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Discrimination Issue Toward the Turkish Minority in Bulgaria in the Post-1989 Era

1989 Sonrası Dönemde Bulgaristan'daki Türk Azınlığına Yönelik Ayrımcılık Sorunu

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Abstract

Minorities are vulnerable populations that can often be subjected to oppression, assimilation, and discrimination within their countries. The term minorities, as used here, refer to groups that are fewer in number, non-dominant, and have characteristics than differ from the majority in a country. This study aims to analyze the Turkish minority in Bulgaria with respect to the issue of discrimination in the post-communist period, the period after 1989. The framework of discrimination was used to involve legal, economic, and cultural discrimination. As for the methodology, the study relied on in-depth interviews in Bulgaria, based on snowball sampling. In addition, relevant secondary data was also used as needed. The findings of the study show that a certain degree of progress has been made in the positions of the Turkish minority in the post-communist period, but the minority still suffers some degree of legal, economic, and cultural discriminations. Certain suggestions have also identified to overcome the issue of discrimination in concluding the study.

Keywords: Turkish Minority in Bulgaria, Bulgarian Turks, Minority Issues, Minorities At Risk, Discrimination.

Öz

Azınlıklar, ülkeleri içinde sıklıkla baskı, asimilasyon ve ayrımcılığa maruz kalabilen savunmasız topluluklardır. Burada kullanıldığı şekliyle azınlıklar terimi, sayıca daha az olan, baskın olmayan ve bir ülkedeki çoğunluktan farklı özelliklere sahip grupları ifade etmektedir. Bu çalışma, 1989 sonrası dönemde Bulgaristan'da yaşayan ve ülke nüfusunun en az %10'unu oluşturan Türk azınlığın durumunu,

ayrımcılık sorunu bağlamında irdelemeyi ve değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Ayrımcılık sorunu, yasal, ekonomik ve kültürel olmak üzere üçlü bir çerçevede ele alınmış ve söz konusu çerçeve Bulgaristan'daki Türk azınlığın durumuna uyarlanmıştır. Metodoloji bağlamında çalışma, kartopu yöntemi temelinde azınlık temsilcileri ve diğer ilgililerle Bulgaristan'da yapılan yüz-yüze derinlemesine görüşmelere dayanmıştır. Bunun yanı sıra, konu ile alakalı yazılı ve görsel kaynaklar da ikincil veri olarak kullanılmıştır. Çalışma bulguları, komünizm dönemine göre Bulgaristan'daki Türklerin durumunda belirgin iyileşmeler olduğunu, ancak yine de, temel bir Avrupa Birliği ilkesi de olan ayrım gözetmeme (non-discrimination) ilkesinin yeterince yaşama geçirilemediğini, Türk azınlığın 1989 sonrası dönemde de değişik düzeylerde yasal, ekonomik ve kültürel ayrımcılığa maruz kaldığını göstermektedir. Söz konusu sorunlar çalışmada ayrıntılı olarak ele alınmış ve bunların aşılması noktasında bir takım önerilere de yer verilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bulgaristan'daki Türk Azınlık, Bulgaristan Türkleri, Azınlık Sorunları, Risk Altındaki Azınlıklar, Ayrımcılık.

Introduction

It is an undeniable fact that no country in the world has a completely homogeneous population. Expressing slightly differently, every country has at least one minority group because of natural diversity in its population and because of wars, natural disasters, invasions, and so on, causing massive migration. In any case, minorities are vulnerable populations that can often be subjected to oppression, assimilation, and discrimination within their countries. Sociologically, it refers to groups that are fewer in number, non-dominant, and have characteristics than differ from the majority in a country. It is generally accepted in the literature that minority groups should differ from the majority in terms of one or more of language, religion/sect, or ethnic origin. (Pazarcı, 2018, p. 74). The following section will further explain that term.

