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# Left Wing, Right Wing, Everything *Xenophobia, Neo-totalitarianism, and Populist Politics in Bulgaria*

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The Ataka party plays up ethnic and religious intolerance to garner far-right support for its far-left political agenda.

ALTHOUGH Bulgaria acceded to the European Union on January 1, 2007, many Europeans continue to be critical of the rampant criminality that characterizes Bulgarian politics and society. Six months after the country's EU accession, one of the smaller of the seven parliamentary groups in the National Assembly (Narodno Sabranie) introduced a bill that addressed the problem of high-level corruption by calling for an investigation of the 2004 privatization of the former state-owned telecommunications monopoly (BTK).<sup>1</sup> Although there had been multiple bids, including one from the New York-based American International Group (AIG), BTK had been sold to an unknown "foreign" investor called Viva Ventures for \$250 million. The low price led to widespread speculation that Viva Ventures was a front for individuals close to the prime minister and his cabinet. Less than four years later, Viva Ventures was now reselling BTK to AIG for \$1.2 billion, making a whopping \$950 million profit for the mysterious company.

Seizing on the widespread public outrage at the resale, the party accused the government that had been in power at the time of the sale of stealing money from the Bulgarian people that otherwise could have been used for healthcare and education. The bill it introduced called for criminal charges against the politicians who had overseen the deal (and most likely taken the kickbacks) and suggested that BTK should be re-nationalized and sold directly to AIG so that the profits would accrue to the state budget. Not surprisingly, most of the members of parliament from previous governments voted against

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Ataka leads a protest in front of the mosque in Sofia.

the bill, and many Bulgarians threw up their hands in despair at the growing inequality and dramatically lower standard of living that seventeen years of “democracy” had brought them.<sup>2</sup>

The party that introduced the bill was quick to capitalize on this frustration. Ataka (“Attack”) was a “right-wing” coalition of nationalist parties that had stunned political observers in the 2005 parliamentary elections. Although it had materialized just two months before the election, it beat all the moderate center-right parties, garnering more than 8 percent of the vote and twenty-one seats in the 240-seat unicameral National Assembly. This made Ataka the fourth-largest of the seven parties in parliament and the first party with an openly nationalist platform to be represented in post-communist Bulgaria. Using a wide variety of issues to stir up anti-elite resentments, Ataka’s populist appeal spanned almost all of the country’s demographic groups and transformed the political terrain of the small Southeast European nation.

This article examines the populism of Ataka and its charismatic leader, Volen Siderov. Most of what has been written about Ataka, whether by foreign or Bulgarian observers, tends to focus on its right-wing nationalist rhetoric against Bulgaria’s large Turkish and Roma ethnic minorities or on Siderov’s angry and flamboyant personal style. Ataka’s massively attended political rallies on Independence Day, its petitions to silence the call to prayer from the country’s mosques, and its demonization of the Gypsies has captured the attention of both the national and international media, which describe the party as associated with the “Brown International.”<sup>3</sup> This article, however, argues that Ataka’s nationalist bluster is only part of a more complex and often contradictory political platform that includes deeper, radically leftist, neo-totalitarian elements. The party’s agenda goes beyond single-minded ethnocentrism and appeals to the disenfranchised. Ataka is a true populist party in that Siderov’s charismatic leadership and anti-establishment

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stance enable it to promote ideas that originate on opposite ends of the political spectrum. Moreover, its less obvious left-wing politics has enabled it to consolidate its support among a wide variety of demographic groups. Contrary to what is maintained by most observers, this article will demonstrate that Ataka strategically deploys a discourse of ethnic and religious intolerance to garner popular support on the far right for what is essentially a far-left political agenda.

## **Politics, Populism, and Nationalism in Bulgaria, 1989–2005**

Todor Zhivkov had been Bulgaria's undisputed leader for thirty-five years when he unexpectedly resigned as secretary-general of the Politburo in November 1989.<sup>4</sup> Unlike elsewhere in the Eastern Bloc, however, the communists had few real domestic adversaries; most of the dissenting voices were reformers or gentle critics from within the Party.<sup>5</sup> At a congress early in 1990, the "new" leadership of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) changed its name to the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) and remained in control of the country. Two other political parties quickly emerged, the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF), a coalition of more than ten opposition groups, and the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF), representing Bulgaria's large ethnic Turkish minority.

A handful of nationalist parties also appeared on the political scene, arguing against the restoration of the rights and properties of Bulgarian Turks who had been forced to leave the country in the last years of the Zhivkov era. Although these parties did not have widespread support, they were influential enough to prevent the UDF from joining forces with the "Turkish" MRF. Partially as a result of this divide in the anti-communist forces, Bulgaria became the first country in Eastern Europe to democratically return its former communists to power in the free and democratic elections held in 1990. Whatever support the nationalists might have had in the immediate post-communist era, however, quickly evaporated with the outbreak of the Bosnian war in March 1992. Bulgarians did not want to follow the Bosnians into a sectarian war.<sup>6</sup>

The entire decade of the 1990s was characterized by a political Ping-Pong game between the BSP and the UDF, with power shifting perennially back and forth between them, and with the MRF always playing a decisive role. The first government to fulfill its four-year mandate was the UDF administration of Ivan Kostov between 1997 and 2001, after the BSP had led the country into a total economic collapse in 1996. But the UDF had committed

itself to the structural adjustment of Bulgaria and spent its time in power working closely with both the World Bank and the IMF to restructure and privatize the still largely state-owned Bulgarian economy. On top of this, there were widespread allegations of corruption within the government, and it became increasingly apparent that certain UDF ministers were enriching themselves through the privatization process. Indeed one minister was nicknamed "Mr. Ten Percent" for the kickbacks he allegedly took from each privatization deal.<sup>7</sup>

According to Erik Jones, Bulgaria's first post-socialist populist leader arrived just in time for the 2001 parliamentary elections.<sup>8</sup> Simeon Saxecoburgotski (Simeon II) was the grandson of Tsar Ferdinand Saxe-Coburg von Gotha, the German prince who was Bulgaria's second king after its liberation from the Ottoman empire.<sup>9</sup> Simeon's father was Boris III, a much-loved monarch who is best remembered internationally for his role in saving Bulgaria's Jewish population from the death camps despite his political alliance with the Nazis in World War II. Although he was never officially crowned, Simeon succeeded to the throne after Boris III's suspicious death in 1943. Since he was only six years old at the time, a regency was established, and for a brief time after the war Bulgaria was a communist monarchy until the monarchy was officially abolished in 1946.

Simeon II fled Bulgaria and eventually settled in Spain. When communism collapsed, Bulgaria's new constitution unequivocally declared the nation a republic. In order to prevent Saxecoburgotski from regaining power through democratic means, it included a provision requiring presidential candidates to have been resident in the country for at least five years before the election.<sup>10</sup> This prevented Saxecoburgotski from running for president in 1991.<sup>11</sup> He returned to Bulgaria in 2001, declared his intention to run, and challenged the provision. When the Supreme Court upheld it, he organized the National Movement of Simeon the Second (NMSS) in April 2001, just two months before the elections. Although he had some political support from the monarchist faction, Simeon II appealed more broadly to the general disgust most Bulgarians felt toward the BSP and the UDF.

