawn from participation.

Of some interest is the fact that, in 1996, the Bulgarian Socialist Party initially nominated Guonguy Pirinski to run for president. However, Pirinski was born in the United States, and his candidacy had to be withdrawn because the Constitution excludes anyone who was not born in Bulgaria. Also of interest is the increasing number of female candidates, particularly in 2006, although for the post of vice president only.

The BSP and the UDF were key political players in the nomination of candidates, even when they were in a coalition or nomination committee. These

two large parties had played an important role from 1992 to 2001, and they dominated the bipolar model of government. However, in 2001 a third party, the National Movement of Simeon the Second (NMSS), won the parliamentary elections. Nevertheless, that party did not take part independently in the next presidential elections but rather formally supported the nominee of the UDF. Also, a new active participant emerged in 2006—the nationalist party Ataka, whose leader, Pavel Shopov, reached the second round of the presidential elections of that year. Interestingly, every incumbent has run for re-election, with Zhelyu Zhelev and Georgi Parvanov succeeding, whereas Petar Stoyanov failed in his 2001 re-election bid.

A Brief History of the Presidential Debates

As stated above, no comprehensive study of presidential debates in Bulgaria has ever been conducted, nor does the present study claim to be exhaustive. It is, however, based on criteria that were drawn from the existing research, as well as criteria adapted from the CDP website (<http://www.debates.org>).⁵ Data was collected regarding the types of debates that were conducted, what formats were preferred, and what topics were discussed. Also of interest were the personalities of the moderators, the conduct of the political participants, and the rhetorical and argumentative strategies they employed. The descriptive method was applied, and the criteria were reduced and adapted to match the objectives of the present study regarding the limitations to accessing debate records. In the end the following criteria were adopted to describe the debates: year, electoral round, type of debate, opponents, staging or format, the topics discussed, the broadcast medium, and the moderator.

1992

The first televised presidential debate in the history of Bulgarian politics was broadcast by BNT on January 17, 1992, two days before the second round of the election process was held. Dimitri Ivanov, a prominent journalist, acted as the moderator, and he directed the discussion and ensured that no violation of the rules and ethical norms occurred. The general topic was the authority of the Head of State at the beginning of the democratic process in Bulgaria. Participants in the one-hour debate were Zhelyu Zhelev and Velko Valkanov, the remaining two candidates (Ivanov spoke for 4½ minutes; Zhelev for 17½ minutes; and Valkanov for the remaining 44 minutes). The format allowed Zhelev and Valkanov to present their ideas on the subject in opening statements, after which they were given the opportunity to answer six questions. Neither candidate utilized the time allocated for dialogue; rather, each will-

predominantly on monologic expositions and counterarguments. Given the narrowly defined subject of the debate, other important election issues such as national security, Bulgarian culture, agriculture, and the "nationalities" issue (relating to national minorities) were not discussed.

1996

The 1996 presidential election campaign included four debates. At the time, the political situation in the country was very complicated, because the economic crisis had escalated while the Bulgarian Socialist Party was in power. All of the debates were televised by BNT.

The first debate, consisting of two segments, occurred on October 10. Major participants included Petar Stoyanov, Ivan Marazov, Irina Bokova, and Georgi Ganchev. Other candidates took part in the second portion of the debate, with Dimitar Markovski, Slavomir Tzankov, Pencho Penchev, and Alexander Tomov explaining some points in their platforms. Focused on the topic of the President as unifier of the nation, the two-hour debate consisted of opening statements from each participant, followed by a question-and-answer period. The candidates discussed Bulgarian membership in NATO and the European Union, with Irina Bokova (the Bulgarian minister for European Affairs and a Socialist Party candidate for vice president) in particular answering questions concerning international relations. Toward the end of the debate, Marazov (the Communist Party candidate) asked Stoyanov, the eventual winner, an aggressive question: "Mr. Stoyanov, how can voters believe you?"

The second debate, also consisting of two segments, occurred on October 17. Arlin Antonov, representing business interests in Bulgaria, replaced Ganchev among the major participants; several other candidates took part in the second portion of the debate. Major topics included domestic and foreign policy issues. Although the format was similar to that of the October 10 debate, the individual statements and major appeals by the candidates were held off until the end of the program, given the general feeling that viewers would tend to remember these statements better and, in this way, the candidates could send a more powerful message to the electorate.