As minorities face discriminations, oppression and assimilation, minority rights have long been considered as part of human rights. Therefore, the prohibition of mishandle and mismanagement of minority rights have been worded in many human rights-related documents. As expressed, the "principle of non-discrimination" requires that any right set forth by legislation shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status." (Petricusıc, 2005, pp. 1-23,5-6). Besides as expressed by a UN Report, "although principles of equality and non-discrimination are firmly rooted in binding international standards, racial discrimination and lack of adequate protection of minorities remain a widespread challenge in most regions of the world." (Guidance Note of the Seceratary, 2014, p.3). This undeniable situation causes many difficulties for minorities in their daily life. Its humanitarian sensitivity means that the minority problem is rarely off the world agenda.

Regarding Turkish Minorities in Bulgaria, it is outcome of the First and Second World Wars. The borders of Balkan countries were delineated based on power sharing after, the structure of populations was not taken into consideration. In Bulgaria, the Turkish minority comprises at least 10% its population of eight million. From the 1950s until 1989, when Bulgaria's communist administration collapsed, its Turkish minority suffered enormous pressure, such that its ethnic identity was denied, and the Communist Party attempted to assimilate it. After the regime change in late 1989, the situation partially improved, especially once

Bulgaria decided to become a European Union (EU) member state. It started to take more concrete steps that in terms of human rights and minority rights within a very basic EU principle of non-discrimination. Accordingly, Bulgaria also ratified the European Convention on Human Rights on 7 September 1992. These developments cleared the way for EU membership in 2007, which was recorded as a crowning Bulgaria's democratization and transition to the rule of law.

Bulgaria's abandonment of communism and its turn towards the EU target undoubtedly brought positive developments that cannot be ignored for the Turks to exercise their minority rights. Likewise, since EU membership necessitates harmonization of Bulgarian law with EU law, it is logical to think that that there is no longer a critical minority problem in Bulgaria – as Bulgarian officials often state.

However, is this really the case? Is there no longer a Turkish minority problem in Bulgaria, which is integrated with the EU? Alternatively, is Bulgaria's Turkish minority exposed to different policies of oppression and discrimination that are not as sharp as during the communist regime, but still make themselves obvious? In other words, to what extent has the principle of non-discrimination actually realized in Bulgaria? To address these research questions, this study focused on the Turkish minority living in Bulgaria since 1989, based on some face-to-face interviews, as well as relevant secondary data.

To evaluate the post-1989 period more systematically, this article begins with a brief theoretical review of ethnic identity, minority rights, and discrimination concepts to address the status and rights of the Turks living in Bulgaria. Then a summary of the aforementioned period will attempt to be explained. Afterwards, the emphasis will be on discussing and evaluating the focus period, based on an analysis of the primary and secondary data. Many dispute resolution strategies to ease ethnic tension and to foster social peace will also be tried to come up with in concluding the study.

A Brief Theoretical Review of Ethnic Identity, Minority Rights and Discrimination

Minority rights are clearly based on social identity theory, which tries to explain that people are motivated to develop and maintain social identities, including ethnic identity, that are positive but that clearly set their groups apart from other groups. (Zbarauskaite, Grigutyte and Gailience, 2015, pp. 121-130) This formulates why an ethnic

group in minority position can differentiate itself from major group in a society and insisting on maintaining its original ethnic identity. Bearing in the mind that ethnic identity is not a uniform construction, as various ideas, norms, values, culture, preferences, historical, social and religious dynamics have certain role in progress at ethnic identity.

Actually, ethnic identity narrates how persons interpret and understand their ethnicity and their degree of identification with their ethnic group (Phiney, 1996, pp. 918-927) and is based on cultural traditions and values that are usually transmitted across generations (Zbarauskaite, Grigutyte and Gailience, 2015, pp. 121-130). Therefore, the progress of ethnic identity is deemed as a course of the building of identity over time, owing to a sense of belonging to an ethnic group (Phinney and Ong, 2007: as cited in Zbarauskaite, Grigutyte and Gailience, 2015).

Regarding the definition of minority term, there is no consensus on a clear definition of the term minority. As expressed sociologically, it refers to groups that are fewer in number, non-dominant, and have characteristics than differ from the majority in a country. It is generally accepted in the literature that minority groups should differ from the majority in terms of one or more of language, religion/sect, or ethnic origin (Pazarcı, 2018, p.74). Within this framework, the United Nations Special Rapporteur On Minorities, Francesco Capotorti, defines a minority as "a group of people who are few in number compared to the rest of the population of a state, differing from the rest of the population with their characteristics such as ethnic, religious or language" (United Nations Human Rights Office of Head Commissioner, 2010). Furthermore, some scholars hesitate to use the minority term as it refers to notorious international politics of 1920s and 1930s constructed by League of Nations pioneered by France and England. So community group and society terms are sometimes preferred instead of minority.