From a theoretical perspective, Saxecoburgotski could certainly be seen as having run on a populist platform. According to Paul Taggart's definition, populist movements capitalize on popular frustration at the corruption and self-interestedness of those who dominate representative politics.<sup>12</sup> Populists also appeal to the idea of a fixed national identity that unites the populace that the political elite should serve. As the former king exiled



Ataka members work to get signatures to silence the call to prayer.

by the communists, Simeon II embodied the possibility of national salvation with his slightly archaic Bulgarian accent and his royal reputation untarnished by the mire of post-communist politics. Saxecoburgotski's campaign slogan consisted of two simple words: "Trust me." His entire campaign was based on the charisma of the former king and the widespread perception that the other parties were irredeemably corrupt.

The NMSS ultimately took 120 seats in the 2001 parliamentary elections and formed a coalition government with the MRF (the ethnic Turkish party), pushing both the BSP and the UDF into the opposition. Not surprisingly, Simeon II named himself prime minister and appointed a gaggle of young Bulgarians educated abroad to his cabinet, hoping to bring fresh blood to Bulgarian politics. Peter Učeň argues that the NMSS represented a benign "centrist" populism because it was "in no case anti-democratic, anti-capitalist, or anti-Western," and

channeled anti-establishment zeal into support for a party that promised to combat corruption and increase transparency and accountability in government.<sup>13</sup>

In relations with the West, the NMSS turned out to be extremely successful—negotiating for Bulgaria's membership in NATO, preparing the way for the country's accession to the EU, and concluding agreements that would allow U.S. troops to be permanently stationed in Bulgaria. The four years of the NMSS government also saw an inflow of investments from abroad, as foreigners bought up coastal properties and agricultural land from impoverished rural Bulgarians. Unfortunately, however, the NMSS proved to be just as corrupt and opaque as previous governments, and the former king forever besmirched his political reputation by restituting crown lands to himself and allowing his young cabinet ministers to continue the now-entrenched practice of bleeding the state coffers while in office through corrupt privatization schemes

and manipulating the foreign debt. Bulgarians were not pleased with Simeon II's performance and were eager for a new outlet through to vent their growing frustration.<sup>14</sup>

## The 2005 Parliamentary Elections

By the time of the 2005 elections, only the BSP and the MRF had survived the fissures that had fractured the Bulgarian political landscape during the previous four years. The center-right coalition was in a shambles. Two new entities had been formed out of the UDF: the Bulgarian National Union (BNU), a coalition of several smaller parties, and the Democrats for a Strong Bulgaria (DSB), led by Ivan Kostov. A handful of MPs had also split off from Simeon's NMSS to form their own political party, New Time (NT). With so many different parties competing for votes, the NMSS government feared that people would be discouraged from going to the polls. In an attempt to coax Bulgarians out to vote, the NMSS government instituted an Election Day lottery whereby they could win mobile phones, computers, and televisions. Compared with previous Bulgarian parliamentary elections, the campaigns in 2005 were much more sophisticated and expensive. Large glossy posters of smiling politicians were ubiquitous, and the rival campaigns invested heavily in radio and TV advertising. It was thus rather atypical when small, black-and-white A4-sized photocopies (i.e., 8.3 × 11.7 inches) began appearing in the major cities just months before the election.

These posters were striking in their simplicity.<sup>15</sup> They consisted of white letters spelling the word "Ataka" superimposed on a solid black outline map of Bulgaria. Below this uncomplicated image were two lists, "Ataka is for" and "Ataka is against." The "for" list included such points as pulling Bulgarian forces out of Iraq, revising corrupt privatization deals, and making sure that the Bulgarian economy served the interests of the Bulgarian people. The "against" list had four points. Ataka was against: (1) "anti-Bulgarians" in the government, (2) foreign military bases in Bulgaria, (3) the selling of land to foreigners, and (4) ethnic parties and separatist organizations. Beyond the posters, Ataka had a weekly newspaper called *Nova Zora* (New Dawn) and a nightly television show on SKAT TV, a private cable channel, hosted by Volen Siderov. Glossy posters of Siderov began to appear in the weeks immediately before the election, but instead of smiling at the camera in a suit, these posters showed him wearing a black leather jacket and angrily glowering. Below his image were the words: "To take our Bulgaria back for the Bulgarians."<sup>16</sup>

In the run-up to the elections, political analysts and observers paid little attention to the Ataka coalition, which consisted of three small nationalist parties: the National Movement for the Salvation of the Fatherland, the Bulgarian National Patriotic Party, and the Union of Patriotic Forces and Militaries of the Reserve Defense. All eyes were focused on the Bulgarian Socialist Party and whether it would garner enough votes to form a government on its own. But when the votes were tallied, the results stunned both the Bulgarian political establishment and international observers.

Despite the Election Day lottery and the good weather, the turnout was the lowest in Bulgaria's post-communist history. About 1.2 million more Bulgarians decided to stay home for this election than had in 2001, with voter turnout only 56 percent of the population.<sup>17</sup> In a small country of only 7.9 million, such a drop in democratic participation was in and of itself a protest vote. Bulgarians who did go to the polls spread their votes across multiple parties, and in the end seven different groups won seats in the new parliament. The NMSS lost sixty-seven seats, and one national newspaper labeled the election a "Putsch against Simeon."<sup>18</sup> The UDF was decimated, gaining only twenty seats. And although the BSP had won the majority of votes, it did not get enough to form a government by itself or in coalition with the MRF. Instead, an awkward coalition was formed by the BSP, the NMSS, and the MRF.

But the real story was that Ataka had won twenty-one seats.<sup>19</sup> Receiving almost 300,000 votes—8 percent of the total cast by those Bulgarians who bothered to go to the polls—it firmly established a presence for the populists in parliament. Ataka became the fourth-largest party in the National Assembly, beating all three of the center-right political formations against which it had competed. In the midst of the political jockeying to form a new government, the Bulgarian media focused on Siderov's unexpected success (one daily newspaper called him "the new hand of chaos") and the supposed right-wing turn of Bulgaria's electorate.<sup>20</sup> Immediately after the elections, the first cover of the influential weekly news magazine *Tema* featured a photo of an impassioned Siderov shouting into a microphone with his fist raised in the air. The accompanying headline stated that Ataka had made a mess of "the plans of the politicians" in Bulgaria.<sup>21</sup> Ataka's electoral success sent a strong message of defiance to Western Europe, and some feared that it would harm Bulgaria's scheduled EU accession.<sup>22</sup>

The question on everyone's mind was: Who voted for Ataka? The proportion of Ataka voters was rather even

across the country, with the exception of some oblasts with large ethnic Turkish or Macedonian populations. The Ataka coalition won about 10 percent of the vote in Sofia, as well as in more rural regions like Pleven, Sliven, Shumen, Bourgas, and Stara Zagora. In Ruse and Veliko Tarnovo, Ataka won more than 12 percent of the electorate.<sup>23</sup> It was generally assumed that Ataka's racist and xenophobic rhetoric about the "Gypsy terror" and the "new Turkish yoke" had appealed to uneducated and rural Bulgarians, but the exit polls demonstrated that this was not so.<sup>24</sup> Data collected by Alpha Research showed that 42 percent of Ataka's votes came from urban centers outside Sofia and only 16 percent from villages (compared with the 30 percent of BSP support and 78 percent of MRF support that came from villages).<sup>25</sup> Only 18 percent of Ataka voters were between the ages of eighteen and thirty, compared with 24 percent of the UDF and MRF voters. More important, 27 percent of Ataka's votes had come from Bulgarians with a university education or higher, and only 9 percent came from those with no more than elementary education to the eighth grade. Furthermore, 30 percent of Ataka's voters had voted for Simeon in the last election and 11 percent had voted for the BSP. Most significant was the fact that 26 percent of Siderov's supporters had not bothered to vote in the 2001 election, a figure significantly higher than for any other party that won seats in parliament (the highest percentage was the NMSS with 16.5 percent). This meant in part that Ataka had reached out to a new constituency, giving voice to a political agenda hitherto ignored by Bulgaria's political elite. This untapped constituency was an extremely important discovery, since it meant that right-wing rhetoric could inspire otherwise apathetic people to go to the polls.