The third and final debate during round one took place on October 22. This was a very interesting meeting in the sense that all of the leading candidates for president and vice president took part. The main topics for discussion included the president's role in a social and economic crisis, his or her constitutional duties, and agricultural reform in Bulgaria. Petar Stoyanov's running mate Todor Kavaldjiev, took advantage of the opportunity to speak about major transformations that had occurred in the agricultural sector as a result of its

denationalization. Irina Bokova again was more active in the debate than Ivan Marazov, the Socialist Party candidate for president, who made it into the second round, where he lost to Petar Stoyanov.

The concluding TV debate of the 1996 campaign took place on October 31, three days before the general election, with Stoyanov, Marazov, and Bokova on the stage along with Krasimir Ganev, a Bulgarian journalist who served as the moderator. Interestingly, Todor Kavaldjiev, who at that time was a member of the Bulgarian Agrarian Party, did not participate, primarily because he lacked media experience. On the other hand, Bokova managed to provide adequate support to her partner by taking part in all the debates, as she had much more political experience and she behaved as successfully in media events as Marazov did. The debate, which lasted 90 minutes, focused on the constitutional authority of the President and on the duties of the office.

All four debates were conducted under clear and strict rules: the role of the moderator was limited; the topics and general questions were negotiated in advance, and the participants received specific instructions from their campaign staffs. Due to the differing numbers of participants, both group and one-on-one debates were held. On the whole, the process was a successful one, and the 1996 election campaign in Bulgaria, in addition to reaffirming the constitutional election process itself, represented a positive step forward in the development of electoral traditions.

2001

By 2001 the media and communication environment in Bulgaria had changed dramatically. Lilia Raycheva, a commentator on politics and the media, has noted that non-state funded radio and television broadcasting burgeoned after the 1996 passage of the Radio and Television Act and that in 2005 there were over 200 TV channels and almost 120 radio stations available within the country (Raycheva 2006, 360). In addition, the Internet had permeated political campaigning, information dissemination, and analysis. In Raycheva's opinion, therefore, with regard to both the parliamentary elections held that year and the presidential election, both the campaigns and the election returns "manifested grave professional problems in the domain of sociology and the media that failed to meet the principal requirement for unbiased information and predictability of [the] results" (Raycheva 2004).⁶

It was in this environment that two debates were held during the 2001 presidential campaign, both televised on a private, commercial television channel called bTV.

The first of these debates—held on November 6, nearly a week before the

first round of the electoral process—featured five of the six candidates for the presidency: Bogomil Bonev, Petar Beron, Georgi Ganchev, Renata Indjova, and the incumbent President, Petar Stoyanov. Interestingly, Georgi Parvanov—the man who would defeat Stoyanov in the second round runoff election—did not participate. There were two moderators, Ivo Indjev and Svetla Petrova, both prominent political commentators and the hosts of political talk shows on bTV. It is noteworthy from a socio-cultural point of view that the debate occupied nearly 2½ hours of prime time television, starting at 9:00 pm, and that a live audience consisting of 150 ordinary citizens plus 19 journalists from various Bulgarian media witnessed the proceedings.

The group debate format consisted of the following elements: first, the moderators offered a statement of the ground rules that had been agreed upon, followed by introductions of the debate participants; next, each candidate delivered a short statement regarding his or her party platform; finally, the remaining time was devoted to a question-and-answer period, with questions posed not only by the moderators, but also by members of the live studio audience. Behavior was restrained: the moderators followed the established procedures, and the candidates waited their turn and spoke in the prescribed order. Both the format and the overall ambience surrounding the occasion contributed to the general perception that this debate had aroused great interest and made a significant impact on Bulgarian political reality.

A second, less formal but no less serious, debate took place on the evening of November 16, two days before the runoff election. This event featured Stoyanov and Parvanov, who appeared on a bTV popular late-night talk show hosted by one Stanislav (Slavi) Trifonov, a noted pop musician and actor. Facing off head to head, the second round candidates discussed the authority of the President under the constitution, the merits of membership in NATO and the EU, and a variety of economic issues, including inflation, the general standard of living of most Bulgarian citizens, and the cost of national security as a budget item. The debate followed a consistent format: on each topic, the candidates stated their platform position, then answered specific questions.