Coming to discrimination term, it can be described as the violation of the basic principle that all individuals should be treated equally in the same circumstances (Oudhof, 2007, p. 9). Besides, discrimination also contains acting in a different way toward individuals based on their membership in a social group. The term refers to behaving in a biased or demeaning manner (Kitle and Whitley, 2010: as cited in Zbarauskaite, Grigutyte and Gailience, 2015).

Regarding the evaluation of discrimination, scholars attempt to illustrate it many ways. For example, Craig summarises (Craig, 2005) the assessment of discrimination by four essential elements:

1) an individual or group is in comparison, treated or affected differently than the comparator, 2) the difference is disadvantageous to the individual or group, 3) the difference in treatment or effect is causally linked to a characteristic of the individual or group protected by antidiscrimination legislation, and 4) there is no exception or justification permitting the difference in treatment or effect (as cited in Oudhof, 2007). Discrimination can be implemented in various ways: 1) directly or indirectly, depending on the criteria causing different outcomes; and 2) culpable or systemic, depending on the possibility to assign responsibility (Olli and Olsen, 2005: as cited in Oudhof, 2007).

The policy of non-discrimination embraces the rights of minorities to equality before the law and equal access to public services without impeding by any excuse. It also contains essential freedoms of expression, association and assembly, movement and freedoms for the protection and promotion of identities and cultures of minorities Those policies also include the right to information in preferred language, the right to hold religious beliefs of own choice. (Ravnbol, 2010). As understood, the non-discrimination principles contain a large variety of rights and freedoms for minorities that are virtually narrated for human being as part of human rights.

Considering human development progress, the minority issue has been a part of the debate in most post-conflicts negotiations since the 17th century. However, the early emphasis was largely on the protection of the rights of religious minorities, as religious identity was more evident at that time. However, with the spread of nationalism in the 19th century, all major congresses (Vienna (1814-15), Paris (1856) and Berlin (1878) contained the rights and security of people remained in the borders of states (Sigler, 1983) because of the newly identified territorial boundaries (as cited in Petricusıc, 2005). Therefore, contemporary minority rights and their security issues evolved from the consequences of inter-states conflicts in the 19th century. Not de-emphasizing previous progresses, the Treaty of Versailles, after the First World War, was the first international treaty that systematically encompassed the minority protection and rights in history since three empires were disbanded at end of the First of World War and millions of people were relocated because of that (Petricusıc, 2005). This created huge minority problems which needed to be tackled. Indeed, Bulgarian Turks became a minority population when peace treaties were signed after First World War.

The First World War demonstrated that a new world order must be established and maintained based on peace and justice in accordance with the U.S. President Wilson's "Fourteen Principles", proclaimed after the World ended. The Pact of the League of Nations agreed at the Versailles Treaty, centred on Wilson Principles, contained no provisions regarding human rights, however, it incorporated two relating systems of mandates and of minorities (Petricusıc, 2005). However, the League failed to constitute a minority system for the inter-war period as major powers, France and Britain, mismanaged and exploited the League for their national interests. They mishandled to protect the minority rights and security as well as mandate system.

Overall, until the Second World War, human rights issue was not virtually accepted in international politics; therefore, minority rights and non-discrimination policies were also not considered as universal rights like today's meaning (Petricusıc, 2005). During the Second World War, war atrocities toward human being led to the acceptance of human rights, which also encompassed the minority rights. The UN and its sub agencies further progressed the minority rights and non-discrimination policies in many binding international documents.