Journalists and analysts, claiming that Ataka got the votes of those who felt most disenfranchised by the country's transition to democracy, focused on the party's scapegoating of ethnic minorities, especially the Roma and the ethnic Turks.<sup>26</sup> Other observers continued to hold that young people were more susceptible to nationalism than the generation that had grown up under communism.<sup>27</sup> But for many Bulgarians it was the party's attacks against previous governments' slavish obedience to the West that stuck a deep chord. A letter published in *Tema*, entitled "Why I Voted for Ataka," came from a young, relatively well-to-do doctoral student at Bulgaria's top university with a family and a deep desire to live and work in Bulgaria.<sup>28</sup> The writer said that she did not consider herself one of the "losers of society." She felt that previous governments had made important decisions that

**Volen Siderov, Address to the Opening of Parliament, 2005 (excerpt)**

On the first day of the 40th People's Assembly, I want to express the gratitude of the parliamentary group Ataka to all the Bulgarians who disrupted the plans of the oligarchy and the national traitors clique. . . . After 15 years of national betrayals, frauds and criminal plundering, after the arrogant demonstrative policy of genocide towards the Bulgarian people carried out by several parliaments and governments under the dictation of foreign powers, at last the hour of the Bulgarian Renaissance has come. . . . The Bulgarian people have been aroused and have deafeningly slapped the face of the so-called political class that has long turned into a herd of grunting pigs, into unfeeling balls of lard, deaf to the problems and the suffering of their own people. . . . Dear colleagues and guests, the abuses and torrents of negative sentiments that have been poured over Ataka are only proof that we are following the right direction. We have the right to say this because all of these sentiments have come from the national traitors and nihilists, from people who are ready to sell the Motherland for one stipend from [George] Soros or a wad of U.S. dollars offered by foreign agencies. The honest Bulgarian patriots (and they are the great majority of the nation!) have understood that the jackals that are howling against us are doing so because they are pained that there are now some people in the Bulgarian parliament who will expose both their betrayals and their plunders, that there are now defenders of the rights of the Bulgarians in Bulgaria, that there is our movement "Ataka" that brings hope to hundreds of thousands today, and millions of Bulgarians tomorrow! . . . Bulgaria above all! Bulgaria for the Bulgarians!<sup>1</sup>

*Source:* See the full text of this speech in Bulgarian at: [http://www.ataka.bg/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=59&Itemid=31](http://www.ataka.bg/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=59&Itemid=31), accessed October 31, 2005.

would affect her future and the future of her children without consulting her, and as examples she cited Bulgaria's membership in NATO and the elites' headlong rush to accede to the European Union at any cost—even at the cost of the Bulgarian people.

Volen Siderov is a passionate public speaker. His colorful abuse of ethnic minorities and establishment politicians became the favorite fodder of the Bulgarian media, and he himself became something of a national phenomenon. In his first speech on the opening day of the new parliament, the populist leader of Ataka did not disap-



T-shirt worn by Ataka supporter. "Bulgaria above all!" is the Bulgarian version of "Deutschland über alles!"

point, denouncing the previous governments as national traitors complicit in a "genocide" against the Bulgarian people. (See excerpt of speech in text box on previous page.)<sup>29</sup> It is impossible to separate the electoral success of Ataka from the personal history of its chairman.

## The Charismatic Leadership of Volen Siderov

Although there are certainly other high-profile personalities associated with Ataka, the party is most identified with Volen Siderov, and it is his image that represents it on its Web site ([www.ataka.bg](http://www.ataka.bg)) and most of its campaign materials. Siderov was born in 1956 in the city of Yambol and attended a secondary school that specialized in mathematics.<sup>30</sup> Between 1977 and 1980 he studied polygraphy and photography in Sofia, and he eventually became a professional photographer and journalist. In 1987 he matriculated in philology at Sofia University, but with the dramatic political changes of 1989 he left school and never completed his university education. He also briefly tried a distance-learning course in Orthodox Christian theology at a seminary in Shumen, but that too was left incomplete. In the early 1990s, he was a parliamentary

candidate on the UDF list and then became editor-in-chief of the UDF's party newspaper, *Democracy*. In this capacity Siderov was a strident advocate for freedom of the press. He not only controlled the propaganda wing of the anti-communist movement but also used his position as editor to "democratize" the press. One way he did this was by interspersing political articles with "Western-style" advice columns on such subjects as how to have better sex. Perhaps most notoriously, in 1993 Siderov posed for a series of nude photographs for the Bulgarian magazine *Lady*. In one of the most famous, he is seated with a cigar and a glass of whiskey, and in another he is smoking a cigar while reading *Democracy* with a bottle of Johnny Walker on an end table beside him. Nude photos, whether of men or women, had been forbidden in the Bulgarian press under communism, and Siderov personally challenged these conventions in his efforts to liberalize the media.

After his stint as editor of *Democracy*, Siderov became an editor at another influential daily newspaper, *Monitor*. In the run-up to the 2001 parliamentary elections, he tried to ally himself with Simeon Saxecoburgotski, but he was ultimately left off the party list and soon lost his job at *Monitor*. Between 2001 and 2003, Siderov busied himself by writing several popular books that established his credentials as a right-wing nationalist. The first of these, *The Boomerang of Evil*, published in 2002, was a rabidly anti-Semitic text that questioned the historicity of the Holocaust and blamed "a Jewish world conspiracy" for many of the world's ills.<sup>31</sup> Siderov held the Jews accountable for the seventy years of communism in Russia and maintained that "today Judea is called the USA," arguing that the Jews were also to blame for the ravages of global capitalism.<sup>32</sup> The book sold quite well and eventually went into a second edition despite its unabashed anti-Semitism and its author's lack of scholarly credentials.

In *Bulgarophobia*, his follow-up the very next year to *Boomerang of Evil*, Siderov focused on policies and politicians that he saw as acting against the interests of the Bulgarian people.<sup>33</sup> *Bulgarophobia* was far more than a right-wing nationalist tract, however, for upon closer inspection it proves to cater more to the radical left. Although there is plenty of anti-Semitic, anti-Turkish, and anti-Roma rhetoric to satisfy Siderov's far-right supporters, most of the questions posed in the book reflect the concerns of many mainstream Bulgarians about how their country had been run since 1989.

