

THE STATESMAN – A STRATEGIC LEADER

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Abstract

Based on a comparative analysis of the different types of politicians, the statesman's major characteristics have been identified: a strategic leader who is well aware the interests and the prestige of his own country as a mandatory norm; a powerful social integrator; manages to set priorities; has the character, the resolve and the intellectual potential to perform his mission – to guarantee the security, well-being and prosperity of his nation and state.

An analysis is made of the reasons for the crisis in statehood, for the degradation of the ruling political elites, and for the lack of authentic statesmen in Bulgaria and in the European Union at the start of the 21st century.

Special attention is paid to the first of its kind rating survey made in this country: The Most Successful Bulgarian Prime Ministers (1879 – 2009), which is based on a questionnaire including 56 researchers. The ranking is based on 20 indicators. The aim of the survey is to highlight the statesmen in Bulgaria's latest history who could serve as a suit to follow for the contemporary ruling elites.

The study finishes with an analysis of the role of research and cognition for state governance. Also the tradition has been outlined in UNWE in the teaching of political sciences.

Keywords: degradation of the political elites, statesman, crisis of statehood, prime ministers, rating survey, strategic leader

JEL: I2, N4, Z1

Introduction

At the start of the 21st century political governance has been ever more losing its deepest essence and meaning. The mere listing of some of its basic functions exposes the significance and complexity of this human activity:

- work towards the public (common) good. Hence this is what the sign put on the building of the Rector (manager) of the historical Dubrovnik Republic reads: “*When you enter this building, you should forget about the personal and take care of the public*” (“*Obliti privatorium publica curate*”);

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- create effective and fair rules guiding the functioning of the public sphere (from the municipality to the EU);
- to develop and apply governance strategies and specific public policies;
- to manage the inequalities in society;
- to prevent and resolve conflicts, etc.

Paradoxically this complicated public activity (with rare exceptions) is carried out by people who are at the average (and in many cases below) intellectual level. Karl Popper is even more adamant, saying that: “*I am of the opinion that those in power rarely go beyond the average level in both moral and intellectual respect, and are quite often below it*” (Popper, 1993, p. 146). This is among the fundamental contradictions of state governance, and it rather deteriorates with the development of human history.

At the start of the 21st century there is a deep crisis of statehood, a large-scale degradation and even misery of the ruling political elites not only in Bulgaria but in the EU. There are rare exceptions. Perhaps never before throughout the many centuries of this state’s history has as poignantly stood out the question of the lack of authentic statesmen as during the last three decades. In the contemporary conditions politics has undergone a serious metamorphosis. It is becoming increasingly tougher, superficial and demagogue. We have witnessed its menacing simplification.

There has been a confusion of the following notions: there is a clear meaning of politics, policies and the political. There is another meaning of partisanship (addressing a particular issue from the narrow perspective of a political party) and politicking. There is a clear meaning of statesman and a politician with vocation, whereas a partisan politician and a dabbler in politics have a different meaning. This is the reason why this study begins with what Confucius defines as *jun min* (*rectification of names*). To create a common scientific language, it is necessary to clarify the meaning of concepts so that this meaning should be acknowledged and perfected.

The statesman – “*rector civitatis*” (*guardian of the state*)

For centuries on end the peoples and the political philosophers have made attempts to depict the of the authentic statesman and to identify him with a given political activist. It was back in the political philosophy of Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome that, in close connection with the theory of the best state structure, the view was developed about the best state activist. According to Plato, state governance is the most difficult profession that requires more than any other profession training and dedication. His political ideal laid out in the dialogues on the state, the statesman and the laws is **sofocration** – the governance by the knowledgeable and the wise (“*the philosophers should be kings or the kings* –

philosophers”). In the dialogue on the state, Plato writes as follows: “*Until in the states... the philosophers start to reign or until the aforementioned kings and powerholders start dealing in a true and satisfactory manner in philosophy, and until state power and philosophy merge in a single whole ... I do not think that there will be an end to the troubles of the states ...*” (Plato, 1975, p. 168).

According to Cicero, “*rector rei publice*” or “*rector civitatis*” (“*the manager*” or “*the guardian of the state*”) should presumably possess high moral and civil traits: prudence, reason should dominate over low passions, wisdom, justice, incorruptibility, moderation, valour, oratorical prowess and even knowledge of the Greek authors (Cicero, 2019). This is likely to precipitate embarrassment in many contemporary politicians. Cicero envisages “*the aristocrat reformer*” Publius Cornelius Scipio, Lucius Aemilius Paullus, Cato the Elder, Gracchus-father, among others. Yet Cicero himself can be deemed as belonging to this ideal for the state activist (Yankov, 2006, p. 42).

In the corpus of the Latin panegyricists (“*Panagyrici Latini*”), the answer that they give to the perpetually topical question about who of the contenders is the legitimate emperor and who is the usurper is not straightforward – the source of power is important but so is the manner of governance – “*the true emperor governs in favor of his subjects, abstains from iniquity and guarantees the security and the wellbeing of the state and the people*” (Gerdzhikov, 2007, pp. 7-8). It is hard to add anything essential to this depiction of the true statesman.

According to the prominent Bulgarian jurist and researcher prof. Lyubomir Vladikin, the statesman is called upon to perform one of the most complicated and difficult tasks: to guide or directly manage the state affairs. He should be well aware of or intuitively identify the factors that impact the state affairs: constitutional structure, the factual state of affairs of the public goods, the balance of power between the internal forces within the country and those in the international arena, and its possible shift, etc. (Vladikin, 1992, p. 83). The eminent Bulgarian historian academician Georgi Markov in his book *Lessons for the Statesmen* (in which he somewhat self-ironically points out that “*he takes the liberty to share what he has overheard from Kleo*”) describes the statesman as a gifted politician – well aware of his mission to the people, to the wellbeing of whom he dedicates himself: “*A state without statesmen is doomed to be transformed into a state without future*” (Markov, 2001, p. 223). Encho Mateev provides his interpretation of the concept under scrutiny: “*The statesman does not mean that the individual and society are engulfed by the state; it means that the idea of the state is elevated to the supreme political regulator of the political leaders’; it means that there is awareness that the interests and the prestige of your state are an indispensable and mandatory norm of political activity.*” (Mateev, 1992,

p. 11). Prof. Todor Tanev has developed “*a cumulative model of the statesman as a specific type of politician who is national strategic leader*” (Tanev, 2013, p. 7).

In my opinion the statesman is an elite politician in the meaning that Wilfredo Pareto uses the concept of elite – “*the best in their sphere of activity*”. Hence statesman can be defined as the best politicians in their profession that possess strategic thinking. It is here relevant to recall the popular saying: “*Not every tree makes a whistle*”. **The politician statesman is a valuable rarity.** Yet these two categories are often juxtaposed. In its ultimate form this juxtaposition is present in General Charles de Gaulle’s notable utterance: “*I am not a politician, I am a statesman!*”.

Politician is a generic concept, given that there are various types of politicians. What is the difference between the dabbler in politics, the vocational politician and the statesman? These types involve the description of *ideal types*. In reality, however, there is a far more varied and controversial typology.