In this regard, the principles of equality and non-discrimination are included in the UN Charter that highlights respect for human rights and in the fundamental freedoms for all. These principles have been further progressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in all core international human rights treaties, such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), as well as in regional instruments. For example, the Article 5 ICERD provides a list of specified civil and political rights, as well as economic, social, and cultural rights that the state must ensure non-discrimination and equality for racial/ethnic groups (Ravnbol, 2010). Additionally, the articles 26 and 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) and International Standards and Guidance for Implementation, OHCHR, 2010 also identify principles for non-discrimination (Guidance Note of the Secretary, 2014)

The Period Before 1989: Identity Conflict and Historical Background

Although EU data show that the Turkish minority population in Bulgaria is about 800,000-850,000, it is estimated that the real population of the Turkish minority is much higher due to the assimilation policies

pursued during communist rule. Turkish sources generally suggest 1-1.5 million (Bal-Göç, 2020).

Although these figures are disputed, the Turkish minority is clearly Bulgaria's largest minority community, corresponding to at least 10% of the population. Historically, its size has been a source of perception by the Bulgarian state. Moreover, considering that the Turkish minority were exposed to large-scale assimilation policies before the 1990s, this percentage was unquestionably much higher in the past.

Although there are different theories regarding the ethnic origin of the Bulgarians, a generally accepted thesis is that they came to the region with Atilla Huns. Despite this Turkic origin, Bulgarians had adopted Slavic culture by the sixth century following long exposure (Kafesoğlu, 1985; Karatay, 2018). Thus, Bulgarian ethnic identity has crystallized around a Slavic language and Christianity, which gave it an ethnocentric structure against other groups.

Social identities are realities that are not inherent; rather, they are socially constructed through socialization and idealization as individuals develop but becoming resistant to change once they form (Rayner, 2005). Research on human development indicates that individuals are born without consciousness or ethnic identity (Cote, 2006). Instead, ethnic identity is shaped by socialization, which is the sum of the social interactions experienced throughout childhood. Therefore, the factors affecting the formation of ethnic identity may also vary (Özçelik, 2016, pp. 143-167). While some social circles that shape the individual may prioritize lineage or blood bonds, for example, others can emphasize common language, culture, or history (Jenkins, 2004). Generally, blood ties are more common sources of identity in traditional societies whereas a common language, interests, and togetherness are more determinant in industrialized societies.

However, no matter how it is shaped, once ethnic identity is formed, it certainly becomes extremely rigid and resistant to change. Although an exchange of ethnic identity is possible theoretically, this does not happen as much as for other social identities, apart from exceptional cases.

The main reason why ethnic identity is so rigid lies in the strong psychological bond between identity and the (Öğretir, 2017, pp. 2151-2164). This bond, which emerges out of development and socialization with close family ties, is quite difficult to change as it meets the

individual's needs for belonging and identity, security, and sense of liking. Thus, the success of one's ethnic group is often perceived as a personal success while group failure can be painful as personal failure (Fenton, Ethnicity, 2003).

While ethnic identity is a natural and universal phenomenon, it is not a direct source of conflict. Otherwise, the world's thousands of different ethnic groups would be in constant struggle with one another only on the basis of difference. Nevertheless, any ethnic group tends to see others who do not belong more or less as a threat. While this is less felt in highly industrialized, democratic societies, it can manifest itself more clearly in developing societies. The consequence for minorities is exposure to the dominant group's pressure and assimilation policies (Özçelik, 2020, pp. 42-46).

Bulgaria's situation is not very unusual either. In the 11th and 12th centuries, an identity conflict emerged between Turks, who began to migrate to Bulgaria, and Bulgarians who identified themselves as a different social identity, despite their Turkish origin. While there was no major physical conflict, it created psychological barriers between the two communities. Turkish and Bulgarian groups preferred to live in separate villages or regions, or separate neighborhoods in large urban settlements. Language and religion, and identity and culture formed on the basis of this difference, while minimizing interaction between the two communities (Crampton, 1997).

As Bulgarian territory came under the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the 14th century, more Turkish people were sent to Bulgaria under Ottomanization policies. This time, the community which defined itself as Bulgarian, became generally dominated by other groups despite being more populous in their regions. Consequently, Bulgarians, who remained under Ottoman rule for almost five centuries, perceived this period as a great threat to their social identities. Although they did not experience a collective historical trauma. Therefore, after Bulgaria gained its independence towards the end of the 19th century, its nation building was inevitably shaped by Ottoman and Turkish opposition (Karpat, 2004; Kut, 2005). Its Turkish population was forced to emigrate under various pressures while those who could not immigrate faced assimilation.