The seriousness of the subject matter belied the fact that this debate was conducted on a regularly scheduled entertainment program quite similar to the U.S. late-night television shows hosted by Jay Leno and David Letterman (but with a decidedly political twist: in the mid-1990s Trifonov had been an outspoken opponent of the reigning Socialist government). As a result, the topical discussions were interspersed with commercial breaks.

In addition to these debates involving the candidates for president, at least one debate featuring candidates for vice president was held. It was organized by privately owned Darik Radio, the country's first and most prominent "news radio"

station. Broadcast on November 8, two days after the round one presidential debate, this encounter unfortunately did not generate much interest and was not heard by a broad spectrum of the population.⁷ The vice president has very limited authority within the Bulgarian political system, and the choice of a running mate seems to have little impact on voter interest or decision-making processes.

2006

Three debates were televised during the 2006 presidential election campaign, all of them prior to round one. The first, which was presented on the state run channel BNT, occurred during prime time (9:30–11:00 pm) on September 28, nearly a month ahead of the October 22 balloting that would determine the survivors for the runoff election. Five of the seven candidates participated (neither President Parvanov nor General Lyuben Petrov, the two candidates from the political left, took part). The debate centered around a single topic, national security policy and the authority of the president, utilizing a format developed by the Presidential Election Commission, with the chief of staff for each campaign signing off. All of the candidates were allotted an equal amount of time—13 minutes, due to the absence of Parvanov and Petrov—to present key elements of his or her party platform. What transpired was more like an open discussion rather than a debate, with very little intensity or exchange of arguments and counter-arguments among the participants.

Two separate debates were held during the final week of round one campaigning. The first, on October 15, was a one-on-one confrontation between Parvanov and Nedelcho Beronov, who was supported by both the UDF (the party that both Zhelyu Zhelev and Petar Stoyanov had led as President) and the DSB (Democrats for a Strong Bulgaria), both fairly right-wing groups. Since Parvanov represented a coalition of groups in which the Socialists (BSP) predominated, this debate presented contrasting philosophies regarding how government should be organized and run, notwithstanding the fact that Beronov and his running mate, Julianna Nikolova, came in third in round one (with a shade under 10% of the vote) behind Parvanov and the ultra-nationalist Volen Siderov (who amassed 64% and 21%, respectively). Indeed, this debate, which was conducted during a broadcast of the popular talk show "Tête-à-tête" on Nova TV, yet another privately owned national television network, focused on a tendentious philosophical issue: "Bulgaria During the Next Presidential Term: Is There a Battle Between the Left and the Right." The popular host of "Tête-à-tête", Tsvetanka Risoava, moderated the program in her normal style, asking questions directly to each of her guests, who did, nevertheless, have the opportunity to challenge one another's answers.⁸

Finally, on October 19, all of Parvanov's challengers met in another round robin discussion, broadcast on state television, that focused on three general issues: the duties of the President, domestic social policy, and EU membership. This debate employed the same format as the September 28 event BNT had hosted, but with greater opportunity for the candidates to exchange counter-arguments with their opposition.

Two Person Debates vs. Group Discussions

By all accounts, the Bulgarian public preferred the head-to-head debate format rather than discussions that included a large number of candidates. Four such debates were held during the first 15 years of the post-Communist era: Zhelev vs. Valkanov before the first national plebiscite in 1992; both of the 2001 Stoyanov vs. Parvanov debates; and Parvanov vs. Nedelcho in 2006. Parvanov, in particular, favored this format; not once did he participate in the group events, in general preferring to speak in front of his confirmed admirers at events sponsored by the Bulgarian Socialist Party, or, as president, in televised speeches under strictly controlled conditions. In part this may be due to the fact that Parvanov is not comfortable in freewheeling discussions. Similarly, in 2006, he declined to participate in a two-man debate with his fiercest challenger, Volen Siderov, who is a polished public speaker and an aggressive advocate for the nationalist policies espoused by Ataka. Indeed, Siderov was known for taking every possible opportunity to promote the party ideology, which views most social issues in Bulgaria through a prism that separates the Slavic majority within the population from the two largest minority groups: the Roma and the Bulgarian Turks.