The dabbler in politics is the most widespread *political animal* (*zoon politikon* in Aristotel’s terminology) not only in Bulgaria but throughout the world. Its basic characteristics are as follows: unscrupulousness; clientelism; opportunism (changing membership in different political parties); political partisanship; a person who does not fully understand the political reality (and invariably takes part in it); he who makes his living on politics rather than lives for the sake of politics (in Max Weber’s interpretation). The dabbler in politics is typically the demagogue – the antipode of the vocational politician and of the statesman.

The vocational politician is distinguished by the fact that he dedicates his political activity and exercises politics rather as a social position and for the sake of ideas. According to Weber, the vocational politician is defined largely by three traits: passion (dedication to the deeds); sense of responsibility; and *correct vision*.

The statesman is distinguished by the following basic characteristics: a strategic leader who is well aware of his country’s interests and builds up its authority as a mandatory norm; a powerful social integrator (who skilfully uses his nation’s potential – as the prominent Bulgarian statesman from the late 19th century notes Petko Karavelov: “*With a political party one may rise to power, yet one cannot possibly govern only with a party*”); combines dexterous leadership with high-quality management; who has perfectly mastered the art of setting priorities (“*Setting priorities is part of the meaning of political life*” – Vili Brandt); who notices what others fail to see; possesses the character and resolve to perform his mission despite the obstacles he inevitably comes across (after all “*there is a real danger that political leaders should follow the trend and not their principles and beliefs*” – Margaret Thatcher); who possesses strategic thinking and tactical

flexibility (“*The dabbler in politics thinks of the next elections, whereas the statesman – of the next generations*” – James Freeman Clarke).

One needs **political intuition**, which (just as the artistic one) is innate only in its embryonic form. Moreover, it is rarely there. It is even possible that the prime ministers of big countries lack political intuition. The vocational politicians are few in number (what applies in this case is the biblical formula: “*For many are called, but few are chosen*”). In order to develop political intuition, of prime importance is experience, i.e. the participation in political activity. What should not be downplayed is also the acquisition of fundamental political knowledge that comprises the systematization of the accumulated experience in political life. Political intuition is among the factors that involves the possible definition of politics as a type of art (*politics as art, the art of the compromise, the art of the possible*, etc).

The crisis of statehood in the early 21st century

During the last three decades there has been a tendency towards a plummeting level of the political elite and of the leaders. With very few exceptions, we can hardly speak of contemporary statesmen. In the EU member states, there are no politicians of the rank of De Gaulle, Mitterand, Adenauer, Brandt. In post-1989 Bulgaria instead of vocational politicians and statesmen, those who emerge of the political stage tend to make their living on politics rather than live for the sake of politics. The majority of the contemporary political elite are people with no historical thinking and a sufficiently developed feeling for statehood and national identity, and as a result, they tend to be subservient to any more powerful allies (*yes-men*). Prof. Andrey Pantev with some self-irony defines this category of politicians (and some historians) as “*guilty braggarts*” before our new partners.

Running counter to the diplomatic ethics, ambassadors of our new allies behave as if they were general governors, denting our sense for national dignity. **Yet both the nation and the individual should live decently – and have a sense of personal integrity. Unless they respect themselves, others will never respect them.** It is no coincidence that in the EU’s Chart for basic human rights dignity is posed before freedom (in Section I). The chart was officially announced in Nice in December 2000 and came into effect in 2009 (together with the Treaty of Lisbon). According to the novelist Anton Donchev: “*Dignity is the backbone of the human personality. Without dignity you are not a human being but a reptile. Dignity has the unique property not to be bought*”. Another eminent Bulgarian novelist – Emiliyan Stanev, emphasized the following: “*Without dignity, no morality or honour could possibly exist, apart from that in Radko the fart*” (character from Ivan Vazov’s *Under the Yoke*, informer of a Turkish town hall). **Today both the personal and the national dignity is a serious deficit.**

It was almost 15 years ago that I published an article headlined *The Problem of Statehood after Bulgaria's Liberation (1878) and in the Early 21st Century*. In the article I raised the following question: “How come after the liberation, within only two decades, a national state was built that was comparatively well functioning for the time, while in the early 21st century (in 2007) in the annual *Failed States Index of the Foreign Policy Journal*, the *Peace Foundation* and the *Carnegie Foundation* ranked Bulgaria as “a state in danger of failure” (Yankov, 2008, p. 7b; 2012, p. 182).

The comparative analysis along a number of indicators (the economy, agriculture, demography, education, patriotism) exposed the existence of opposite tendencies (antipodes) during the two historical periods. **The major conclusion was that after 1989, the processes pertaining to the collapse of statehood were in direct proportion to the deficit of statesman's frame of mind, of historical thinking and of continuity in the development of the Bulgarian state.**

The crisis of statehood is connected with a controversial phenomenon that sums up *globalization* as a term, in particular – the imposed version of neoliberal and corporate asymmetric globalization. According to Bernie Sanders (the runner for president in the USA in 2016 and 2020): “*Corporate globalization undermines democracy. It strongly enhances the power of global corporations at the expense of the local, urban and national administrations*”. Prof. Vaclav Klaus, in his turn, president of the Czech Republic and doctor honoris causa of UNWE, spares no criticism of the EU: “*Brussels wants to undermine the only indisputable and developed form of human organization that has proved its viability – the nation state*”. In the view of some neoliberal analysts, globalization almost spells the end of the nation state. Margaret Thatcher is adamant that “*such predictions, however, are false*” (Thatcher, 2002, p. 15).

For millenia on end the peoples have been living in states. This is likely to be the case in the future. The state is a category of history. The very idea of the state has changed throughout the years – from the ancient eastern despotism and the Greek polities (city states), through the empires and feudal monarchies to the nation states. The state has changed depending on the new conditions, but it has retained its fundamental relevance, no matter what might be the drawbacks of state governance in many countries.

At the end of the 20th century and the start of the 21st century, the predominant trend in politics is minimizing the state's role, reducing the scale of the public sector and of the state's activities and functions. The international financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank lay the emphasis on the system of neoliberal measures taken to decrease the level of state interference in the economy – a pack of measures referred to as the *Washington Consensus* by one of its founders (Fukuyama, 2004, p. 19).

Joseph Stiglitz, winner of the Nobel Prize in economic sciences, identifies the following negative aspect of globalization: “*While I worked for the World Bank, I could immediately observe globalization’s destructive effect on the developing countries and in particular on the poor on these countries*” (Stiglitz, 2003, p. xvii). Another Nobel Prize Laureate – Milton Friedman, an orthodox champion of monetarism and the free market, in one of his commentaries published in 2001 points out that a decade earlier he would have addressed the countries that were performing a transition to socialism in three words: “*Privatize, privatize, privatize. Yet this was a mistake... It turned out that the rule of law was probably more fundamental than privatization*”. Yet this finding turned out to be overdue for most societies of Eastern Europe.

The manner of carrying out privatization, in which the market’s role was absolutized, while the state institutions’ stability and the rule of law was downplayed, contributed largely to the delegitimation of the countries belonging to the former socialist system. In the words of Stiglitz: “*IMF’s policy partially based on the outdated assumption that markets can cope on their own and will bring about efficient results collapsed, so the desired state intervention in the market relations was acknowledged – a measure that could guide economic growth to improve the wellbeing of all*” (Stiglitz, 2003, p. xx).