However, the real break happened in the bipolar international system that emerged after the Second World War when Bulgaria joined the Eastern Bloc led by the Soviet Union. More precisely, this was the result

of occupation by the Soviet Union army, which actually controlled most of the Balkans after the war. As part of the US-led Western Bloc, Turkey was unable to protect the Turkish minority in Bulgaria because any such steps could upset the relationship between the two blocs. Because Bulgaria realized that Turkey could not take action alone out of fear of starting a global war, it continued to violate the human rights of its Turkish minority.

After the Second World War, the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP), which emerged from the merger of the Bulgarian Workers' Party and the Workers' Social Democratic Party, took power, with the obvious support of the Soviet Union and without any political opposition power. From the beginning, BCP tried to strengthen the regime and was careful not to create any social unrest. However, in the 1970s, following serious economic hardship and political turmoil, BCP and its leader, Tudor Jivkov, adopted a policy of creating a single nation based on absolute obedience. Pomak and Romany names were replaced by Bulgarian names, whereas the names of Bulgaria's Greeks, Armenians, and Jews were not touched because they were not perceived as threatening BCP's one-nation politics since they were few and not regarded as very different to the Bulgarian language and religion (Demirtaş Coşkun, 2001).

In the 1980s, the Bulgarian administration started to target Turks, who were regarded as the main threat, with various human rights violations, particularly by forcibly changing Turkish names, a ban on speaking Turkish, the closure of mosques, and preventing people from fulfilling religious duties, such as funerals or (Alp, 1990;Atasoy, 2011). The Bulgarian administration even argued that Turks were Bulgarians who had been forcibly Turkified during Ottoman rule (Lütem, 2000). Surprisingly, these justifications for a policy of assimilation did not find a response among Bulgarian Turks while the initiatives were considered 'understandable', especially by some anti-Turkish circles who do not know about the international context. In contrast, Turkey was very disturbed and complained about the violations at many international governmental organizations, such as the United Nations the Arab League, and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. However, Turkey mostly could not get the support it wanted (Sönmezoğlu, 2006).

One success was the closure in 1987 of Belene Camp, which was notorious for holding political prisoners, due to political pressure from Europe after Turkish escapees informed the European public about

what was happening there. In 1989, international pressure finally forced the Bulgarian administration to allow its Turkish minority to emigrate and Prime Minister Turgut Ozal ordered Turkey's border gates with Bulgaria to be open to them. About 350,000 emigrated to Turkey in one year, particularly during the summer of 1989 while smaller numbers scattered across various European countries.

After this first large wave of migration, the remaining Turkish community in Bulgaria was almost a headless body because most of the emigrants had been an intellectual and well-educated group (Özlem, 2019). Leadership is the key success factor at any kind of structure, organization, or business (Koçak, 2020). It took a long time for new intellectuals to emerge among Bulgaria's remaining Turks, which enabled the Bulgarian administration to take advantage with further assimilation policies. Nevertheless, despite these emigration and assimilation policies, Bulgaria's Turkish community did not disappear and was able to survive, even under the most difficult conditions. Today, it still comprises at least 10% of Bulgaria's population, concentrated in Sofia, Shumen, Kardzhali, Plovdiv, and Dobruca. In addition, there are Tatars and Gagauz minorities, who are close relatives of Turks within the Turkic identity.

Discrimination against Bulgaria's Turkish Minority Since 1989

After communism collapsed in Bulgaria in 1989 and BCP, led by Todor Jivkov, lost power, improvements started in human rights and minority rights. Firstly, the suppression of fundamental rights and freedoms was abandoned, with the 1991 Bulgarian Constitution guaranteeing human rights and including mechanisms to prevent infringement. Bulgaria also became a party to many international human rights treaties, joining the Council of Europe in 1992, ratifying the European Convention on Human Rights on September 7, 1992, and signing the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities on October 11, 1997. More importantly, Bulgaria demonstrated its intention to integrate with Western Europe and the EU as soon as possible by harmonizing its local legislation with EU legislation to comply with the EU acquis in line with the Copenhagen criteria. Minority rights in Bulgaria, which the EU commission issued various warnings about from 1998 to 2005, reached international standards, at least on a legal level. Indeed, the EU Commission's report on Bulgaria on September 26, 2006, before it became an EU member, appreciated the reforms. The report concluded that Bulgaria had complied sufficiently with the EU's

political, economic, and legal Copenhagen criteria to be granted EU membership on January 1, 2007 (Semra, 2007).