In *Bulgarophobia*, Siderov argues that Bulgaria's elite classes have sold themselves to foreign interests (all in the West) and have manipulated the country's future for

their own economic benefit. A brief look through the table of contents reveals that Siderov rails against Bulgaria's membership in NATO, asking what the economic benefits have been (almost none) and why the country could not be neutral like Switzerland. He severely criticizes Bulgaria's participation in the so-called Coalition of the Willing in Iraq even though the people were so overwhelmingly against it. He also asks why Bulgaria must close two safely functioning nuclear reactors in order to join the European Union, when the closures will turn the country into a net importer rather than exporter of electricity, and will certainly raise costs for Bulgarian consumers. He details the corrupt privatizations of profitable state-owned enterprises to Western firms or to oligarchs who have robbed the state budget of much-needed funds for education and healthcare. He questions the priority on paying down Bulgaria's foreign debt rather than tending to the social needs of the people and is outraged by the constitutional amendments that allow foreigners to buy up agricultural land. *Bulgarophobia* was even more popular than *Boomerang*, and the jacket image of Siderov in a black leather jacket was used on the campaign posters for Ataka's 2005 parliamentary bid. Much of the agenda outlined in *Bulgarophobia* would eventually be channeled into the party's straightforward political platform, the "20 Principles of the Ataka Party."<sup>34</sup>

In 2004 Siderov published *The Power of Mammon*.<sup>35</sup> This book followed in the style of *Boomerang of Evil* in that it was anti-Semitic, further developing the idea of an international Jewish plot to eradicate Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Although *Bulgarophobia* was his most successful and best-known book, Siderov's opponents have focused almost exclusively on *Boomerang* and *The Power of Mammon* as examples of his extreme views. During this period Siderov began hosting a nightly show, "Ataka," on SKAT TV, a private cable channel that claimed to be "the Most Bulgarian Television." He used the show to raise a series of politically inflammatory subjects, such as the high crime rates among the Roma and the dramatic increase in the construction of new mosques across Bulgaria.

Siderov's books, combined with his outspoken televised attacks on Bulgaria's minorities and the alleged Gypsy "reign of terror," made him a pariah in liberal political circles and among Western diplomats. Thus Ataka's unexpected electoral support came as a shock. While some foreign observers compared Siderov to Jean-Marie Le Pen in France, Jörg Haider in Austria, or Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands, Bulgarian intellectuals preferred to put him in the company of Adolf Hitler or the Bosnian

Serb leader Radovan Karadžić.<sup>36</sup> A few members of the European Parliament actually put together a formal statement against Ataka: "a written declaration on protection of people in Bulgaria against neo-totalitarianism," and collected 115 signatures.<sup>37</sup> Washington was also worried, wondering whether the election results were just an ideological flash in the pan or whether Ataka would become a stalwart presence in the ever-fickle arena of Bulgarian politics.<sup>38</sup>

## The Elections of 2006 and 2007

Ataka would have a chance to prove itself in the 2006 presidential elections and the 2007 elections for the European Parliament. After entering the National Assembly in the summer of 2005, Siderov and his colleagues in the Ataka coalition went about consolidating their power and stirring up trouble. On July 13, 2005, the Sofia City Court officially registered Ataka as a party (rather than a coalition) with Volen Siderov as chairman, indicating that the movement intended to become a permanent fixture on the Bulgarian political landscape.<sup>39</sup> Shortly thereafter, in October, Siderov started the daily newspaper *Vestnik Ataka*, aiming to reach beyond the mainly urban audiences of SKAT TV and bring Ataka's message to the most rural areas of the country.<sup>40</sup> *Vestnik Ataka* once again combined radical views from both the far right and the far left with voluminous accounts of the continuing misdeeds of Bulgaria's political elites and tales of Siderov's never-ending assault on the status quo.

In its first year, Ataka at least partially lived up to Siderov's anti-establishment rhetoric. Following the bluster of his opening speech to the parliament, Siderov continued to attack his fellow MPs, particularly those associated with the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, which he denounced as an unconstitutional ethnic party.<sup>41</sup> He also began publicly questioning dubious privatization deals carried out by previous governments, asking for criminal investigations and demanding that corrupt politicians be held liable for harm done to the Bulgarian state. On one occasion, Siderov refused to leave the rostrum and the chairman of parliament was forced to switch off his microphone as he hurled insults against his colleagues.<sup>42</sup> At that point, the Ataka deputies staged a walkout, swearing not to return until Siderov was given the floor once more.

These antics did not endear Siderov to the other MPs and began to cause some fractures within his own parliamentary group. In January 2006, sixty-seven individuals and organizations collectively sued Siderov for instigating hatred and intolerance in society.<sup>43</sup> The

Table 1

**Parliamentary Elections in Bulgaria**

Party	Seats		
	1997	2001	2005
National Movement of Simeon II (NMSS)	-	120	53
Union of Democratic Forces (UDF)	137	51	20
Coalition for Bulgaria	58	48	82
Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF)	19	21	34
Ataka	-	-	21
Democrats for Strong Bulgaria	-	-	17
Bulgaria People's Union	-	-	13
Others	26		
Total	240	240	240

Source: ElectionGuide.org.

following April Siderov and one of his colleagues were the subjects of a parliamentary declaration accusing them of “a brutal act of hooliganism” after they beat up the driver of a car allegedly involved in an “assassination attempt” on Siderov’s life.<sup>44</sup> As a member of parliament, however, Siderov enjoyed immunity from prosecution for any crimes while in office. In July 2006, 147 members of parliament voted to strip Siderov of his immunity, opening him up to legal action, and less than three weeks later a local court in Sofia ordered him to stop making “discriminatory” remarks and to pay a small fine.<sup>45</sup> But Siderov, undaunted, spun the entire scenario to his political advantage. He argued that the political elites, fearing the threat he posed, were conspiring to discredit him and weaken support for Ataka. He told the National Assembly: “Under prosecution and without immunity I shall nevertheless continue to do what I am doing now. I will continue to unmask the political Mafia and will work against it, and the people who believe in me will follow me, regardless of how many more propaganda or media actions against me you will initiate. I will continue to act and you will regret the results.”<sup>46</sup>