The candidates themselves seemed to prefer discussions focused on no more than two or three topics. Such issues have included: the role of the President as stated in the Constitution; social problems, including inflation; educational reform; and the merits of a Western orientation toward NATO and the European Union. Most of the speakers preferred to confine themselves to monologue, which could be used effectively to highlight their personal achievements, rather than to engage the opposition in dialogic give and take. In addition, particularly in the group debates, most could not resist the temptation to attack their opponents directly, emphasizing specific facts about the political behavior or private lives of the other candidates, regardless of any procedural agreements, the topics at hand, or even their own campaign platforms. As a result, ad hominem attacks abounded.

Interestingly, vice presidential candidates did not encounter one another in head-to-head discussions, and they participated even in group events only rarely. Nor were they particularly successful orators. The exceptions were Irina

Bokova in 1996, as noted earlier, and Juliana Nikolova of the conservative democrats for a Strong Bulgaria party, who in 2006 appeared quite frequently on radio to discuss the role of the vice president in areas such as law enforcement, probation, and amnesty, as well as certain social issues, including Bulgarian citizenship, the role of Bulgarian expatriates in domestic politics, and the demographic crisis in society (the exceedingly low fertility rate combined with a high mortality rate, an aging population overall, and deteriorating health among the populace, all leading to a declining life expectancy and a precipitous drop in population).⁹

The Political and Rhetorical Posture of the Presidents

During the period of Bulgarian history under consideration, three men have been elected president in nominally free, democratic elections: Zhelyu Zhelev, Petar Stoyanov, and Georgi Parvanov.

Zhelev strongly favored integration with the West (as did most people in Eastern Europe after the dissolution of the Soviet Union). His comments regarding Bulgaria's future were predominantly optimistic, with a focus on foreign rather than domestic policy. In addition, Zhelev was very cognizant of how to use public speaking opportunities to enhance his own popularity and personal prestige: he often emphasized the fact that it was he who signed the Partnership for Peace framing agreement with NATO and, before that, the protocol dissolving the Warsaw Pact.

Stoyanov, who emerged as the leader of the conservative coalition known as the Union of Democratic Forces during the 1996–1997 economic crisis, was a more eloquent public speaker than Zhelev. In comparison to Zhelev, whose style tended to be more direct and straight forward, Stoyanov inclined to imagery and metaphor, and his rhetorical style is still vivid in the history of Bulgarian political discourse. It was Stoyanov who declared that the "game of politics" had come to an end and that the "illusion factory has been shut down" (a direct slap in the face of the Communists and their Socialist successors). He spoke about a "new reformist majority" and a "new social contract between the government and the governed," while eschewing timeworn statements about the difficult times that lay ahead. Stoyanov's lofty, passionate manner characterized both his campaign rhetoric and his public persona as president. Like Zhelev before him, his favorite topics were European integration and the need for Bulgaria to join NATO, which he saw as intertwined not only with foreign, but also domestic policy issues: "*delaying and postponing the Euro Atlantic integration of Bulgaria is aimed directly against the country's national interests and also against any hope of a better future for ordinary Bulgarian citizens.*"

Parvanov introduced moderation and diplomacy into discussions of foreign and domestic policy issues. In his debates with Stoyanov and Beronov, Parvanov emphatically stated his position in favor of European integration, which was extremely significant, because earlier, as the leader of the Bulgarian Socialist Party, he had consistently expressed serious reservations on the subject. But Parvanov sought a balance between Bulgaria's relations with the United States, on the one hand, and with Russia on the other hand. In this context, he stated that "*our NATO membership is no panacea for our defense industry*" and, further, that "*Bulgaria's defense industry is not simply part of the security and defense system, but rather a factor and measure of our full membership in NATO.*" Moreover, in the 2006 debate against Beronov on Nova TV, Parvanov took a populist stance on a number of social issues.

The Rhetorical Techniques of the Debaters

Throughout the modern political history of Bulgaria, political orators, particularly presidents, have tended to rely upon three basic types of appeal: idealistic arguments, populist phrases, and pragmatic arguments. Historically, idealism, populism, and pragmatism have all played key roles in political rhetoric generally and in debates among presidential candidates.