The model of economic liberalism and market fundamentalism was imposed on the Eastern European countries. It started with absolutizing the state’s role and the plan to have the countries from the former socialist system end at the other extreme – absolutizing the market’s role and total privatization.

This global trend in the development of statehood examined so far was largely typical of the state of affairs in Bulgaria in the post-1989 period. Its negative consequences were further deepened also by the deficit of statehood among the majority of the political elite and by the flaws of the imposed political model. The small government, the lack of effective institutions and the state’s demonization and even deconstruction in certain years of the transition opened up cleavages in which corruption and crime readily set in. The Bulgarian society yet again faced the need to strengthen statehood, raise the effectiveness of the state institutions and bolster the administrative capacity. In the words of Stiglitz, it was necessary “*to recreate the state*” (Stiglitz, 2003, p. xxi) – involving the establishment of a more effective and responsive government. It was impossible to perform such a task unless society elected genuine statesmen. In our attempt to contribute, albeit partially, we set out to carry out the first of its kind survey in this country entitled *The Most Successful Bulgarian Prime Ministers (1878 – 2009)*” (Yankov, 2019).

**An attempt to identify the statesmen in Bulgaria's most recent history:
the rating survey entitled *The Most Successful Bulgarian Prime Ministers
(1879 – 2009)***

Idea, system of indicators and character of the survey

The idea for such a piece of research was conceived in 2012 during the academic instruction in the subject of *The art of the statesman* delivered to the master's degree students in political science at UNWE. It was then that the need arose to identify the genuine statesmen in Bulgaria's recent history. In response to this need and as a result of the nearly two-year efforts, the rating survey entitled *The Most Successful Bulgarian Prime Ministers (1879 – 2009)* appeared. Even though it drew on some similar pieces of research undertaken in other countries (USA, Great Britain, among other), this survey is to a high extent innovative and original in nature.

The ranking is based on the following 20 indicators for the assessment of the prime ministers' traits and achievements:

3. Background (*family, education, experience*);
4. Party leadership (*party leader, place in the party's hierarchy, relations with both ruling and opposition parties*);
5. Relations with the National Assembly (*reponse to both oral and written enquiries, participation in debates, votes of no-confidence, the adoption or the rejection of government bills*);
6. Management of Bulgaria's macroeconomy (*providing for macroeconomic stability and economic growth, increase in GDP, important initiatives*);
7. Communicative skills;
8. The ability to make compromises (*the art of compromise, the art of the possible*);
9. Risk taking;
10. The ability to set up a competent team (*teamwork*);
11. Political intuition (*flair, insight, correct vision – Weber*);
12. Honesty, decency, moral authority (*“to possess high civil traits” – Cicero; not to be prone to power abuse for personal benefit*);
13. Intelligence and virtue (*charisma, charm*);
14. Domestic policy achievements (*other than in the macroeconomy*);
15. Foreign policy achievements;
16. Governance traits and organizational management (*to skillfully combine leadership and high-literacy management; leadership and management – two separate though complementing systems of action*);
17. Avoidance of catastrophic blunders and critical situations;
18. Social integrator (*unifier, the skill to use the nation's potential*);

19. Priority setting skills (*Priority setting is part of the meaning of political life – Vili Brandt*);
20. The character and the resolve to fulfill their mission, despite the obstacles;
21. Protection of the national interests and the country's prestige, bolstering national self-esteem and confidence, taking care of the Bulgarians living abroad beyond the country's territory;
22. Overall opinion (*overall assessment of the traits and achievements of the respective prime minister*).

The research rests on a survey carried out among 56 researchers from universities in Bulgaria and from BAS (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences) – historians and political scientists who presumably have knowledge in political history and state governance after 1879. The invitation to take part in the survey was accepted by academic professors, associate professors and PhDs in history and political science from UNWE, Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, Veliko Tarnovo University Saints Cyril and Methodius, Plovdiv University Paisii Hilendarski, Southwestern University Neofit Rilski, New Bulgarian University, Burgas Free University, Institute for Historical Studies at BAS, Macedonian Scientific Institute, Thracian Scientific Institute, the National Historical Museum, among other. Hence this is a piece of research based on expert analysis and assessment.

Respondents assessed the prime ministers along a scale from 1 (the lowest assessment) to 5 (the highest assessment) along each of the 20 criteria pertaining to personal traits of character, abilities and achievements in state governance. The responses of the separate researchers are confidential.

Among an overall of 49 prime ministers in the 1879 – 2009 period, the survey covers another 31 prime ministers who were in office for approximately a year or more. There are prime ministers who have been heads of the executive power for a shorter period of time and even though they have serious achievements, they can hardly be assessed in a complex manner.

During the historical period under examination, 20 prime ministers have been heads of the Bulgarian government twice or more, and the remaining 11 – only once:

Five times head of the Council of Ministers (CM) were: **Aleksandur Pavlov Malinov** (16.01.1908 – 5.09.1910, 5.09.1910 – 16.03.1911, 21.06. – 17.10.1918, 17.10. – 27.11.1918 29.06. – 12.10.1931).

Four times head of the Council of Ministers were as follows: **Petko Stoychev Karavelov** (28.11.1880 – 27.04.1881, 30.06.1884 – 9.08.1886, 12.08. – 16.08.1886 и 20.02. – 21.12.1901); **Stoyan Petrov Danev** (22.12.1901 – 2.11.1902, 4.11.1902 – 18.03.1903, 18.03. – 6.05.1903 и 1.06.1913 – 4.07.1931); and **Georgi Ivanov Kyoseivanov** (23.11.1935 – 4.07.1936, 4.07.1936 – 14.11.1938, 14.11.1938 – 23.10.1939 и 23.10.1939 – 15.02.1940).

Three times head of the Council of Ministers were as follows: **Dragan Kiryakov Tsankov** (26.03. – 28.11.1880, 7.09. – 31.12.1883 и 1.01. – 29.06.1884); **Vasil Hristov Radoslavov** (16.08.1886 – 28.06.1887, 4.07. – 20.12.1913 и 23.12.1913 – 21.06.1918); **Konstantin Stoilov Konstantinov** (29.06. – 20.08.1887, 19.05. – 9.12.1894 и 9.12.1894 – 18.01.1899); **Andrey Tasev Lyapchev** (4.01.1926 – 12.08.1928, 12.09.1928 – 15.05.1930 и 15.05.1930 – 29.06.1931); **Nikola Stoykov Mushanov** (12.10.1931 – 7.09.1932, 7.09. – 31.12.1932 и 31.12.1932 – 19.05.1934); **Kimon Georgiev Stoyanov** (19.05.1934 – 22.01.1935, 9.09.1944 – 31.03.1946 и 31.03. – 22.11.1946); and **Anton Tanev Yugov** (18.04.1956 – 15.01.1958, 15.01.1958 – 17.03.1962 и 17.03. – 27.11.1962).