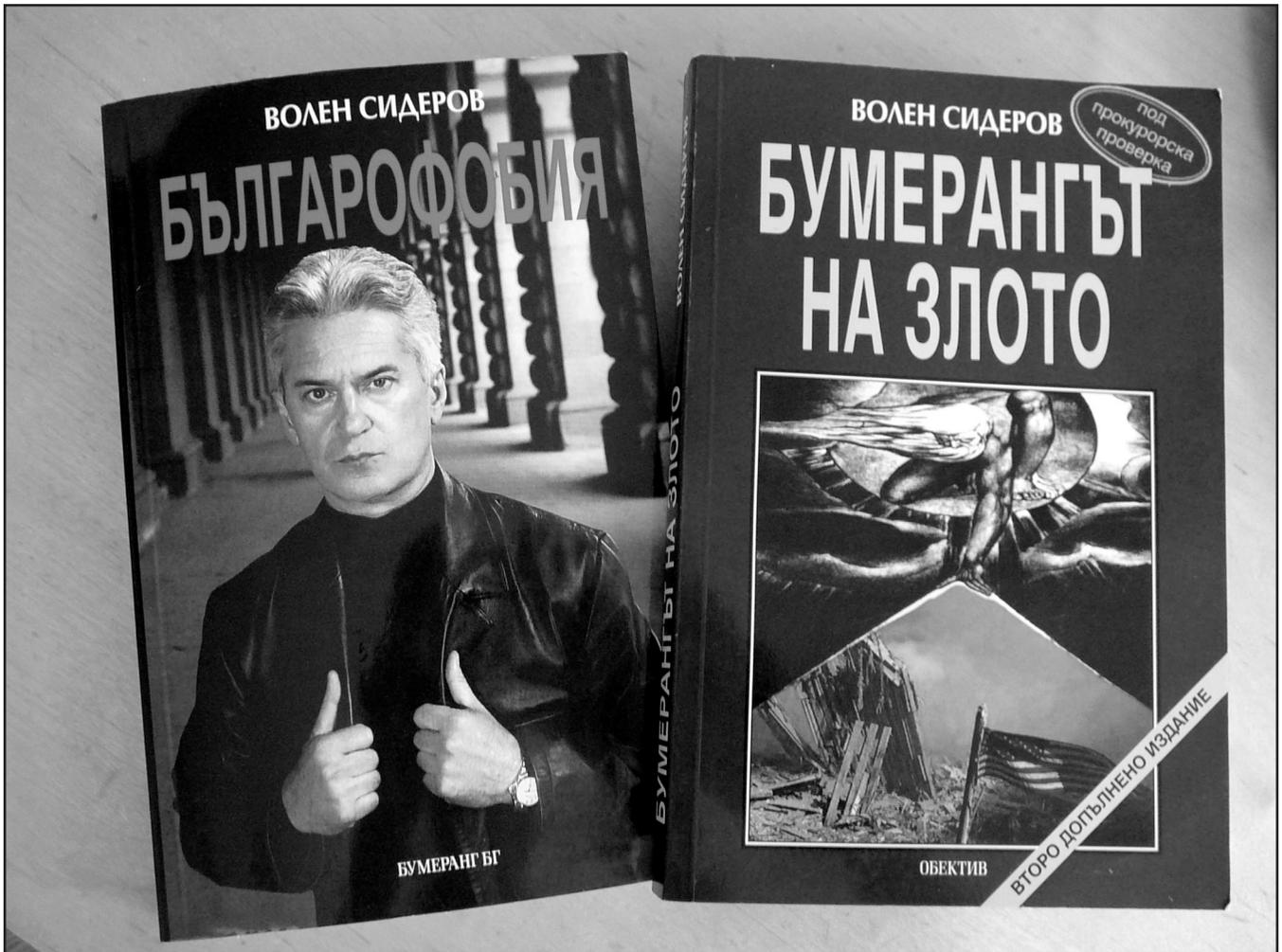
Despite (or perhaps because of) the lawsuits and the negative publicity, Siderov did remarkably well in the presidential elections held in October 2006. The incumbent was Georgi Parvanov, who had the strong support of the ruling BSP/NMSS/MRF coalition. The right-wing parties, and the politically ambitious and charismatic mayor of Sofia, Boiko Borisov, all supported the candidacy of Nedelcho Beronov. Siderov ran as the Ataka candidate with almost no support from the older, established parties.

In the first round, Parvanov won 64 percent of the vote, Siderov won about 22 percent, and Beronov came in an abysmal third with only 10 percent.<sup>47</sup> All told, Siderov won approximately 600,000 votes, doubling Ataka’s support in just over a year since the parliamentary elections. Because Bulgarian law requires a run-off if voter turnout does not exceed 50 percent (it was only 43 percent), Parvanov was forced to face Siderov in a second round. Although Parvanov won in a landslide (with 2,050,488 votes) Siderov still managed to win 649,000 votes, meaning that almost a quarter of the electorate cast their votes in favor of Ataka in the second round. Siderov was soundly defeated, but his strong showing allowed him to claim a modest victory, vowing that Ataka would only grow in influence.<sup>48</sup>

After Bulgaria’s accession to the European Union on January 1, 2007, Ataka’s populist strategy was challenged by the formation of yet another party based on the charismatic leadership of an individual. General Boiko Borisov was a former bodyguard who had served as general secretary of the Ministry of Interior (chief of police) under Simeon II’s government. As mayor of Sofia, Borisov had founded the Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria (GERB) party in order to run in the elections for the European Parliament. While GERB clearly won the day with 22 percent of the vote and five mandates in Brussels, Ataka’s performance was still significant.<sup>49</sup> The BSP won five mandates, and the MRF won four, but Ataka beat both the NMSS and the UDF and took three seats in the European Parliament.

In fact, the Bulgarian EP elections were particularly important for the right-wing Identity, Tradition, Sovereignty (ITS) group in the European Parliament. Ataka sent three deputies to Brussels (Slavcho Penchev Binev, Desislav Slavov Chukolov, and Dimitar Kinov Stoyanov), who, together with new deputies from Romania, strengthened the extreme right-wing group. The ITS, which includes colorful deputies like Alessandra Mussolini and whose largest member is France’s National Front, suddenly gained speaking rights, committee positions, and around €1 million in annual funding now that it could boast a minimum of twenty deputies from six different countries.<sup>50</sup> Dimitar Stoyanov, Siderov’s twenty-three-year-old stepson (and the youngest member of the EP) soon became a flamboyant and controversial figure in Brussels because of his intentional lack of respect for political correctness.<sup>51</sup> Thus, although Ataka most certainly lost votes to GERB, it still managed to pull in almost 300,000 votes in an important election about how Bulgaria’s interests (and image) would be represented in Europe.

The threat from GERB and its own populist leader,



Volen Siderov's books: *Bulgarophobia* and *Boomerang of Evil*. The image of Siderov on the cover of *Bulgarophobia* was used in Ataka's campaign posters.

Borisov, may ultimately hasten the demise of Ataka as a political force. GERB's strong showing in the elections for European Parliament was followed by a resounding victory in the 2007 municipal elections. Borisov's party won the influential mayoralities of Sofia and Plovdiv, Bulgaria's two biggest cities, and won the second-largest number of municipal council seats nation-wide. After the first round of voting, the BSP had 1,114 (or 21 percent) of municipal council seats, ahead of GERB with 924 seats (17.4 percent). By contrast, Ataka, which came in fourth after the MRF, won only 440 municipal council seats, or 8.3 percent of the vote, less than half of what was won by GERB, but still more than the NMSS, the UDF, or the DSB.<sup>52</sup> GERB's popularity rests almost entirely in the charisma of Borisov, and there are predictions that he will become prime minister after the 2009 parliamentary elections.<sup>53</sup>

While Ataka's long-term sustainability is an open

question, the party has already had a significant effect on Bulgarian politics. Thanks to its openly xenophobic, anti-Turkish, and anti-Roma rhetoric, what was once politically unacceptable has become quite mainstream. Inspired by Ataka, Ivan Kostov and the Democrats for a Strong Bulgaria (DSB) party have begun to challenge the constitutional legitimacy of Ahmed Dogan and the Movement for Rights and Freedoms. Siderov has put many politicians in the uncomfortable position of having to agree with him or seem anti-Bulgarian. One example is the situation in Kurdzhali, a regional city with a large population of ethnic Turks. In 2007, the city's leaders wanted to rename several streets after prominent Turkish historical figures, some of whom had taken part in the Ottoman conquest of Bulgaria.<sup>54</sup> Ataka's protests forced other parties and politicians to take a stand on the issue, including Boiko Borisov, who was eager not to appear too

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pro-Turkish.<sup>55</sup> The 2007 U.S. Department of State Human Rights Report for Bulgaria found that almost \$150 million had been used in vote-buying schemes and that the Turks had organized “election day tourism” whereby Bulgarian passport holders residing in Turkey were bused in to vote in municipalities important to the MRF.<sup>56</sup>

Another example is the Sofia City Court’s refusal to register OMO Ilinden-Pirin, a political party that claimed to represent Bulgaria’s ethnic Macedonians. The vast majority of the country’s politicians agreed with the decision on the grounds that there is no distinct Macedonian ethnicity. Bulgaria’s political elites found themselves forced to agree with Siderov, because he would have denounced any support for ethnic Macedonian self-determination as a threat to Bulgaria’s territorial integrity,<sup>57</sup> and in consequence espousing this cause would be political suicide for almost any politician, even one as popular as General Borisov.<sup>58</sup>

Perhaps even more uncomfortable for the ruling BSP and the other centrist parties was Ataka’s high-profile backing of the seamstress strike against a German-owned garment factory in Gotze Delchev.<sup>59</sup> Siderov’s fervent support for the strikers, overworked and underpaid, as are most women in the garment industry, forced other politicians into the difficult position of having to placate foreign investors threatening to leave the country<sup>60</sup> but at the same time stand up for Bulgarian workers in an industry known to be exploitative. The Gotze Delchev strike, and Ataka’s unwavering support for other threatened strike actions against foreign companies, clearly demonstrates the populist nature of its appeal. It can champion issues located anywhere on the political spectrum merely by mobilizing an anti-establishment critique and relying on the charismatic appeal of an outspoken and seemingly ubiquitous leader.