By and large, the participants in these televised debates were well aware of the wider audience behind the camera and less concerned about their on-stage opponents. As a result, their statements tended to be aggressively declarative and propagandistic in nature, appealing to that portion of the electorate already sympathetic to their cause, whatever that might be. To a certain extent, this was based on their lack of experience in the arena of democratic politics, but it also reflects an appreciation of the fact that Bulgarian voters expected to hear emotional statements from their leaders, at least in the first years of democratic "euphoria", which also explains why during that time Bulgarian voters demonstrated strong party loyalty and a high level of political activism. This behavior changed as the realities of life in a post-Soviet world were felt more strongly, explaining why participation in round one elections shrunk from 75% in 1992 to below 50% in 2006, necessitating a runoff election despite the overwhelming victory of the incumbent, Georgi Parvanov. But viewers tended to respond to messages taken directly from the platform of the party they supported; and they were more susceptible to easily decoded metaphors or ironic comments about the opposition than to statistical data, policy analysis, survey results, or definitional statements. Not surprisingly, these factors inclined candidates to use figures of speech that conformed to audience expectations, with a tendency to discredit or belittle

their opponents, and to minimize the use of facts, figures, or logical argument in their statements during the debates.

Some of the more striking instances of this rhetorical behavior include, in 1992, Velko Valkanov, a lawyer, asking Zhelyu Zhelev, a philosopher by education, if the latter were a Turk wearing a fez. This forced Zhelev to reiterate the fact that he was 100% Bulgarian (*i.e.*, a Slav and a member of the Orthodox church) and to avoid openly affirming his support for the group known as the Movement of Rights and Freedoms, which had been established in 1990 as an ethnic party to promote the rights of the national minorities. Also in 1992, Zhelev, holder of a doctorate, was derided by Georgi Ganchev as a "boy from the village" to emphasize the humble beginnings of his opponent rather than the intellectual success that he had demonstrated throughout his adult life.

During the 2001 debate on *Slavi's Show*, Parvanov challenged Stoyanov regarding the latter's leadership position in the Bulgarian Socialist Party apparatus during the 1996–1997 period of hyper-inflation in Bulgaria and asked his opponent if he knew the current price of a loaf of bread; Stoyanov failed to give an unambiguous answer, and the viewers were left with the impression that he did not know. With bread being a staple in the diet of the average Bulgarian, Stoyanov's ignorance was perceived as symbolic, signaling his detachment from the everyday problems of the ordinary citizen.

Nor were candidates above using public relations tools that would fall in the realm of "dirty tricks" (known in Bulgarian politics as "black PR"). For example, in 2001, during the televised debate on bTV, incumbent President Petar Stoyanov (probably advised by his PR staff and political experts) decided to show a secret file containing information about his opponent Bogomil Bonev, a general and ex-minister of Internal Affairs, implying that Bonev was connected with criminal elements. Ivo Indjev, one of the two moderators, actually held up a file for viewers to see, but this undoubtedly cost Stoyanov, who failed to win re-election, the support of many followers.

During the 2006 presidential campaign, someone anonymously leaked information to the media alleging that both Georgi Parvanov, the president seeking re-election, and Georgi Markov, a marginal candidate running under the banner of the Law, Legality, and Justice party, had been agents of the secret police in the Communist era. Nedelcho Beronov was accused during the same campaign of having bought his home at a price below market value, taking advantage of his position as a member of the Constitutional Court. Parvanov, at least, survived the political attack, scoring an overwhelming victory at the polls (Beronov finished third and Markov fourth out of seven candidates).

In one subtle attack, Beronov's unusual first name was purposely mispronounced in a way that implied he was "incapable." Beronov, an old man who

had served as a justice on the Constitutional Court, did not have enough rhetorical or media experience, so did not respond fast enough, a critical factor for successful participation in TV debates.

Of course, many of the candidates in all of the election campaigns tended to repeat during the debates the same slogans and key messages that appeared on their posters and billboards and in their printed campaign materials, for the simple reason that voters were familiar with these slogans and expected to hear them from the candidates. For example, in 1996 Petar Stoyanov presented himself in print and on television as the "new face of the UDF" and as the "new beginning." Similarly, the slogan "Georgi—President"—so well known by the general public from the campaign posters for Georgi Ganchev—was reinforced during the 2001 debate when the candidate claimed that for five years he had been the "shadow president" and that it was high time for him to become the "real" Bulgarian president.