Two times head of the Council of Ministers were as follows: **Pacho Petrov Stoyanov** (12.01. – 20.02.1901 и 6.05.1903 – 22.10.1906); **Aleksandar Stoi- menov Stamboliyski** (7.10.1919 – 9.02.1923 и 9.02. – 9.06.1923); **Aleksandar Tsolov Tsankov** (9.06. – 22.09.1923 и 22.09.1923 – 4.01.1926); **Bogdan Dimitrov Filov** (15.02.1940 – 11.04.1942 и 11.04. – 14.09.1943); **Georgi Dimitrov Mihaylov** (23.11.1946 – 11.12.1947 и 12.12.1947 – 20.07.1949); **Valko Velyov Chervenkov** (20.01.1950 – 20.01.1954 и 20.01.1954 – 18.04.1956); **Todor Hristov Zhivkov** (27.11.1962 – 12.03.1966 и 12.03.1966 – 9.07.1971); **Stanko Todorov Georgiev** (9.07.1971 – 15.06.1976 и 17.06.1976 – 18.06.1981); and **Andrey Karlov Lukanov** (8.02. – 21.09.1990 и 22.11. – 20.12.1990).

Once head of the Council of Ministers were as follows: **Stefan Nikolov Stambolov** (20.08.1887 – 19.05.1894); **Ivan Evstratiev Geshov** (16.03.1911 – 1.06.1913); **Georgi (Grisha) Stanchev Filipov** (18.06.1981 – 19.06.1986); **Georgi Ivanov Atanasov** (19.08.1986 – 8.02.1990); **Dimitur Iliev Popov** (20.12.1990 – 8.11.1991); **Filip Dimitrov Dimitrov** (8.11.1991 – 30.12.1992); **Lyben Borisov Berov** (30.12.1992 – 17.10.1994); **Zhan Vasilev Videnov** (25.01.1995 – 12.02.1997); **Ivan Yordanov Kostov** (21.05.1997 – 24.07.2001); **Simeon Borisov Saxe-Coburg-Gotta** (24.07.2011 – 16.08.2005); and **Sergey Dimitrievic Stanishev** (16.08.2005 – 27.07.2009).

A big portion of the prime ministers are also party leaders. The following prime ministers included in the survey were not affiliated to any party *включените*: **Ra- cho Petrov, Georgi Kyoseivanov, Bogdan Filov, Dimitar Popov and Lyben Berov.**

Challenges to the research

On the role of the time and the circumstances. At the end of his life, Napoleon Bonaparte admits the following: “*My son cannot possibly replace me. I cannot possibly replace myself. I am a product of circumstances.*” (Emerson, 1912, p. 191). One of the challenges to the survey was how to correlate the criteria (indi-

cators) for the assessment of the prime ministers during the respective time and historical periods. Which is more important: to make the correct choice at time of war or to develop the economy in time of peace? It is one case when the prime ministers governed the country during economic expansion, and a different case when they the country during periods of total weakness and crises.

Even though the circumstances are crucial, not all depends on them. The eminent political philosopher of the Renaissance period Nicolo Machiavelli in his famous book *Il Principe* (translated under the title of *The Ruler* or *The Prince*) raises the following question: “*What place does fortune take in human actions and could it possibly be defied?*”. Under *fortune* he envisages the historical circumstances. Machiavelli’s response is as follows: “Fortune may be the arbiter of one *half* of our actions, but she still *leaves* us the *other half*, or perhaps a little less, to *our* free will” (Machiavelli, 1985, p. 100). Man is connected with some circumstances and he is forced to consider his deeds in their context. Yet he is not a passive agent. Along with Machiavelli’s *fortune*, the philosopher treats as a second engine of the historical process the personal energy that manifests itself as individual strength, valour and enterprise. The prominent political philosopher justified the role of *Homo faber* (creative man), who is able to coordinate his behaviour with the demands of the historical age. Such an understanding is in line with the Roman tradition, according to which *Fortes furtuna adiuvat* (Fortune favours the bold).

The prime ministers and their actions can be interpreted in terms of both a cause and an effect. Their actions are an effect with regard to the historical conditions, politics and the institutions at the time. They are a cause in case they have the prowess, character and the intellectual potential to impact and change politics, the institutions and the events. It is appropriate that we should now recall the memorable thought of Vasil Levski: “***Talking about Bulgaria, time is in us and we are in time, time transforms us and we transform time***”. It is quite often that at exams students are assigned the task to interpret this thought. I rarely find the answers satisfactory. The Apostle’s genius is not related only to his organizational skills – his clout is a result of his enormous moral authority. In the first place comes thinking and the crystallizing of the unique idea about the Bulgarian national liberation revolution and the internal revolutionary organization, which pertains to the genial thought that “*time transforms us and we transform time*”. Levski is also a political philosopher, which is the reason why he was included in the book *Political Thought from Ancient to Contemporary Times* (Yankov, 2006), devoted to the top achievements in the history of political thought. Historical circumstances impact ideas and politics. However the national revolutionaries’ actions change the time, attitudes and circumstances as a whole.

The case of President Franklin Roosevelt is particularly revealing about the relation between circumstances and leader. In the view of Fred Greenstein from Harvard University, Roosevelt “*created the events, as his personality was not simply shaped by his time, but also shaped the time*“ (Greenstein, 1988, p. 39). Naturally, the political leaders of the bigger nations have far bigger opportunities to shape their time, whereas the opportunities of the smaller nations are restricted (in many cases mainly because of geopolitical interests and aspirations of the so called great powers).

On interruption and continuity in the Bulgarian state’s historical development. The analysis of this extremely important (even pivotal) problem in the Bulgarian state’s development starts with a thought of the prominent Bulgarian historian Petar Mutafchiev: “*When a person attempts to scrutinize the Bulgarian people’s history and to understand the meaning of the most typical phenomena therein, they are left with the impression that this history comprises a strange mixture of incompatible extremities and controversies ... Graduality – an essential marker of every normal development is almost lacking altogether, as if the sole invariable feature in the Bulgarians’ entire historical life is in fact the absence of perseverance and continuity.*” (Mutafchiev, 1987, p. 139). According to Mutafchiev, this feature involves not only the medieval Bulgarian state but also the Third Bulgarian Kingdom.

Even if we assume that Petar Mutafchiev has made an exaggeration, nevertheless the problem about the absence of sustainable continuity is among the essential issues in Bulgarian state’s development. Probably what impacts this is also the fact that this country’s independent development was twice interrupted by a foreign rule. While visiting countries from central and western Europe, what always makes an impression is the continuity and the material culture (in architecture, for instance) – the accumulation of cultural layers. What stands out in this context is the difference from Bulgaria. As academician Ivan Duychev points out, during the Ottoman invasion and in the following centuries, the monuments of material culture were destroyed and plundered: “*Today there is not a single architectural or artistic monument from this period that has remained intact*“ (Duychev, 1985, p. 227).

Such historical retrospections can provide the arguments to explain the occurrence of historical circumstances, yet they are no excuse for the entire succession of Bulgaria’s ruling elites who failed to impose a stage-by-stage evolutionary development without any extremities. Iliya Beshkov, who deeply examined the layers of the Bulgarian mentality, singled out a negative feature of our national character: “*We tend to either fiercely swear or praise ad nauseam. We have no sense of measure*” (Beshkov, 1981, p. 106). We have no measure.