## Right Wing, Left Wing, and Everything

In 2007, when members of the European Parliament were presented with the draft declaration against Ataka, it was entitled “On the Protection of People in Bulgaria against Neo-Fascism.” One member objected to this formulation, however, on the grounds that Ataka was much more communist than fascist, and thus the declaration should be about protecting the people of Bulgaria from “neo-totalitarianism,” a phrase referring to the pre-1989 communist government.<sup>61</sup> Of the many articles and diatribes written about and against Ataka over the last several years, very few have recognized the radical left agenda lying just beneath the xenophobic rhetoric.<sup>62</sup>

The most obvious evidence of Ataka’s leftist tendency

is its ongoing effort to obtain laws that will allow the state to re-examine privatizations<sup>63</sup> and re-nationalize state-owned companies sold to foreign investors under dubious circumstances.<sup>64</sup> Ataka has targeted certain well-known privatization transactions—BTK, the Boyana Film Studios, Balkan Airlines, and the National Electric Company, among many others. In almost all cases, state assets were sold off to foreign investors at well below their actual value, to the benefit of the governments in power. From Ataka’s point of view, all of these assets belong to the Bulgarian people as part of their inheritance from the communist period, and they have been robbed of this wealth by their own political elites, who somehow manage to own mansions and German luxury sedans on their state salaries of about \$300 a month.<sup>65</sup> As radical income inequality becomes more and more visible, so, too, may Ataka’s nationalist economic appeal to ordinary Bulgarians.

Concomitant with the critique of privatization is an excoriating rhetoric against the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Siderov believes that in addition to the large-scale embezzlement of funds from the state budget, Bulgaria has been unnecessarily impoverished by foreign debt repayments to international financial institutions (IFIs), and that previous governments ceded too much power to these foreign interests. In a classic critique of neo-liberalism, Siderov fulminates against the structural adjustment and stabilization policies that slashed state expenditures for healthcare, education, and pension support in order to service ill-gotten foreign debts. Not since the “reform” communist leader Andrei Lukanov suspended foreign debt payments in the spring of 1990 has a Bulgarian politician been so outspoken against the IFIs and their deleterious effects on the domestic economy.<sup>66</sup> One of Ataka’s “20 principles” is that the Bulgarian economy should be “for the Bulgarians,” an appealing slogan to people who have lived through the total dismantling of the once relatively generous welfare state.

This challenge to the World Bank and the IMF goes hand-in-hand with strident anti-Americanism. Ataka was categorically opposed to membership in NATO and participation in the Coalition of the Willing, a position accurately representing the views of the many Bulgarians who were emphatically against sending troops to Iraq. Siderov has organized rallies and circulated petitions against the stationing of as many as 5,000 U.S. troops on Bulgarian soil as Washington moves U.S. European military bases into the country to be closer to the Middle East.<sup>67</sup> Ataka argues that in its entire history Bulgaria has never had foreign troops stationed within its borders (not even Russian ones),

and that it has very little to gain and much to lose from hosting the U.S. soldiers.<sup>68</sup> Siderov says that the country will become a terrorist target when Washington decides to start another war against a Muslim country.<sup>69</sup> All this taps into the widespread outrage that a U.S. decision to launch a military action from the bases could be taken without consulting the Bulgarian government, especially action against Iran, a long-time friend and ally.

Finally, and perhaps most important, is Ataka's extreme Slavophile devotion to Russia.<sup>70</sup> The party's anti-Western, anti-IFI, and anti-foreign-investor positions might seem completely unrealistic and unrealizable unless one factors in the support Siderov is most likely receiving from Moscow. In fact, in many respects Siderov can be seen as taking a page from President Vladimir Putin's playbook, what with all his talk of increasing state power to protect the people from both foreigners and domestic oligarchs who are conspiring to keep them poor and destitute. Bulgaria has a long history of allegiance to Russia, with which it shares both Slavic ethnicity and the Eastern Orthodox faith.<sup>71</sup> More important, it was Russia, invoking the rhetoric of pan-Slavicism, that helped to liberate Bulgaria from the Ottomans when the Western powers refused to help, and this fact is commemorated by the many pro-Russian histories of Bulgaria and by the monuments to Alexander II, the Russian "Tsar Liberator," scattered throughout the country. In addition to historical ties, there are also business connections. Several future oil and gas pipelines are projected to pass through Bulgaria, raising the possibility that Russia is reasserting itself in its old client state by seeking to control almost all of Bulgaria's non-nuclear energy supply. Popular discontent with the West, the emergence of winners and losers in the transition, continuing frustrations with a democracy that seems to only benefit the elites, combined with the reality that Bulgaria will not match the living standards of Western Europe for at least 100 years<sup>72</sup> and that the average wage, as of May 2007, is still only about \$160 a month<sup>73</sup> may lead many Bulgarians to favorably re-evaluate their country's former alliance with Russia. It should not be surprising that Ataka's Web site, which once had several English-language pages, can now only be read in Bulgarian or Russian, indicating the party's growing identification with a renewed pan-Slavicism. Thus, Ataka has two distinct faces, one representing it as a right-wing nationalist party to its allies in Western Europe, and one promoting a Russian version of left-leaning, nationalist neo-authoritarianism justified by the people's inability to defend themselves against corrupt political elites and oligarchs.

## Conclusion

The ability of Ataka and Volen Siderov to balance these two distinct and sometimes contradictory political platforms is a testament to their populist appeal. Ataka has become the anti-establishment something-for-everyone party in a political milieu where most of the other parties have crowded into the pro-Western, pro-market center. There is something deeply ironic in the fact that a party initially so anti-Turkish, anti-Roma, anti-American, and anti-any-type-of-foreign-intervention is now embracing Russia. Ataka seems to be drastically reducing its anti-Turkish and anti-Semitic rhetoric. In 2007 SKAT TV and the party newspaper began to concentrate more on what could be considered left-wing issues, such as strikes and corrupt privatization transactions. This may signal an attempt to expand its base among far-left voters, especially in light of a 2006 survey finding that 86 percent of Bulgarians believe that the state should take care of most things in the country, including providing employment and redistributing wealth.<sup>74</sup> Those who support Ataka from the far right may be willing to stomach the prospect of nationalization, challenges to private property, and a strategic alliance with Russia as long as Ataka remains committed to "dealing with" the Gypsies and the Turks. Similarly, its supporters on the far left may be willing to put up with the party's nationalist xenophobia and hysteria about the "Gypsy terror" as long it continues to advocate for the return and redistribution of illegally gotten wealth. Because of its uncanny ability to combine these two historically contradictory positions, Ataka may be as much a "post-modern" as a "populist" party.

## Notes

1. "Ataka: Zatvor za vinovite, prodali BTK" (Ataka: Jail for the Guilty Ones Who Sold BTK), *Vestnik Ataka* (July 5, 2007): 1–3.