Ganchev's political tenacity and rhetorical style represent an interesting phenomenon in the short history of presidential campaigning in Bulgaria. After placing a strong third out of 22 candidates in the first round of the first ever general election for president as the candidate of the business community,¹⁰ and a strong third in 1996 out of 14 candidates, again backed by the business community,¹¹ Ganchev created his own coalition to run once more in 2001, but placed a disappointing fifth out of the six candidates with barely over 3% of all the votes cast. He viewed the debates not merely as a dialogue with the other candidates, but as opportunities to deliver short fervent speeches to voters. When speaking in public, he tended to refer to himself in the third person as *Georgi*, and he often appealed to individual voters with a direct and intimate form of address that soon became his hallmark: "Hello, you, Bulgarian!" Volen Siderov, the leader of the nationalists, preferred exhorting his fervent supporters with phrases such as "Dear followers!" and "Bulgarian patriots!" He also had a ready supply of stock phrases, including the following: "The President is the father of the nation"; "The head of state should understand the problems of ordinary people"; and "The president should be a son of the Bulgarian nation." Well known for impassioned speeches against "gypsies" (the Roma) and "communities of homosexuals," Siderov would sometimes meld such statements into his arguments against plans to integrate Bulgaria into NATO and the EU.

There were, of course, candidates who did not fit the campaign mold. Zhelev, for instance, a true democrat who spoke on behalf of all the people who shared his democratic ideals, failed to repeat on television the main slogans of his otherwise successful 1992 election campaign: "Young Bulgaria for Zhebyu Zhelev" and "Zhelev—the Power of United Opposition." Zhelev preferred to highlight his background as a dissident and a philosopher, a relatively soft and seemingly

ineffective rhetorical position. Similarly, during the next election cycle, Ivan Marazov emphasized his background as an academic. In the televised debates he used much longer sentences than his opponents, ignoring the fact that clear and concise phrases are more effective in public speaking, especially in politics and broadcasting. Not surprisingly, these statements failed to resonate with the voters: although Marazov and his capable running mate, Irina Bokova, survived into round two, they were soundly defeated in the runoff election by Petar Stoyanov and Todor Kavaldjiev, who won by a 3-to-2 margin.

Media Involvement in Presidential Debates

L. Raycheva insists that since 1990 the mass media in Bulgaria, particularly television companies, have managed to exercise a great influence on public opinion through their political reportage and by organizing election debates. In addition, of course, they broadcast video clips of the various candidates and cover their campaign speeches (Raycheva 1999, 2004, 2006). In that regard, it is true that the Bulgarian media market has evolved over the last twenty years: the role of the electronic media in Bulgarian society, in general, and political life, in particular, has increased. Consequently, their involvement in presidential election campaigns is growing.

At the start of the democratic era, Bulgaria operated only one television channel—the state-owned Bulgarian National Television—and only one radio station—the state-owned Bulgarian National Radio. But now there are a number of privately owned media, including bTV, Nova TV, 7TV, Balkan Bulgarian Television, and Europa Television, among others. Two of these television companies—specifically, bTV and NovaTV—and Darik Radio have become very well established, not only in the Bulgarian media market, but also in the Bulgarian political environment. As described above, the first presidential debates in 1992 were organized by the BNT, which at the time had preserved its monopoly over the media market.

Currently, the electronic media not only broadcast presidential and other political debates, they are active players in the process by which such debates are produced. Media managers, political advisers, and PR experts take part in the negotiations and negotiate contracts that cover a number of the elements that are essential to staging such events, not only the format, roles, and rules governing how the debates shall be run, but also broadcast copyrights, commercial partnerships, even contracts with the participants. Most commonly, debate moderators are chosen from among prominent analysts and political commentators from the nation's major print and electronic media (the only exception being Slavi Trifonov, a celebrity whose nightly talk show is clearly

differentiated from the social and cultural milieu normally associated with political debate.