Extremities are particularly typical of the periods of national catastrophes, crises and radical political turnabouts: after 1918 and 1923, in the first years after

1944 and 1989. The strongly ideologized dabblers, guided by their short-term black-and-white thinking, political blindness and the subserviant mentality typical of the past years, continue to stoke confrontation and provoke ill-intended division in the Bulgarian society, and to enter into battles with the past. While other countries – such as, for instance, Greece and Spain in the 20th century (and previously France, England, etc), which experienced far more bloody civil wars, manage to find the strength, will and intellectual potential to achieve a rapprochement in their societies.

It was the ancient Roman poet Ovid who said: “Do not forget what you have achieved”.

In the development of the Bulgarian state (as in any other state) there are intransient values connected with national identity and language, material and spiritual culture, economic prosperity, demographic potential, among other. A big portion of the contemporary Bulgarian elite has no historical thinking. What is more – a prime minister during the first years of the transition does not use the word **Bulgaria**, replacing it with *this state*. History is a process in which there are both transitional as well as sustainable values and layers – both in the material and spiritual sphere. It was back in time that the eminent Bulgarian writer Emilyyan Stanev noted with concern that: “*The lack of continuity is most dangerous for a nation like whose new history has not reached cantury yet ...*”. He goes on to say that: “*At times I think that we have lost our historical memory*” (Stanev, 1983, p. 451). In the contemporary conditions of corporate globalization, which puts to the test nation states and identities, the threat from a lack of sustainable continuity is even bigger.

On the dangers of subjectivity and personal bias. Every rating measurement of historical figures carries the risk of some dose of subjectivity. We were well aware of this while we were preparing and carrying out the research. As the prominent Bulgarian writer Stefan Tsvayg points out: “*In any case it is the creator himself who best knows the hidden mistake of his creation and its internal danger*” (Tsvayg, 1979, p. 94). In this case the fact that there are 56 researchers involved in the survey and they have knowledge about the state governance in Bulgaria in the 1879 – 2009 period, balances personal biases and reduces the risk of subjectivity and ideological suggestions.

In order to draw conclusions with bigger scientific plausibility it is necessary to analyze and compare a sufficient set of data and facts. In this case the experts and scientists have based their assessments on 20 indicators about the prime ministers’ traits and achievements. This is how is avioded the option to stress selectively on one fact or another (or quasi-fact), which exposes rather the methodological insufficiency typical of the so called **about science**. Furthermore, in order to restrict the possible short-term assessments, the survey encompasses the heads of the executive branch of government until the year 2009.

Results from the research. Prime ministers who can be defined as statesmen

The results from the survey were systemized in 63 tables. This study will focus mainly on the rating ranking based on the last 20th indicator (Your overall opinion) on the overall ranking) based on all 20 indicator (see Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1: Ranking of the Bulgarian prime ministers (1879 – 2009) based on the 20th indicator *Your overall opinion*

№	Prime ministers	Grade	Normed grade within the limits:	
			0 – 1	0 – 100
1	Stefan Stambolov	4,45	0,890	89,0
2	Petko Karavelov	4,21	0,842	84,2
3	Konstantin Stoilov	4,14	0,828	82,8
4	Aleksandar Malinov	3,99	0,798	79,8
5	Andrey Lyapchev	3,89	0,778	77,8
6	Todor Zhivkov	3,64	0,728	72,8
7	Aleksandar Stambolijski	3,51	0,702	70,2
8	Ivan Geshov	3,41	0,682	68,2
9	Nikola Mushanov	3,29	0,658	65,8
10	Ivan Kostov	3,26	0,652	65,2
11	Kimon Georgiev	3,23	0,646	64,6
12	Dragan Tsankov	3,21	0,642	64,2
13	Georgi Kyoseivanov	3,19	0,638	63,8
14	Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha	3,18	0,636	63,6
15	Sergey Stanishev	3,04	0,608	60,8
16	Georgi Dimitrov	3,02	0,604	60,4
17	Dimitar Popov	3,00	0,600	60,0
18	Andrey Lukanov	2,95	0,590	59,0
19	Lyuben Berov	2,82	0,564	56,4
20	Stanko Todorov	2,71	0,542	54,2
21	Stoyan Danev	2,69	0,538	53,8
22	Valko Chervenkov	2,60	0,520	52,0
23	Racho Petrov	2,57	0,514	51,4
24	Georgi Atanassov	2,50	0,500	50,0
24	Zhan Videnov	2,50	0,500	50,0
26	Aleksandur Tsankov	2,45	0,490	49,0
27	Vasil Radoslavov	2,43	0,486	48,6
28	Filip Dimitrov	2,39	0,478	47,8
29	Bogdan Filov	2,38	0,476	47,6
30	Grisha Filipov	2,18	0,436	43,6
31	Anton Yugov	2,16	0,432	43,2

Source: Yankov (2019, p. 78).

Table 2: Overall ranking based on all 20 indicators

№	Prime ministers	Grade	Normed grade within the limits:	
			0 – 1	0 – 100
1	Stefan Stambolov	4,04	0,808	80,8
2	Konstantin Stoilov	3,98	0,796	79,6
3	Petko Karavelov	3,96	0,792	79,2
4	Aleksandar Malinov	3,94	0,788	78,8
5	Andrey Lyapchev	3,81	0,762	76,2
6	Ivan Geshov	3,54	0,708	70,8
7	Todor Zhivkov	3,53	0,706	70,6
8	Aleksandar Stambolijski	3,49	0,698	69,8
9	Nikola Mushanov	3,35	0,670	67,0
10	Kimon Georgiev	3,32	0,664	64,4
11	Sergey Stanishev	3,26	0,652	65,2
12	Ivan Kostov	3,24	0,648	64,8
13	Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha	3,22	0,644	64,4
14	Georgi Kyoseivanov	3,19	0,638	63,8
14	Andrey Lukanov	3,19	0,638	63,8
16	Georgi Dimitrov	3,15	0,630	63,0
17	Dragan Tsankov	3,14	0,628	62,8
18	Stoyan Danev	2,98	0,596	59,6
19	Lyuben Berov	2,95	0,590	59,0
20	Dimitur Popov	2,93	0,586	58,6
21	Stanko Todorov	2,83	0,566	56,6
22	Aleksandur Tsankov	2,81	0,562	56,2
23	Valko Chervenkov	2,75	0,550	55,0
24	Zhan Videnov	2,74	0,548	54,8
25	Bogdan Filov	2,72	0,544	54,4
26	Georgi Atanassov	2,67	0,534	53,4
26	Racho Petrov	2,67	0,534	53,4
28	Vasil Radoslavov	2,65	0,530	53,0
29	Filip Dimitrov	2,49	0,498	49,8
30	Anton Yugov	2,40	0,480	48,0
30	Grisha Filipov	2,40	0,480	48,0

Source: Yankov (2019, p. 80).