Today, approximately 30 years have passed since the transition to multi-party democratic political life in Bulgaria and thirteen years have passed since it gained EU membership. In general, the Turkish minority's situation in Bulgaria has undeniably improved significantly compared to the communist period. For example, the Turks' Rights and Freedoms Movement has gained a place in Bulgarian political life, non-native speakers of Bulgarian now have the right to education in their own language, Turkish broadcasting is allowed, and a partial liberalization of religious activities has begun. On the other hand, face-to-face meetings with Turkish minority leaders and other interested parties living in Bulgaria reveal that the Turkish minority still faces various structural or practical problems. These problems are mainly related to discrimination and can be summarized under three main headings: legal, economic, and cultural discrimination.

Legal Discrimination

The most obvious form of discrimination is legal, referring to the lack of equal rights and opportunities for minority groups in front of the law or within the political system. This can be manifested as restrictions in public services, on the right to vote and being elected, and not receiving equal citizen status in general in the public sphere (Yılmaz, Ethnic Conflicts in the Post Cold War Era, 2007).

Although Bulgaria's 1991 constitution and subsequent legislation prohibits any legal discrimination and grants equal rights to all Bulgarian citizens before the law, the implementation is different. First, no regulation recognizing Turks as a minority. Although the administration justifies this by providing equal rights to everyone, it does not grant sufficient minority rights. Furthermore, it inevitably exposes the Turkish minority to the decisions and actions of the Bulgarian majority.

The minor reference is made in Paragraph 2 of Article 36 of the Constitution of Bulgaria about Bulgarian citizens whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian. However, this does not help the Turkish minority because it does not mention anything about minority group rights, when the essence of minority rights is to give them to minority groups and apply them consistently. This is not the case in Bulgaria as seen in the difficulties Turks experience in gaining parliamentary representation.

The second main problem is that Turks face serious practical difficulties in gaining equality before the law. Bulgarians are preferred for recruitment to public services while Turks especially are blocked under various pretexts from jobs in critical public services, such as security, intelligence, the judiciary, and military service. This status of Turkish Minority in Bulgaria entirely bears a resemblance of the situation expressed in the UN report, which is about the discrimination of minorities in the world. The report states that in most cases minorities are in a non-dominant position, some minorities are systematically marginalized and excluded from decision-making and receive little or no support to improve their situation (Guidance Note of the Secretary, 2014). So, Turkish Minorities have been marginalized and excluded from decision making. They have receives little support to ameliorate their life.

The principle of equality before the law and non-discrimination in recruitment to public services only applies to non-critical, low-level public service posts. The Bulgarian authorities respond to international criticism and pressure by denying that there is any discrimination in law. As evidence, they point to examples like the governor of Razgrad, Günay Hüsmen, who was appointed despite being from the Turkish minority. However, discrimination occurs, not due to the law itself, but because it is not properly applied according to its intention. Symbolic appointments like Hüsmen's cannot obscure the everyday, practical discrimination faced by Bulgaria's Turkish minority. This situation also against EU legislation system regarding the discrimination polices.

Economic Discrimination

Economic discrimination can be achieved by allowing minority groups a smaller share of the national income, forcing them to work in labor-intensive jobs, denying them the conditions needed for their economic progress, and turning their regional resources to national resources dominated by central groups (Fenton and Bradley, Ethnicity and Economy: Race and Class Revisited, 2002).

