

Bulgaria

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Bulgaria is considered a non-democracy from 1919 to 1945. Bulgaria is a monarchy at the time. Boris III, House of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha (Morby 2002), ruled as Tsar of Bulgaria from 1918 until 1943. Bulgaria joined the Axis powers in World War II, maintaining its territorial integrity and sovereignty. In 1943 Boris III died suddenly and, according to Archigos, his brother Prince Kyril took over as Regent. This is not a SOLS change since they are from the same dynasty. (Note: US Library of Congress tells a different story: “In the summer of 1943, Boris died suddenly at age 49, leaving a three-man regency ruling for his six-year-old son, Simeon. Because two of the three regents were figureheads, Prime Minister Bogdan Filov, the third regent, became de facto head of state in this makeshift structure.” By our rules, we go with Archigos.)

In September 1944 the Soviets invaded Bulgaria. Five days later, the Fatherland Front coalition “four communists, five members of Zveno, two social democrats, and four agrarians” (US Library of Congress) carried out a bloodless coup d’état and Kimon Georgiev Stoyanov of the Mil/Zveno Peoples’ League/Fatherland Front (Mil/NSZ/OF) became Prime Minister. Geddes codes a single-party regime starting in 1944. This is a SOLS change. He ruled through 1945. From 1945 to 1989 Bulgaria lived under a totalitarian state, ruled by a single-party, the Communist Party. This country experienced a transition to a democratic regime in 1990 and since then it can be considered democratic. Cheibub et al. code Bulgaria as a mixed parliamentary-presidential regime and Archigos codes the prime minister as the effective ruler.

From 1944 to 1946, after the Second World War, Bulgaria was ruled by Kimon Georgiev. “Georgiev headed the first and the second Fatherland Front governments and laid the groundwork for the establishment of the totalitarian state that was to be in existence until 1989” (Cook 2001, 441).

Dimitrov was also part of the Fatherland Front and directed communist activities in Bulgaria. In April 1945, he returned to the country to lead the Communist Party. In September 1946, a national election and a referendum were held in Bulgaria to decide the Premier and whether the monarchy was to be abolished or not. The result was a clear vote against the monarchy and in favor of the Communist Party. As a result, Dimitrov was elected as a Prime Minister and Georgiev was appointed as foreign minister and vice president. This change is not a SOLS change because Dimitrov like Georgiev was backed by the Communist Party. According to Geddes the single-party regime was in place already.

After Dimitrov there were several premiers and all belonged to the Bulgarian Communist Party. Finally, in 1989, Zhikov was removed from power and replaced by Mladenov, also of the BKP. During this time change towards democracy started to take place and multi-party elections were held in 1990. The BKP competed and won under its new name, Bulgarian Socialist Party. Lukanov of the BSP became Prime Minister. These are not SOLS changes since the same party is in charge.

A general strike in the country due to a severe economic crisis forced Lukanov to resign. “A coalition in December 1990 between the BSP (Bulgarian Socialist Party) and the opposition Union of Democratic Forces (SDS) formed a new government headed by a nonpartisan lawyer, Dimitar Popov” (Cook 2001, 166). This period was considered as an interim government (Stone 2002, p. 210 and Pop-Eleches 2009, p. 219). Thus, the change from Lukanov to Popov is not a SOLS change.

In 1991, the first fully democratic elections were held and the SDS won and formed a government headed by Filip Dimitrov as Prime Minister. This is a SOLS because Dimitrov belonged to a different party than Lukanov and ends the dominance of the Communist Party. Dimitrov tried to implement structural reforms as the IMF and the World Bank demand; however, he was unsuccessful in this goal and at the end of 1992, the National Assembly passed a motion of no confidence against him. In December 1992, he was replaced by Ljuben Berov, a nonpartisan technocrat as Prime Minister. Europa World Yearbook (2004, 907), Berov had acted as an adviser to president Zhelov and his appointment was resisted by Dimitrov's SDS. Berov's government may be seen as a caretaker government that was supposed to overcome a deep economic crisis. However, as Berov's government lasted longer than 18 months, his government's entry was coded as a SOLS change.

Berov also was unable to improve the economic situation of the country. He stayed in office until September 1994 when due to the crisis he resigned. As a result, a caretaker government, headed by Reneta Indjova, took office (Cook 2001, 167; Knight et. al. 2004, 297) (no SOLS change) until new elections were held. This election took place in December 1994, and the BSP (i.e. the former Communists) won, and in February 1995 Zhan Videnov became Prime Minister. Conversely, the change from Indjova to Videnov is a SOLS because Videnov belonged to a different party than Dimitrov.

The Videnov government was also unable to implement successful economic reforms, and because of a bank crisis, strikes, and mass protests, Videnov was forced to resign in April 1997. He was followed by another caretaker government headed by the conservative SDS's leader Stefan Sofianski (Cook 2001, 167; A Political Chronology of Europe 2001, 60). Sofianski called for elections for April 1997 in which the SDS won. (Note: the SDS is also called United Democratic Forces which led a coalition comprising four parties before the election) (Inter-Parliamentary Union). So, the new Prime Minister, Ivan Kostov, was appointed. Thus, the change from Videnov to Sofianski is not a SOLS change because the latter was a provisional ruler, and the change from Sofianski to Kostov is a SOLS change because Kostov belonged to a different party than Videnov.

Kostov governed the country for four years until the elections of 2001. In these elections, former tsar Simeon II, Simeon Borisov competed at the head of National Movement Simeon II (NDSV). "He had been forced to create a coalition with the Bulgarian Women's Party and the Movement for National Revival after the Sofia City Court refused to register his movement because it did not meet all of the requirements" (Inter-Parliamentary Union). The NDSV won the election but was one vote short of majority. As a result, Simeon made a "coalition deal with the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MDL), the party representing the ethnic Turkish minority" (Inter-Parliamentary Union). This is a SOLS change. (MDL is also sometimes referred to as MRF.)

Borisov was PM until 2005. In that year new parliamentary elections were held, and the BSP led the Coalition for Bulgaria (ZzB) which consisted of eight parties. They did not gain a majority and entered a "coalition with the National Movement Simeon II (NMSS) and the Movement for Rights and Freedoms" (Inter-Parliamentary Union). We code this as a major SOLS change since the new PM, Stanishev, was from a different party than Borisov although his government included the previous coalition government.

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