Along the indicator *Your overall opinion*, the research highlights the names of three Bulgarian prime ministers in Bulgaria's most recent history: Stefan Stambolov, Petko Karavelov and Konstantin Stoilov. In a possible future survey there may be some rearrangement in the ranking, yet overall the first three can hardly be disputed. According to academician Georgi Markov, "*it is almost impossible to question the highest ranking*".

The researchers of Prime Minister **Stefan Stambolov** have made the following more important conclusions and assessments (at times contradictory) about his governance:

- According to prof. Andrey Pantev, Stambolov is the typical case of amplitudes in the assessment for his governance that change depending on the short-term environment. He has been railed against and kept silent about, or simply passed over. Today, however, he is automatically (almost like a parrot) being drawn out. It is namely prof. Pantev who started to reinterpret Stambolov's government back in 1981.
- Stambolov is a politician and statesman, who worked towards elevating statehood and its affairs in Bulgaria. According to Encho Mateev, in the context of statehood, he does not embrace Russiaphobia, but Bulgaria phobia instead, as he defends the Bulgarian national interests.
- "*Stambolov is the embodiment of the strong personality and has set off the historians' traditional interest in the great persons in history and the general public's even stronger interest in them. Moreover, he was never affiliated to any party but tended to stand above the parties napmuume (if he ever admitted them). Thus he was raised to the status of the prototypical statesman.*" (Daskalov, 2009, p. 109).
- He encouraged economic growth: railroads were constructed (covering more than 360 km); industrial enterprises were opened (80 factories); the trade balance and exchange were increased; laws were adopted to ensure that the army and troops were supplied with armament, clothes, foods, etc. – all made in Bulgaria; The first Bulgarian agricultural and industrial fair was held (in Plovdiv in 1892); documents were drawn up such as the decrees for the first Bulgarian agricultural and industrial convention (1892), which was in fact the first attempt to draft a comprehensive program for the state's economic policy.
- During Stambolov's term in office a high-quality education law was passed, and the first school of higher education was opened (today Sofia University) etc.
- He made significant foreign-policy achievements: he defended the young state's independence and sovereignty; he pushed through the Sublime Porte the Sultan's official acts of recognition of the Bulgarian bishops in Macedonia (first in the diocese of Skopje and Ochrid, later on in the diocese of Veles

and Nevrokop); a breakthrough was made in the so called capitulations (the unprofitable trade agreements that the Ottoman Empire inherited from the great powers); new trade contracts were concluded, among other;

- Negative aspects: “*he created political police and set the beginning of death sentences in court against political opponents*” (acad. G. Markov). In the decades up to the Balkan wars there was no such taking the law in one’s own hands with political opponents.
- Stambolov is described as a dictator by many researchers. This is how A. Pantev responds to such allegations: “*Modernization – economic, industrial, political, and national consolidation... at least at the initial stage involves methods of violence and coercion. Only demagogues and fools fail to see this unattractive, yet relentless dependence.*” (Pantev et al., 1996, p. 132).
- At the end of his term in office, Stambolov, blinded by power and stressed out by the constant threats to his life, becomes suspicious and mistrustful. Surrounded by unscrupulous adulators, he started losing the meaning of political reality in the country and that of the changed foreign-policy situation. As a result on 18 May 1894 King Ferdinand accepts his resignation (the 15th in a row), and thus his eight-year rule ended.
- The nature of Stambolov’s governance is best revealed by an excerpt from his speech before the National Assembly of 17 November 1893: “*Esteemed deputies! I do not belong to the Pharisaic dabblers in politics – I neither filter the mosquitoes, nor do I absorb the camels, but walk on straight to achieve my goal. When I come across something that in my conviction should be done to rescue the Fatherland, I will do it, even though it may even be banned by law.*” (Pantev et al., 1996, p. 140).
- By way of conclusion, I will quote the summing up (and largely balanced) assessment made by prof. Elena Statelova: “*A prominent statesman, who ruled with an iron hand in troubled times, with serious credit in foreign policy and many negative deeds in domestic policy that will leave an irreducible trail on Bulgarian democracy*” (Statelova, 2006, p. 127).

The researchers of Prime Minister **Petko Karavelov** have highlighted the following major conclusions and assessments of his term in office:

- honest and talented statesman, painfully concerned about the situation in the country, “*an ideally selfless man*”;
- one of the creators of the Turnovo Constitution. Among all the political activists after the liberation, he does the most to apply and observe the constitution: “*There is no king without power, nor is there a people without rights*” (P. Karavelov);

- as prime minister always assumes governance upon the majority's confidence, and if he happens to lose their trust, he is ready to quit. He is described as "*the of Bulgarian parliamentarism*";
- Karavelov has contributed the most to laying the foundations of the financial system in post-liberation Bulgaria. It is upon his motion that the following laws are adopted: the Stamp Tax Act; the Supreme Audit Office Act; Budget Compilation and Amendment Act; Customs Statute Act; Patent Act; Budget Accountability Act; Land Act; National Coin Act; National Bank Act, etc. It was during his tenure that the Statistical Bureau at the Finance Ministry was opened. Hence prof. G. Danailov justifiably argues that: "*It can be assumed that the pearls of the Bulgarian financial legislation were created at the time Karavelov was in power*";
- during Karavelov's term in office, political life developed on a legal basis. His tenure "*did not know censorship, spying, the relentless persecution of political opponents or the holding of trials in court*" (E. Statelova);
- a unifier, striving to harness the potential of the entire nation in governance: "*You may rise to power with a political party, yet you cannot govern only with a party*";
- Karavelov is a moderate political activist – he is an opponent of extreme decisions or political adventures: "*The man in state power will never be forgiven for walking towards the unknown*";
- he is with a heightened sense of national integrity, *fanatically hostile* to any interference on the part of foreigners in Bulgaria's state of affairs: "*I have always struggled to ensure that our relations with the external world be improved, yet without making concessions that they should demand*";
- defends the sovereignty of the young Bulgarian state and calls for cooperation with Russia and the other countries based on equal treatment;
- by way of conclusion we will quote the summary assessment made by Simeon Radev: "*With Karavelov's death, an extraordinary man left the historical stage. He made mistakes in his political activity, yet these mistakes did harm to him personally and not to his fatherland. Everything else in his life talks of his intellect and valour. He remained an example of personal selflessness and of state thrift; ...in politics he left a number of statehood ideas, defended his convictions and his dignity and was ready for martyrdom ... Yet he had another trait of character that made him an exceptional figure in Bulgaria's modern history: as no other Bulgarian of his time, he combined European thought and the Renaissance spirit*". Furthermore, one of his political opponents – Ivan Ev. Geshov, finds with deep regret that: "*It seems as if there are no longer people left who to work with*".

