Chapter 49
Turning Westward:
Information Policies in Post Communist Romania and Bulgaria

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ABSTRACT

This chapter is an examination of Eastern European information policy and practice. Our analysis will explore information policy of two countries in Eastern Europe in the context of cyber security, as exemplified in Bulgaria's Legal and Regulatory framework and Romania's uphill battle to fight cybercrime. In a larger context these nations highlight the struggle between freedom and security in cyberspace; a topic that is universal wherever technology intersects with politics and commerce.

INTRODUCTION

The 21st century faces new tests of international law and cooperation as well as the limits of national sovereignty. The Internet connects communicators throughout the world, dissolving former national boundaries with the flow of ideas. Since physical borders no longer exclude unwanted visitors, strong measures need to be taken to safeguard sensitive information in this interconnected world, while still allowing freedom of inquiry and expression. These tensions are most keenly felt in nations with a recent history of repressive rule, such as the former members of the Warsaw Pact. In the new reality of a post-Soviet world, Eastern Europe finds itself with new challenges such as weakened economies, ethnic divisiveness, and organized crime. Here technology may provide new answers, uniting disparate populations, creating new business opportunities and increased law enforcement capability. The rapid growth of the Internet has connected formerly divided populations and added a dimension of internationalism previously unattainable in society.

Unfortunately, technology has not been only positive in its effects on society. The ease of

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communication in the information age allows hate groups to form online communities. The lack of borders in the online world of the Internet makes it a truly international avenue for attack. Cybercriminals in Romania, for example, can attack servers anywhere in the world, steal personal information or plant automated programs that effectively remove the target system from the owner's control.

In this essay we will compare and contrast information policy in the focus of legal and regulatory frameworks for Bulgaria and Romania. Although their recent historical experiences are similar, these nations emerged from the era of socialist domination with apparently different perspectives. Bulgaria was chosen as a subject because it looks to the West for inspiration and for its strategic future, Romania was chosen because it appears to have the least control of its rogue elements, though new developments give are quite promising. We will examine in detail the attitudes towards information policy as expressed in official communication channels of these nations.

We will also briefly touch on the dialog between liberty and security, played out in the case of Bulgaria in its legal framework, and in Romania in the quest for minimalist government in the form of decentralization (Government Press Office, 2009) versus "promotional government" in Information Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure strategy.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Bulgaria

The first Bulgarian state on the Balkans, the precursor to modern-age Bulgaria, was formed in 681. Bulgaria struggled with the Byzantine Empire during the succeeding centuries to assert its place, allying and warring with the Byzantine state as political fortunes changed. Bulgaria was conquered by the Ottoman Turks by the end of the 14th century (Crampton, 2005), well before the demise of the Byzantine Empire in the 15th century,

Northern Bulgaria attained autonomy in 1878 and all of Bulgaria became independent from the Ottoman Empire in 1908. Having fought on the losing side in both world wars, Bulgaria fell within the Soviet sphere of influence and became a People's Republic in 1946. Communist domination ended in 1990, when Bulgaria held its first multiparty election since World War II and began the contentious process of moving toward political democracy and a market economy while combating inflation, unemployment, corruption, and crime (CIA Fact book, 2009).

The modern political structure is a parliamentary democracy, with a president and vice president elected on the same ticket by popular vote for a five-year term, which are eligible for a second term. The chairman of the Council of Ministers (prime minister) is nominated by the president and elected by the unicameral National Assembly or *Narodno Sabranie*. It is this National Assembly that created the Classified Information Protection Act, Personal Data Protection Act, Access to Public Information Act and the State Commission on Information Security.

Bulgaria is no stranger to computer technology. During the Communist era, Bulgaria produced a series of Apple II -clone computers named Pravetz after the town where they were manufactured, and as the regime collapsed in 1989 was producing IBM PC clones called the Pyldin-601 (Home Computer Museum, 2009). These computers were sold throughout the Comecon (Goodrich, 1988), the Soviet version of the European Common Market, and the electronics industry eventually employed 300,000 workers, generating 8 billion rubles a year (Wikipedia, 2009). These advances were mainly due to the guidance of the Party Chairman Todor Zhivkov (whose hometown, not coincidentally, was Pravetz). Unfortunately, many of Bulgaria's economic successes were based on Soviet largess, and Soviet-bloc markets.