In Bulgaria, unemployment in areas with dense Turkish minority populations is disproportionately high due to a lack of investment. For example, before Bulgaria gained EU membership, unemployment for Turks and Pomaks was 35-38% but up to 55% among those living in the rural areas of Eastern and Western Rhodopes (Özlem, 2019). Although this improved somewhat after Bulgaria became a full EU member, unemployment among the Turkish minority is still very high, although

net figures are not available. A significant proportion of Turkish Bulgarians earn their living in mountainous areas, mainly through tobacco production, agriculture, and small-scale animal husbandry. Widespread poverty is immediately apparent in rural areas where Turks live intensely. Some young people migrate to cities to break the poverty spiral but still find themselves working in low-wage, labor-intensive jobs, which ultimately prevents them from escaping poverty. Since Bulgaria joined the EU, better qualified Turkish workers have migrated to more developed Western European countries. Although this has raised income levels somewhat, it also created a problem of a lack of qualified workers within the community. A person in Bulgaria, for example, mentioned that he had to wait months for a simple roof repair. Meanwhile, the authorities use EU funds sent to improve Bulgaria's economy for the places highly populated by ethnic Bulgarians, thereby denying the Turkish population its equitable share of these improvements (Özlem, 2019, pp. 323-324).

Cultural Discrimination

Finally, there is cultural discrimination, which can be expressed by excluding a minority group's culture or providing insufficient living space for minority culture (Yılmaz, 2007, p.14). While the exclusion of the minority culture is more implicit, the lack of a living space for the culture in question may manifest itself more clearly.

Both versions of cultural discrimination exist for the Turkish minority in Bulgaria. The persons we talked in Bulgaria claimed that Turkish culture was either implicitly or explicitly humiliated by Bulgarians and considered backward for not complying with the requirements of modern life. Inevitably, therefore, many Turks are excluded from popular social activities while prejudice about the Turkish minority is common.

The second kind of cultural discrimination, namely insufficient living space for local Turkish culture, creates a difficult situation for Bulgarian Turks. The most serious problem is education in Turkish. While Turks in Bulgaria earlier gained the right to study Turkish, the proportion of courses taught in Turkish was reduced to one third in the 1951-1952 academic year while Turkish and Bulgarian schools were combined. In 1959, Turkish minority schools were completely closed while Turkish was reduced to one hour per week as an elective course. By 1974, Turkish education was completely terminated (Özlem, 2019, p. 313).

Since the collapse of the Jivkov administration, mother-tongue education has improved somewhat. For example, in 1991, four hours per week of Turkish was allowed in regions with dense Turkish populations. Then, the 1991 National Education Law included Turkish in the elective curriculum. However, demand was suppressed because the four hours of Turkish lessons per week were only offered on weekends or outside normal school hours. In addition, students taking Turkish lessons were not allowed choose a second foreign language lesson. That is, Turkish was presented as a foreign language for Bulgaria's Turkish minority (Özlem, 2019, p. 314).

The Paragraph 5 of Article 53 of Bulgaria's 1991 Constitution stipulates that natural and legal persons have the right to open private schools under the conditions set by the law. However, while some private schools have opened with financial support from the government, no Turkish minority schools have opened in this way. Although Bulgarian officials claim that this is because Turkish minority youth are not sufficiently interested in Turkish, this does not convince the Turkish minority. Rather, Bulgarian Turks think that the Sofia administration consciously minimizes their rights to learning their mother tongue, and therefore they face cultural discrimination on this point.

Another aspect of cultural discrimination is Turkish-language publications and the media. Although the communist era legal ban on Turkish-language broadcasting has been lifted, there is a serious gap in its implementation. Thus, while even small minority groups in Bulgaria publish national newspapers, there are currently no Turkish equivalents. Yet, the Bulgarian Turks have quite a rich media history. For example, between 1878 and 1939, there were 132 newspapers and 18 magazines (Özlem, 2019, p. 319).

In the post-Jivkov period, on the situation for periodicals has partially improved. For example, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms started to publish a mixed Turkish/Bulgarian publication called Rights and Freedom. However, Bulgarian gradually predominated until the publication was terminated. Turkish Bulgarians launched two other publications, Işık and Güven, but they did not survive for long due to economic reasons.

Currently, there are several Turkish-language periodicals, such as Kırcaali Haber newspaper, Alev, Mosaic, and Muslims magazines (the latter is the official publication of the Chief Mufti's Office of Bulgarian Muslims). However, they are far from meeting the needs of the Turkish

population and have a small circulation compared to the minority's population.

