

SÜDOSTEUROPA

Mitteilungen

Zeitschrift der Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft

Summaries Heft 02/2008 48. Jahrgang

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Projecting Stability in a Time of Crisis – The European Union’s Responsibility towards the Western Balkans

On 1 January 2008, Portugal handed over the presidency of the European Union to Slovenia, the only country emerging from the violent break-up of former Yugoslavia at the beginning of the 1990s that has so far been able to join the European Union. As such, Ljubljana had originally planned to use its time at the helm of the Union to promote the EU’s further enlargement to South Eastern Europe.

Yet, Slovenia is now faced with the challenge of steering the EU through the troubled waters caused by Prishtina’s self-proclaimed independence from Serbia on 17 February 2008. Much will depend on the Union’s willingness to use all its resources in order to project stability within Kosovo and throughout the region. This refers in particular to the capability of the EU members to overcome their internal division regarding the recognition of Kosovo’s independence, and also to hammer out a unified position on how to deal with Serbia and the looming threat of a nationalist government in Belgrade.

Mehmet Bardakçı

Civil-Military Relations in Turkey under the AKP Government

The review of civil-military relations in Turkey after the AKP took office demonstrates that there is both change as well as continuity as for the role of the armed forces in Turkish political life. In the first era under Chief of Staff Hilmi Özkök, civil-military relations resembled those in liberal-democratic countries. Due to both General Özkök’s liberal attitude and the AKP’s responsiveness to the sensitivities of the military, civil-military relations were harmonious to a large extent. Furthermore, the EU accession process led the military to keep a low profile, giving the AKP a free hand in passing EU reforms, which reduced the institutional status of the armed forces in Turkish politics.

The new Chief of Staff, Yasar Büyükanıt, who replaced Gen. Özkök in 2006, adopted a hard-line posture towards the AKP government. By comparison, civil-military relations became tense. Not only was Büyükanıt’s understanding of the persistence of the military’s traditional role in politics a cause for the growing gap between government and military, but also were the two significant elections in 2007 – presidential and parliamentary – responsible for the military’s rising concern about

political Islam. During this period the rise in Euroskepticism, which undermined the EU's role as an actor in domestic politics, provided the military room for manoeuvre against the AKP government.

<p>Heinz-Jürgen Axt From Populism to Europeanization: Greek Experiences</p>
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New member states of the European Union are challenged by populist as well as nationalist and even extremist tendencies. What we can observe today has been already a phenomenon when Greece joined the European Community in 1981. The 1980s were characterized by a Greek government, which presented itself as part of the liberation movements fighting against imperialism and capitalism. The EC suffered from headaches as the new member state dissociated itself from important decisions that had to be taken by consensus.

Twenty years later Greece seems to have changed substantially. People increasingly favour European integration and the government pursues a pro-European path.

Three factors seem to be of importance: The Greek economy has been stabilized and has found its place in the internal market of the EU. The political system and culture have been consolidated. And the EU has helped its less developed countries by expanding its structural policy, which has directed substantial financial transfers to peripheral countries.

Based on these experiences the EU has developed the policy of conditionality. Conditionality, however, is limited in its effects and fades away as soon as states join the EU. Subsequently, processes of Europeanization can help to overcome populist tendencies. But as shown by the Greek case one must be aware that it will take decades and not only years.

<p>Anneli Ute Gabanyi Romania: Populism as an Instrument for Securing Power</p>
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Over the past few years, the spectre of populism has been haunting Europe threatening to hamper the emergence of democratic systems in the new EU-, formerly communist East European member countries and the coherence of the enlarged European Union as well. According to the author, populism is defined as a political code directed against the values and institutions of modern representative democracy in order to capture or to maintain political power.

The paper analyzes the development of anti-democratic populism in Romania taking the specifics of the pre-1989 communist regime of Nicolae Ceausescu as a starting point. The popular uprising overthrowing the regime, which took place in December 1989, served as a springboard for the *coup d'état* staged by an anti-Ceausescu counter-elite and was used as a populist argument by exactly that counter-elite to legitimize its violent takeover. Since then, populism has played an increasingly important role during election campaigns in Romania, culminating in the 2004 campaign for parliamentary and presidential elections. It is in particular the overall populist strategy of the newly elected Romanian president Traian Basescu that challenges the country's political system of

representative democracy and the division of power between the institutions in favour of the presidential prerogatives. Moreover, this strategy has created a climate of political instability and social polarization thus posing a danger for the accountability of Romania's foreign policy.

Attila Ágh Hungarian Politics in the Early 21st Century: Reforms and Post-EU Accession Crisis

East-Central European (ECE) countries are facing a period of post-accession crisis that has taken the EU politicians and experts by surprise. In fact, these latest developments have come of necessity from the double pressure of the new EU requirements and the unfinished "home work", the missing social transformation in the new member states. ECE states have to complete their membership inside the EU as they did in case of joining the Schengen zone at the end of 2007, but the accession to the Euro zone is still ahead of them and they are also rather far from meeting the goals of the Lisbon strategy.

The paper focuses on the recent developments in Hungary after the latest elections in April 2006, namely on the efforts of the Gyurcsány government to introduce major reforms in order to remove the roadblocks to the rapid catching up process within the EU. It concludes that the uphill battle for radical reforms is mostly over and the government in the second half of the cycle has a good chance of consolidating the ongoing reforms. Overcoming post-accession crisis completely, however, is still further down the road after 2010.

Sonja Schüler Political Culture in Bulgaria Today
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In view of Bulgaria's monocentric past and in view of manifold problems and challenges concerning the transition period, the fulfilment of the EU's political and macroeconomic stability criteria and Bulgaria's accession in 2007 represent in many regards an important progress in the country's post-socialist development process. Democratic rights, freedoms and institutions have been introduced and market-oriented structures and mechanisms have been set up. However, there are still enormous discrepancies between the legal and institutional framework and its effective operation both on the socioeconomic and the political level.

The article deals with the characteristics and the social perception of political institutions in Bulgaria and analyzes the background of the rising political influence of populist movements in the country.