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**Party Identification Theory**

Party identification refers to the political affiliations or groups that individuals identify. Party identification is an important aspect of politics, as it identifies attitudes of people that eventually affect the number of votes that a party can gunner. Research has made assumptions that party identification is a crucial concept in political science and the establishment of modern electoral behavior research. Party identification within specific groups of people is considered to be a psychological identification that is affective, enduring and often socialized. Researches have used political affiliations among individuals to try to understand voter behavior, therefore coming up with political identification theories to try to establish the reasons for political affiliations.

Bulgaria, for instance, has a multi-party system, meaning that there exist different political parties that present different political agendas to the people. In cases where there exist multiparty, different political parties with the same agendas can work together to form coalition governments so that they can rise to power. According to Kuzio, 2008, multiparty systems tend to form coalition governments since the divisions in political ideals prompt varied political identifications among the people. This phenomenon makes it harder for single political parties to rise to power. Therefore, political parties must join with those who share the same ideals so that they can sum up enough voters to win elections.

Bulgaria has five political parties with parliamentary representation. They include GERB, Bulgarian Socialist Party, Movement for Rights and Freedoms, United Patriots and Will. These parties present different political ideals for the people, therefore, different groups of voters in Bulgaria identify with political parties of their choices. The political party of interest in this discussion is the Bulgarian Socialist Party.

The Bulgarian Socialist Party represents democratic socialism, a political democracy that supports a socially owned economy while advocating for political democracy. According to Lenin, democratic socialists are pro the democratic control markets by economic institutions, and also emphasize on worker’s self-management. This implies that voters who identify with socialist political parties will choose equality and freedom over capitalism at any given time. This also implies that socialists are also reformists/Marxists, who will stop at nothing to achieve the change that they desire. The Bulgarian Socialist Party has tried to remove GERB, the conservative ruling political party of Bulgaria. GERB represents the Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria. This shows that party identification for conservatives in Bulgaria is higher than that for socialists.

The conceptual definition for Bulgarian voters that identify with the Bulgarian Socialist Party is that those whose values favor equality and freedom more than capitalism or development will most likely vote for the party. However, the operational dimension of socialist political parties does not necessarily mean that all socialists will vote for the Bulgarian Socialist Party, as some voters will choose development and economic stability over equality. According to Kubicek, 2013, socialists will often choose democracy first to complement their ideas. This might be the reason why GERB, the conservative political party in Bulgaria is the ruling party. Thus, we can make an assumption that Party Identification in Bulgaria is more operational than conceptual.

The rationale for this phenomenon, as seen in Bulgarian socialist voters is that economic ideas of socialists are none the less the same as those of conservatives. Both want economic growth and development, even though socialists prefer it to be owned socially. This phenomenon implies that socialists will identify with political parties that will eventually produce an economic mechanism that is functional, same as conservatives, though socialists will favor factor markets while conservatives will favor capitalism.

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