Skill Levels of the Participants in Presidential Debates

The research shows that Bulgarian politicians involved in presidential debates have gradually improved their rhetorical skills, with several factors underpinning this progress. Generally speaking, the candidates came from different backgrounds, which affected their abilities to communicate with their audiences. Thus, during the debates they initially had to follow existing models of media behavior and public presentation and attempt to develop an effective speaking style befitting their personalities and their talents.

Of course, some of the candidates (for example, Zhelev, Valkanov, Beron, and Beronov) already possessed a certain amount of experience speaking in public and dealing with the media. Ganchev had studied rhetoric abroad, which undoubtedly was an advantage, although his performances were marked with such fervor that frequently they were perceived as too exaggerated and out of place, given the dire social and economic situation in Bulgaria. Siderov brought a certain amount of experience as a reporter and TV host, which allowed him to utilize certain rhetorical devices effectively. Stoyanov and Parvanov were experienced members of parliament, quite comfortable with speaking in public. Stoyanov and Valkanov, among others, were attorneys, so they had developed a certain level of oratorical expertise in their professional lives.

Parvanov holds a doctorate in history; together with his experience as a leader of the Socialists, his education undoubtedly helped him to improve his public performance skills. Whereas at the start of his 2001 election campaign Parvanov preferred to speak in public only to audiences of his supporters, eventually he managed to perfect his communication skills and began addressing his speeches to the general public—although at first, most probably feeling insecure, he had them taped and then broadcast on TV and radio.

Petar Stoyanov was the first candidate who delivered speeches effectively and who evolved into an adept political orator.

Over time, as people became more sophisticated, most of the candidates tried to minimize the level of confrontation and the use of ad hominem attacks during the debates. Accordingly, as the years passed, the tone of their rhetoric became noticeably less aggressive and less emotional; instead, the speakers became more moderate, relying more and more on providing comprehensive information to their audience. Parvanov's speech has become fluent, accompanied with gentle but effective gestures. Finally Stoyanov, Parvanov, and Siderov

succeeded in overcoming some shortcomings by taking expert advice. They gradually improved their personal style of political speaking, including the tone and quality of voice, appropriate gestures, posture and facial expressions, etc. In other words, the participants in presidential debates eventually achieved greater effectiveness. Most candidates understood that improved rhetorical skills were the key to building a positive political image.

Other candidates—such as Beronov, who entered politics after having retired from the bench—did not adapt their public behavior and never could improve their speaking skills sufficiently to succeed at this high level of political rhetoric. Rather, he came across as someone with a slow and monotonous speech style. Equally ineffective for other reasons, Siderov modeled his public speaking on other nationalist leaders in Europe, but his aggressive verbal behavior alienated voters who did not already agree with his political and social philosophy.

Media Professionals as the Participants in Presidential Debates

By way of contrast, all of the media personalities who moderated the debates possessed excellent communication skills. Some of them demonstrated genuine rhetorical competence, and on the whole they managed the debates correctly and effectively.

In addition, one should not ignore the significant role played by professionals in campaign management, political advertising, and public relations. Over the years they, too, have developed their competencies, taking advantage of the new opportunities provided by the new reality in the country and in Europe. They were active players in the negotiations needed to organize and schedule political debates, and they took part in preparing the necessary contracts between politicians, PR specialists, and media company managers. As such, they have learned to offer candidates excellent professional expertise.

Political rhetoric and campaign publicity are involved in a variety of ways in the political process that integrates the voter, the state, and civil society. Although pure oratory does not occupy a subordinate position vis-à-vis public relations, and there is no doubt regarding the significance of the rhetorical aspect in election campaigns. Nor is there much doubt that rhetorical practice and political PR are inter-related, perhaps even integrated, phenomena.

Presidential rhetoric, as we have defined it in this study, is not used solely in image-making election campaigns. Nor is it simply an instrument to promote the interests of specific presidential candidates or to advance the goals of the head of state. Rather, rhetoric is included (perhaps not effectively enough) in mass communication campaigns whose ultimate objective is the formation of

values regarding the institution of the presidency itself, in order to ensure that such values are widely shared within society.

Conclusions

We can conclude that presidential debates during election campaigns in Bulgaria represent a new kind of practice in modern Bulgarian political rhetoric. Debate formats have become clearer and stricter. The role of professional public relations experts has grown: such professionals serve not only as media coaches for their candidate, but they also play a key role in organizing and conducting the presidential debates.