Regarding broadcasting, Bulgaria has no Turkish-language television channels. In 2000, during its EU application process, Bulgaria started broadcasting in Turkish on the state television channel BNT1 every weekday between 16.00-16.10. However, ultra-nationalist circles could not tolerate this, and it was stopped in 2009 after a nationwide campaign.

Conclusion

The situation of Bulgaria's Turkish minority, analyzed here within the framework of tripartite discrimination, is an ongoing example of an at-risk minority group. Undoubtedly, after the communist regime collapsed, the rights of this minority improved while the efforts of the Bulgarian government are worthy of appreciation, whether or not they were motivated by gaining EU membership. However, there is still significant discrimination against Bulgarian Turks at different levels.

As a full EU member, Bulgaria, sees no major minority rights problems. Officials claim that Bulgaria has harmonized its domestic law with EU law in line with the Copenhagen criteria, particularly regarding legal discrimination. However, the real problem exists in practice. The persons we talked in Bulgaria argued that the most prominent problem was not being accepted in critical public posts, such as police officers, and judges. Turkish minority citizens are not clearly preferred for these occupations and Bulgarian officials make excuses for this. Therefore, it seems that main problem is not legal but how laws are applied. While some individuals inevitably make mistakes or act maliciously, the state itself must act fairly as this is its main source of legitimacy. Unfortunately, there is strong evidence of systematic legal discrimination. If the Bulgarian state wishes to become a respected member of the family of civilized, democratic nations, then it has to take measures quickly to tackle ethnic discrimination in public employment.

As for economic discrimination, the poverty of the Turkish minority is caused by structural problems that prevent them from integrating with the system. Ethnic identity is, of course, also a value. However, research shows that communities with low welfare are more likely to turn to themselves as they face the risk of exclusion by the majority, which inevitably brings with it the problem of ethnocentrism,

namely intra-group favoritism and external (Burton, 1990; Öğretir and Özçelik, 2008). Within the same logic, as welfare improves, inter-communal relations and harmony develop, tolerance increases, and the integration of minority groups into the system also increases (Horowitz, 1985). Therefore, Bulgaria's investment policies should focus on its poorer populations with dense Turkish communities. If the Bulgarian authorities try to improve the economic conditions of its Turkish minority, it will enable greater social cohesion and peace.

Cultural discrimination, as mentioned above, often refers to widespread social practices that are not as obvious as legal and economic discrimination, but involve implicit structural violence (Galtung, 1990). This is a serious problem that creates significant psychological barriers between ethnic groups, thereby preventing them from living in harmony. Moreover, its penetration into popular culture and its manifestation in the form of common social practices can make it difficult to understand and address the problem. However, as long as cultural discrimination continues, it is not possible to talk about complete peace in society. Peace is not just the absence of physical violence. A positive sense of peace entails that people live in harmony and cooperation, view each other and act accordingly (Fitz-Gibbon, 2010). Conversely, the spread of aggressive, revisionist tendencies against dominant groups or the system by minorities subjected to serious cultural discrimination is also frequently encountered. However, a series of steps are possible to combat cultural discrimination and consolidate inter-communal harmony, such as problem-solving meetings, inter-communal diplomacy events, community festivals (Yılmaz, Interactive Problem Solving in Intercommunal Conflicts, 2005).

All these types of discriminations appear to be, at least to a certain degree, violations of the UN Charter that highlights respect for human rights and of the fundamental freedoms for all. Those attitudes and prejudices are also the violation of the principles progressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the rights expressed at the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD); International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) and International Standards and Guidance for Implementation, OHCHR, 2010.

In conclusion, despite the positive steps taken in Bulgaria in the post-communist period, its Turkish minority remains risk and

continues to be exposed to various levels of legal, economic, and cultural discrimination. This is a serious contradiction for Bulgaria, having joined the EU since it requires clear implementation of non-discrimination against minorities. Bulgaria must definitely obey EU rules while Bulgarian officials should take more effective steps to eliminate discrimination and show an awareness of being a nation with differences in accordance with the requirements of the 21st century, rather than perceiving differences as a threat.

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Sadıkov, Hayri. Personal Interview, 29 July 2019, Madan, Bulgaria.

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