The researchers of Prime Minister **Konstantin Stoilov** highlight the major conclusions and assessment of his term in office (what we mostly take into consideration is the research made by prof. Radoslav Popov *The Forgotten Konstantin Stoilov*) (Pantev et al., 1996, pp. 141-161):

- one of the greatest political activists and statesmen in post-liberation Bulgaria. A person of diverse interests and traits who left significant traces in the history of the Bulgarian statehood during the first two decades after its recovery;
- personal traits: invariably immaculate and elegant, with a cool appearance, and always polite and affable, as he was alien to relations of familiarity;
- he had a high political culture – compared to his contemporaries, he came closest to the European standards for politician and statesman;
- from a critic of the Tarnovo Constitution (from the position of the reasonable conservatism), because of its democratic nature and the *excessive* rights and freedoms, he became an ardent defender of the constitution: he eliminated the amendments introduced during Stambolov's tenure and worked towards the strict adherence to the constitutional texts;
- from an enthusiastic champion of the monarch's strong rule during the 1880s, he gradually reached the assumption that the most appropriate rule for a country like Bulgaria is parliamentary monarchy that combines the king's *reasonable* intervention in the exercise of power;
- he pursues a policy of encouraging the fledgling Bulgarian industry. During his tenure the following laws were adopted: The Promotion of Domestic Industry Act; The Creation of Trade and Industrial Chambers Act; The Structure of Guild Associations Act; The Crafts' Competition Act, etc. He undertook protective measures through the increase of import tariffs, etc;
- he encouraged the modernization of agriculture. The following laws were passed: The Farming Study Act; The Urbanism Act (compulsory mutual insurance); The Veterinary Sanitary Police Act, etc. The Council of Ministers adopted a decision for the import of cattle without tariffs to improve the local breeds;
- During the constituent assembly (1879) he spelled out two basic foreign-policy priorities of the Principality of Bulgaria: constantly good relations with Russia and maintaining the national conscience of the Bulgarians living abroad beyond the state borders, and the preparation of a national unification. He made the biggest achievement in terms of foreign policy by carrying out the reconciliation between Bulgaria and Russia (the restoration of diplomatic relations between Sofia and St. Petersburg) and the international legitimization of the Principal's institution;

- by way of conclusion, we hereby present the summary assessment made by prof. R. Popov about Bulgaria's foreign policy during the period: *“For Stoilov the Bulgarian state's foreign policy should not serve as a flag of differentiation for the political parties in the Principality, and they should end the division into Russophiles and Russophobes, given that such a division runs counter to the national interests. As a politician and diplomat Stoilov emphasized many times that foreign policy should serve the countries' independence and their national interests”* (Pantev et al., 1996, pp. 157-158).

Very instructive and considering the current situation.

Fourth in the ranking comes **Aleksandar Malinov** – the only prime minister that headed five times the Council of Ministers. After Petko Karavelov's death (in 1903) he was elected leader of the Democratic Party, which he led for 35 years (until his death on 20 March 1938). He was part of the political life of the Third Bulgarian State for more than four decades and has become its living history. According to Danail Krapchev, *“Aleksandar Malinov was not only an ideologist and the author of a doctrine. He was a big soul and a quaking aspen that reflected all grief and joys of the Bulgarian. Malinov was a big democrat, yet he was in favour of an enlightened democracy. He was a statesman of the highest rank, who would measure and calculate everything. He was alien to adulation, whether towards his people or towards those in power”* (Bulgarian History, n.d.a).

Aleksandar Malinov was author of the Declaration of Independence read by King Ferdinand on 22 September 1908 in the city of Veliko Tarnovo. In it he dexterously synthesized the public aspirations for the unification of the Bulgarian nation and outlined the path for its future development: *“As my people is always peaceable, today it is aspiring towards a cultural and economic progress; in this respect, nothing should stand in the Bulgaria's way; and nothing should hinder its prosperity. This is the desire of our people, and such is its will. Let it happen as the people wants”* (Kostadinova, Kuzmanov, 1994).

Fifth in the ranking comes **Andrey Lyapchev**. He has the traits of a genuine statesman: businesslike, extremely hard working, efficient, balance, with rich experience, having mastered strategic thinking and the art of compromise. In his program speech to the National Assembly upon inauguration to premiership (on 4 January 1926) he declared himself in favour of *“the politics of peace and loyalty”* by rejecting the policy of confrontation through government's terror and aspirations to establish civil peace in Bulgaria. In the briefest and metaphorical way this can be presented in a popular phrase of his: *“You can reach far if you act in a meek and friendly manner”* (Yankov et al., 2021). **In Bulgaria's history, Andrey Lyapchev will remain as the prime minister of national reconciliation.**

Lyapchev's political activity as minister and head of government pertains to the promotion of the Bulgarian agriculture, crafts and industry. He manifested

virtuosity as a high-quality diplomat – he is assigned the excessively responsible task to resolve the issues of declaring independence. In his capacity of finance minister, he restricted the redundant government expenditures and imposed order and accountability in the government’s financial institutions. In this context comes the assessment made by the eminent Bulgarian entrepreneur, banker and public figure Atanas Burov: “*His entire life was engulfed by thoughts about society, public activity and public goals*” (Yankov et al., 2021).

According to King Boris III, “*he was the only Bulgarian statesman of a Victorian type*”. After his death, both his friends and opponents were unanimous that a prominent Bulgarian statesman had left, and with him ended a whole era in the country’s most recent history. This is an era in which he manifested himself to be a genuine democrat and defender of the national interests. The last words he uttered in his life were: “*Protect the Tarnovo Constitution! Protect the order established in Bulgaria, protect the country’s foundations, as we live in this country!*” (Bulgarian History, n.d.b).

Who stands out among the prime ministers in office during the period of state socialism (1944 – 1989) is **Todor Zhivkov**, who took office in 1956. Along the indicator *Your overall opinion*, he takes the sixth place in the ranking. In the figurative language of academician G. Markov: “*Todor Zhivkov cleaves into the ranking of the bourgeois politicians. The years of his full refutation finished with a generation. Deep disillusionment prompted the people to accept that those 45 of state socialism during the Cold War era, Zhivkov was the smaller evil, given his policy of “the carrot and stick”* (Yankov, 2019, p. 88).

Naturally decisive were the circumstances in the 1960s, the 1970s and the early 1980s. This is the time of peaceful evolutionary development with accumulation in both the material and the cultural sphere, without the extremities typical of the first decade after 1944, and with the return to the Bulgarian historical values and the strengthening of the national identity (particularly in connection with the marking of the 1300 years since the creation of the Bulgarian state). However, apart from the favorable circumstances, what should not be downplayed is Zhivkov’s governance skills and qualities. Prof. Rumen Daskalov sums up and systematizes the observations and assessments made by Kostadin Chakarov and specifically by Niko Yahiel (advisors in the so called cabinet) about Zhivkov’s personality and governance as follows:

In terms of personality: “*good natural gifts, intelligence and phenomenal, though without formal schooling, yet rich practical experience; serious dynamics and energy, fast reaction and combinatorial thinking; extremely hard-working and business-like; predisposing behaviour and the talent to communicate with people; a moderate lifestyle without any lust for money and property*”.

In terms of political traits: “*persistent aspirations towards power and a strong political flair and intuition – a politician by nature; he has mastered to perfec-*

tion the secrets of the struggle for power and the art of Machiavellism; he does not tolerate rivals and ardent figures around himself; regularly removes from the highest levels of power those who acquire their own authority or stands out as an individual, yet without repressions but with rewards instead (job, personal pension); tolerates critical opinions and complaints, but only those coming from below (from the common people); a pragmatic politician, not a dogmatic one; a great diplomat, with foreign heads of state and politicians”.