In turn, candidates have come to appreciate the fact that successful participation in the debates could help them improve their personal political image. Accordingly, they have made the effort to change their style and their behavior, ultimately demonstrating rhetorical competence and good communication skills, both verbal and nonverbal.

A number of candidates for the office of president avoided participating in group debates, preferring one-on-one confrontations with their main rival in a format that focused on just two or three policy topics. By and large, participants in such face-to-face debates preferred a format that did not require them to answer impromptu questions from a live audience.

Finally, one can conclude that presidential messages, both during election campaigns and after one has successfully assumed the reins of power, are a powerful instrument for building the personal image of a political leader. They are an intrinsic element in the new political culture that has come to characterize the age of democratic change in Bulgaria.

Notes

1. In 1954 Todor Zhivkov was named secretary general of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party; from 1962 to 1971 he was also the prime minister; and in 1989 he became the chairman of the State Council, that is, he was the head of state and the leader of the upper chamber of Parliament. November 10, 1989, the day when Todor Zhivkov's resignation was accepted and Petar Mladenov was elected to the position of secretary general of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party and chairman of the State Council, marks the beginning of political, social, and economic reform in Bulgaria: the country turned from socialism to a free-market economy; a multiparty system was established; democratic parliamentary elections were held as well as presidential elections, elections for local government, etc.
2. Article 1 of the 1991 Constitution reads: "No . . . political party or other organization, government institution or individual, can usurp the execution of the people's sovereignty." The Constitution establishes three branches of government, private property is declared

inviolable, and provisions are made for the citizen's rights to be guaranteed, as well as Bulgaria's international commitments. This Constitution follows European democratic principles <http://www.parliament.bg/bg/const>.

3. Theoretically, someone could get elected by garnering at least "50% + 1" of the votes cast in round one. This did not happen until 2006, when incumbent President Georgi Parvanov won in a landslide, amassing nearly 65% of the vote. However, a runoff was held nonetheless, because fewer than half of the eligible voters participated in round one. As an English language version of the Bulgarian Constitution states, "To be elected, a candidate must have received more than one-half of the valid votes, provided that more than one-half of the eligible voters have participated in the polls. Should none of the candidates for President have been elected, a new election shall be held within seven days, and . . . said election shall be contested by the two candidates who have received the most votes." See: http://www.vks.bg/english/vksen_po4_01.htm#Chapter_Four.
4. Bulgarian National Television and Bulgarian National Radio (BNR) as public media are obliged to provide air time for debates every week (Article 11. i., Presidential Election Act). Prior to the first round of the election, BNT and BNR provide TV and radio time once per week for debates lasting 120 minutes (reduced to 90 minutes after 2007). The topics of the debates, ground rules, participation of candidates, and conditions for reconciling any disputes are negotiated by the Directors General of the BNT and the BNR together with supporters of the candidates for President and Vice President who have registered for the election. Following the first round, the surviving candidates are permitted to take part in debates lasting 90 minutes (reduced to 60 minutes after 2007). The topics of the debates and the rules are determined in accordance with Article 11.a. of the Presidential Election Act.
5. That website describes debates according to the following criteria: Date, Location, City, Time, Sponsor, Moderator, Topic, Viewership, and Format. Rules and requirements for holding presidential debates are also presented (Type of Debate, Hall Furniture/Stage Format, Selection of Questioners, Debate Topics, Debate Length, Opening and Closing Statements, Questions and Answers, Timing the Debate, Order of Speakers, etc.).
6. Citation at <http://www.randfonline.com/toc/wplm20/3/2>.
7. One week later, Darik Radio simulcast the televised debate between Stoyanov and Parvanov.
8. The confrontation between Parvanov and Beronov was characterized by the daily newspaper *Sega* ("Today") as a sparring match.
9. See, for instance, Vassilev (2005).
10. In 1992, Zhelev polled 44.66% the first round, Valkanov 30.44%, Ganchev 16.78%, with the remaining 19 candidates amassing only 8.12% of the total vote.
11. In 1996, Stoyanov polled 44.07%, Marazov 27.01%, Ganchev 21.87%, with the remaining 11 candidates amassing only 7.05% of the total vote.

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