2. "Deputati, koito skriha aferata s telekoma" (Deputies Who Hid the Affair with the Telecom), *Vestnik Ataka* (July 6, 2007): 2.

3. Brown is the color traditionally associated with the Nazis in Bulgaria. "The Brown International" was the title of a cover article in *Tema*, the national news magazine. The cover featured images of Le Pen, Alessandra Mussolini, and Volen Siderov among others. See *Tema* (January 27–February 4, 2006), [www.temanews.com/index.php?page=release&relID=290](http://www.temanews.com/index.php?page=release&relID=290), accessed July 27, 2007.

4. Steven Chiodini, "Bulgaria: An East European Revolution in Suspension," *Harvard International Review* 13, no. 1 (winter 1991): 47–49; Milcho Lalkov, *A History of Bulgaria: An Outline* (Sofia: St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, 1998).

5. Romyana Kolarova, "Bulgaria: Could We Regain What We Have Already Lost?" *Social Research* 63, no. 2 (summer 1996): 543–58.

6. Ivan Palchev, *Ahmed Dogan and the Bulgarian Ethnic Model* (Sofia: National Museum of Bulgarian Books and Poligraphy, 2002).

7. For a detailed discussion of the corruption of privatization in the tourism sector, see Kristen Ghodsee, *The Red Riviera: Gender, Tourism and Postsocialism on the Black Sea* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

8. Erik Jones, "Populism in Europe," *SAIS Review* 27, no. 1 (winter/spring 2007): 37–47.
9. R.J. Crampton, *A Concise History of Bulgaria* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Lalkov, *History of Bulgaria*.
10. Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, promulgated in State Gazette 56/13, July 1991, amended in State Gazette 85/26, September 2003 ([www.parliament.bg](http://www.parliament.bg)).
11. Crampton, *Concise History of Bulgaria*.
12. Paul Taggart, *Populism* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2000).
13. Peter Učeň, "Parties, Populism, and Anti-Establishment Politics in Eastern Europe," *SAIS Review* 27, no. 1 (winter/spring 2007): 40–62. I take issue with Učeň's definition of "centrist" populism, however, because of his normative implication that a political party can cease to be legitimate if it is anti-democratic, anti-capitalist, or anti-Western. In a truly open democratic society, anti-Western political parties are not necessarily populist if their anti-Western sentiment is part of a reasoned political platform and to the economic advantage of the country in question.
14. Kristen Ghodsee, "A Monarch and Prime Minister: Electing the Former King in Bulgaria," *NewsNet: Newsletter of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies* 42, no. 3 (May 2002).
15. An image of these posters is reproduced in a recent book on Volen Siderov. See Simeon Neichev, Vladimir Trifonov, and Ivan Aladzhev, *Volen Siderov mezhdu lazhatata i istinata* (Volen Siderov Between the Lie and the Truth) (Sofia: Bulgarski Pisatel, 2007), p. 57.
16. This image was reproduced in an on-line article for the magazine *Obektiv*. See Krassimir Kanev, "How Should We Think of Attack?" *Obektiv*, no. 123 (May/July 2005): 24–28 ([www.bghelsinki.org/obektiv/123-02.pdf](http://www.bghelsinki.org/obektiv/123-02.pdf)).
17. Polia Alexandrova, "Keeping Attack at Bay," *Transitions Online* (June 27, 2005).
18. "Puch sreshu Simeon" (Putsch Against Simeon), *Novinar* (June 27, 2005): 1–2.
19. For the official results, see the Web site of the Bulgarian Central Electoral Commission for the 2005 parliamentary elections ([www.2005izbori.org/results/index.html](http://www.2005izbori.org/results/index.html)).
20. Hristo Hristov, "Volen Siderov—Novata raka na haosa" (Volen Siderov, the New Hand of Chaos), *Dnevnik* (June 27, 2005): 6.
21. "A taka . . . 'Ataka' obarka planovete na polititzite" (Ataka Messes Up the Plans of the Politicians), *Tema* (June 27–July 3, 2005).
22. Nicholas Wood, "Ultranationalist Gains Complicate Bulgaria's EU Bid," *International Herald Tribune* (June 27, 2005) ([www.iht.com/articles/2005/06/25/news/bulgaria.php](http://www.iht.com/articles/2005/06/25/news/bulgaria.php)).
23. See "Izborite: Rezultatite po regioni" (The Elections: The Results by Region), *Dnevnik* (June 27, 2005): 3 ([www.2005izbori.org/results/index.html](http://www.2005izbori.org/results/index.html)).
24. "Bulgarian 'Attack' Leader Reiterates Opposition to NATO, U.S. Bases," Bulgarian Telegraph Agency (Sofia, June 28, 2005), via BBC Monitoring Europe—Political, *BBC Worldwide Monitoring* (June 28, 2005).
25. The exit polls were conducted by Alpha Research and presented by Boriana Dimitrova in June 2005. The exit poll data were available on-line at the Alpha Research Web site until the 2006 presidential elections and can now be obtained by contacting the organization ([www.aresearch.org/index.html](http://www.aresearch.org/index.html)).
26. Yana Buhner Tavanier, "Massive Attack," *Transitions Online* (July 11, 2005).
27. Albena Shkodrova, "Comment: Nationalism Retains Grip on Bulgaria's Youth," *Institute for War and Peace Reporting* (May 11, 2005), [http://iwpr.net/?p=bcr&s=f&o=242245&apc\\_state=henfbc2422371](http://iwpr.net/?p=bcr&s=f&o=242245&apc_state=henfbc2422371).
28. Antoniniya Todorova, "Zashto glasuvax za 'Ataka' " (Why I Voted for Ataka), *Tema* (June 27–July 3, 2005): 52.
29. Christina Dimitrova, "Opening Salvoes in Parliament," *Sofia Echo* (July 18, 2005), [www.sofiaecho.com/article/opening-salvoes-in-parliament/id\\_11796/catid\\_5/](http://www.sofiaecho.com/article/opening-salvoes-in-parliament/id_11796/catid_5/).
30. Neichev et al., *Volen Siderov mezhdu lazhatata i istinata*.
31. Volen Siderov, *Bumerangat na Zloto* (The Boomerang of Evil) (Sofia: Obektiv, 2002).
32. For a critical review in English of Siderov's books, see Krassimir Kanev, "How Should We Think of 'Attack'?" *Obektiv*, no. 123 (April/July 2005), [www.bghelsinki.org/obektiv/2005/123/123-02.pdf](http://www.bghelsinki.org/obektiv/2005/123/123-02.pdf).
33. Volen Siderov, *Bulgarophobia* (Sofia: Bumerang BG, 2003).
34. "20 tochki na partiya Ataka" ("20 Principles of the Ataka Party"), available at [www.ataka.bg/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=13&Itemid=51/](http://www.ataka.bg/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=13&Itemid=51/)
35. Volen Siderov, *Vlastta na Mamona* (The Power of Mammon) (Sofia: Bumerang BG, 2004).
36. Kanev, "How Should We Think of 'Attack'?"
37. See the text at [www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+WDECL+P6-DCL-2006-0019+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN&language=EN/](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+WDECL+P6-DCL-2006-0019+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN&language=EN/).
38. Author's interview with Gene Gibson, Democracy Officer at the Sofia mission of the U.S. Agency for International Development, July 24, 2005.
39. "Bulgarian Court Registers Nationalist Attack Party," BGNES Web site, Sofia (October 17, 2005) via BBC Monitoring Europe—Political, *BBC Worldwide Monitoring* (October 17, 2005).
40. "Bulgarian Nationalist Party Leader Publishes New Newspaper," BGNES Web site, Sofia (July 13, 2005) via BBC Monitoring Europe—Political, *BBC Worldwide Monitoring* (July 13, 2005).
41. Bulgaria's constitution prohibits political parties based on ethnic or religious affiliations.
42. "Bulgarian Nationalists Stage Walkout at National Assembly Session," *Horizont Radio*, Sofia (August 16, 2005) via Global News Wire—Asia Africa Intelligence Wire, *BBC Monitoring International Reports* (August 16, 2005).
43. Krassimir Kanev, "Why We Are Suing Volen Siderov," *Obektiv*, no. 131 (April 2006), [www.bghelsinki.org/obektiv/2006/131/131\\_all.pdf](http://www.bghelsinki.org/obektiv/2006/131/131_all.pdf).
44. "Bulgarian Assembly Condemns Nationalist Party MPs' 'Brutal Act of Hooliganism,'" BTA, Sofia, (April 12, 2006) via BBC Monitoring Europe—Political, *BBC Worldwide Monitoring* (April 12, 2006).
45. "Bulgarian Nationalist Chief Ordered to Cease Discriminatory Remarks," *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, July 21, 2006.
46. "Bulgarian Nationalist Leader Stripped of Immunity," *Horizont Radio*, Sofia, cited in Global News Wire – Asia Africa Intelligence Wire, *BBC Monitoring International Reports*, July 4, 2006.
47. "Izbori za president i vitzprezident na republikata 2006" (Election for President and Vice-President of the Republic 2006), [www.izbori2006.org/results\\_2/](http://www.izbori2006.org/results_2/).
48. "From the Editor: What to Make of Volen Siderov," *Sofia Echo* (October 30, 2006), [www.sofiaecho.com/article/from-the-editor-what-to-make-of-volen-siderov/id\\_18369/catid\\_27/](http://www.sofiaecho.com/article/from-the-editor-what-to-make-of-volen-siderov/id_18369/catid_27/).
49. Central Electoral Commission, "Za izbirane na chlenove na Evropejskiya parlament ot Republika Bulgaria" (Choosing of Members of the European Parliament from the Republic of Bulgaria), [www.izbori2007.eu/results/index.html](http://www.izbori2007.eu/results/index.html).
50. Ataka's European Parliament election commercials on SKAT TV were openly anti-Islamic, showing images of the British Parliament building, the Vatican, and the Eiffel Tower surrounded by flames and morphing into Turkish-style mosques. These anti-Muslim images were clearly in line with the National Front's anti-immigration and anti-Turkey-in-the-EU stance ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=KTFqei4oYnU/](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KTFqei4oYnU/)). Ataka also called for condemnation of the Turkish genocide against the Armenians ([www.ataka.bg/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=63&Itemid=31/](http://www.ataka.bg/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=63&Itemid=31/)).
51. Nina Alexandrova "Avalanche of Protests Against Ataka in the European Parliament," *Standart News* (September 29, 2006), [www.standartnews.com/en/article.php?d=2006-09-29&article=1016/](http://www.standartnews.com/en/article.php?d=2006-09-29&article=1016/).
52. "Boiko specheli Sofia i Plovdiv, BSP—Varna" (Boiko Won Sofia and Plovdiv, BSP—Varna), *Dneven Trud* (October 29, 2007): 1.
53. Jordan Minchev, "V momenta Borisov e neobhodim na Balgarite" (At the Moment, Boiko Is Needed by Bulgarians), *Tema* (November 2–8, 2007): 17.
54. Lyuboslava Ruseva, "Bitkata za Kardzhali—Mezhdu golyamata glupost i golyamata belya" (The Battle for Kardzhali—Between the Big Stupidity and the Big Screw-Up), *Tema* (July 9–15, 2007): 38–40.
55. The MRF won the mayoralty of Kardzhali city with 62 percent of the