In terms of negative aspects: *“a cunning person, which is a deeply engrained trait of character; demagoguery and populist devices, the discrepancy between words and deeds, which became exceptionally glaring during the last decade; suspicion, mistrust and resent, also guile and ruthlessness, when he thinks that there is some threat to his personal (even though he did not physically destroy the people but politically)”* (Daskalov, 2009, pp. 391-392).

From the perspective of statehood, prof. Georgi Karasimeonov, who stands out with his balanced approach and striving towards objectivity, makes a nuanced assessment of Todor Zhivkov: in this person *“attempts to make statehodd decisions can be singled out”* (Karasimeonov, 2010, p. 83). While prof. Aleksandar Chirkov described him as *“a genuine statesman”*.

The remaining prime ministers from this period who have not taken the highest post in the political party hierarchy – their role is of a secondary, even subsidiary importance. This is one of the factors due to which they have taken lower places in the ranking.

As far as the prime ministers from Bulgaria’s most recent history are concerned, (the 1989 – 2009 period), none in the overall ranking (along all 20 indicators) comes among the first ten. For a given politician and for politics in general, as is the case for any other human activity, the results are of prime importance. Obviously the experts do not think that their results merit high assessments. Naturally, the assessment of the activity of the heads of government during the first two decades at the start of the changes is most vulnerable in terms of personal bias and subjectivity. Historical distance is not yet sufficient for this period. Furthermore, research and science on this topic and issues are not yet many in number, and in many cases so are the newspaper materials. In order to make conclusions with higher scientific feasibility, it is necessary to analyze the biggest possible set of empirical facts. The future exposure of new archived documents (especially foreign ones) may bring about a reassessment of the imposed stereotypes about the activity of separate prime ministers from the 12-year period under investigation. The highlighted circumstances should be taken into account by the respectful reader as they get familiarized with the presented data.

Academician Georgi Markov was the major consultant of the survey. He is also author of the Analysis and Assessment of the results of the survey *The Most*

Successful Bulgarian Prime Ministers (1879 – 2009). Prof. Georgi Mishev, who is among the most prominent Bulgarian statisticians, performed the statistical processing of the obtained data. I am particularly grateful for the collegial cooperation of the 56-re researchers who were respondents in the survey.

The meaning of such a piece of research is in the fact that the eminent Bulgarian statesmen with their achievements, statehood frame of thought, feeling for a historical mission and painful concerns about the Bulgarian state development should serve as a suit to follow by the contemporary elites in power. After all, according to a maxim: “*Historia est magistra vitae*” (“*History is the teacher of life*”).

**On the meaning of the cognition and research about state governance.
The contribution of UNWE and the Political Science Department
(by way of conclusion)**

At the start of the 21st century, the majority of the Bulgarian politicians, including prime ministers, ministers and the representatives in the legislative branch of power had no idea about the essence of their actions. Many claim that they can debate about politics, perform political action and take part in state governance without having read Weber’s *Politics as Vocation*. As Vladislav Todorov justifiably argues: “*In public space, there are walking about in a frivolous manner self-styled people and amateurs*”. According to the late prof. Mincho Semov, one of the founders of political science in Bulgaria: “*With very few exceptions, politicians poorly do their job, because of their poor knowledge of the essence and manifestations of politics*” (Semov, 2000, p. 487).

This is where is exposed the role and mission of political science as a scientific subject, as well as those of the political scientists, academic faculty and the experts at the academic level – they should develop the cognition and expertise to meet the goals of state governance and politics. It is no coincidence that in one of the oldest universities – the University of Bologna, during the commencement addresses, the doctoral students are awarded twice a serious book (such Aristotle’s *Politics*): once closed so that the esoteric (specialized) knowledge is documented, and once open – so that it is accentuated that the esoteric task should bring this knowledge to the public (to the people).

In order to fulfill its mission, the collegiate of political scientists should never yield to partisan suggestions, nor to external geopolitical influences. It should instead retain a decent scientific attitude towards the subject matter, as well as adherence to the objective truth and scientific conscience. As a matter of the fact, I have not heard the word *conscience* for years on end. This is what the prominent Bulgarian sociologist and national psychologist Ivan Hadzhijski wrote, perhaps in a moment of grief: “*In this country it is easier to buy conscience than half a*

kilogram of white fudge with walnuts". Hence it is necessary to make a distinction between the truly professional political scientists and the multitude of political *analysts* who tend to show off as being political scientists, whereas in reality they can readily be referred to as belonging to the so called about science.

UNWE boasts of a long tradition in the research and teaching of the sciences pertaining to state governance. The university was set up in 1920 as the Free University for Political and Economic sciences with the mission to prepare "*competent specialists of high culture for the Bulgarian economic, social and political life, law, administration, finance, trade and industrial, insurance and corporate sciences, diplomats, consules, publicists, among other*" (Yankov et al., 2021, p. 9). Among the founders themselves and the first faculty members are well-known ministers who are the genuine constructors of the Bulgarian statehood such as prof. Stefan Bobchev, prof. Stoyan Danev, prof. Vladimir Mollov, prof. Petar Abrashev, prof. Todor Kulev, prof. Petko Stoyanov, academician Dimitar Mishaykov, Andrey Lyapchev, Atanas Burov, prof. Venelin Ganey, among other.

As a continuation of this historical tradition, the Department and specialty of International Relations was created in 1976. It was then that at the Higher Economic Institute Karl Marx (today UNWE) was reinstated the specialized professional training in foreign policy, diplomacy, international organizations, European unification, geopolitics, etc. Fourteen years later the Department of Political Science was set up (by virtue of a decision of the Academic Council of 11 July 1990). Within a relatively short period of time, the department expanded and developed in both scientific and academic terms. In 1996, it became the first Bulgarian department of political studies to become member of the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR). In the consortium's journal (*European Political Science Research*) of August 1999, it was described as one of the "*most significant departments in political sciences in Bulgaria and Southeastern Europe*".

During the 1991/92 academic year, at UNWE the major degree in Political Science was launched, first in the so called sponsored training първоначално (in the meaning of the Academic Autonomy Act). During the 2003/04 academic year, the first students majoring in political science were admitted to state-commissioned academic training. In a number of accreditations by the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency, the specialty is awarded the highest grades in the three degree – of bachelor, master and doctor (since 2009 within the professional field of *Political Sciences* that includes the specialites of *Political Science, International Relations* and *European Studies*).

In its history of more than 30 years, the Political Science Department has invariably strived to establish a style of work with students that rests on two basic principles – academism and collegiality. Academism in the meaning of aspirations towards reaching a contemporary scientific level – both in research

and instruction. Collegiality in the meaning that students should be treated as colleagues and not as subordinates: we should be open and transparent in the dialogue with them; we should be demanding yet without any humiliation and demeanour; while training should be “*maximally close to the students*”.

As political science was established as a specialty and academic discipline, and as it was institutionalized in a separate department, economic and administrative knowledge expanded in breadth, the professional field of Political Sciences was well established, UNWE’s university image was strengthened. This contributed to its return to its original identity of a university for political and economic sciences, as was its name when it was founded more than a century ago.

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