vote, and also soundly won the mayoralties of the six other administrative regions in Karzhali oblast ([www.mi2007.org/results1/09/0916.html](http://www.mi2007.org/results1/09/0916.html)). In the end, there was little need for a coalition between Ataka and GERB because the municipal elections in the Kardzhali region were not free and fair, and MRF mayoral candidates won in every municipality.

56. U.S. Department of State, 2007 Human Rights Report for Bulgaria ([www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100552.htm](http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100552.htm)).

57. Some OMO-Ilinden supporters believe that the parts of Macedonia that are in Bulgaria and Greece should be united with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) to create an independent Great Macedonia.

58. Krassimir Kanev, "In the Case of UMO-Iliden-Pirin, Bulgarian Politicians Followed Attack's Lead," *Obektiv*, no. 138 (January 2007), [www.bghelsinki.org/obektiv/2007/138/138-01.pdf](http://www.bghelsinki.org/obektiv/2007/138/138-01.pdf).

59. "Patriotite oglaviha protesta na shivachkite v grad Gotze Delchev" (The Patriots Headed the Protest of the Seamstresses in Gotze Delchev City), *Vestnik Ataka* (July 6, 2007): 4.

60. "Protests in Bulgaria to Scare Foreign Investors," *Sofia Echo* (July 19, 2007), [www.sofiaecho.com/article/protests-in-bulgaria-to-scare-foreign-investors/id\\_23882/catid\\_64/](http://www.sofiaecho.com/article/protests-in-bulgaria-to-scare-foreign-investors/id_23882/catid_64/).

61. Author's interview with Krassimir Kanev, chairman of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, Sofia, June 22, 2006.

62. One important exception is the work of Nadège Ragaru, a French scholar of Bulgaria. See Nadège Ragaru, "Un parti nationaliste radical en Bulgarie" (A Radical Nationalist Party in Bulgaria), *Critique internationale*, no. 30 (January 2006): 41–56.

63. "Zakon za izmenenie i dopalnenie za privatizatzia i sledprivatizatzionen kontrol" (Law for Amending and Revising the Law on Privatization and Post-Privatization Control), [www.ataka.bg/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=85&Itemid=31/](http://www.ataka.bg/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=85&Itemid=31/).

64. Ibid.

65. There is an extended discussion of this process in Siderov's *Bulgarophobia*.

66. Venelin Ganev, *Preying on the State: The Transformation of Bulgaria after 1989* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 45.

67. "Bulgarian Nationalist says 100,000 Signatures Against U.S. Bases Collected," BGNES, Sofia (March 22, 2006) via BBC Monitoring Europe—Political, *BBC Worldwide Monitoring* (March 22, 2006).

68. "Radical Bulgarian MP Questions Benefits of Agreement on U.S. Bases," BGNES, Sofia, (May 26, 2006) via BBC Monitoring Europe—Political, *BBC Worldwide Monitoring* (March 26, 2006).

69. "Nationalist Leader: U.S. to Bomb Foreign States from Bases in Bulgaria," BGNES, Sofia, (April 27, 2006) via BBC Monitoring Europe—Political, *BBC Worldwide Monitoring* (April 27, 2006).

70. For an example of Siderov's pro-Russian and anti-Western position, see the summary of a speech he delivered in Moscow called "Globalization: The Last Stage of the Colonization of the Orthodox East" at [www.radioislam.org/conferences/#volen/](http://www.radioislam.org/conferences/#volen/).

71. The Russians liberated Bulgaria from Ottoman Turkish rule in 1878.

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