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The EU's Policies towards its New Eastern Neighbours

A new *Ostpolitik* in the Making or a *Mélange* of Different Concepts and Priorities?

The comparative analysis is primarily based on the two Communications published by the European Commission entitled "Black Sea Synergy – A New Regional Cooperation Initiative" (BSS) of 11 April 2007 and "Eastern Partnership" (EaP) of 3 December 2008 and the ensuing policy documents. Overall, the key objectives are to briefly assess the contents of these two policy initiatives / approaches, examine their interaction and the level of their complementarity – if any – and consider their impact for the Black Sea region as a whole.

To this end, the paper, after a brief historical account and a critical presentation of each policy, focuses on the various setbacks and pending issues of both the Black Sea Synergy and the Eastern Partnership while exploring the 'way forward'. In this regard, the idea is basically to table some proposals or at least to raise the appropriate questions reflecting on the potential implications and the probability of a future *modus vivendi* between the two policies.

Josip Madunić

Euroscepticism in Croatia: A Rift between Society and Politics?

On its way into the European Union Croatia still faces various hurdles. The most pressing problems vary from the current border dispute with Slovenia to corruption issues. Croatia's way to accession has been set back numerous times mainly by intergovernmental political differences on the highest level up to the point where a realistic membership date exceeds the year 2010.

Yet, at the same time public opinion in Croatia on joining the EU has gone downhill within the last decade. The article tries to explain whether, to what extent and why the population of Croatia is in doubt about the European Union, while at the same time the political elites have been pushing continuously for an accession, seemingly disregarding public opinion on the issue.

The level of euroscepticism in Croatia exceeds that of other candidate countries like Macedonia and Turkey by far and is roughly on the same level as the bottom five countries of the EU-27. Euroscepticism in Croatia is driven by unique as well as by

already known variables such as lack of knowledge about the EU, insufficient information, fear of economic disadvantages or lack of trust in national as well as supranational institutions. However, probably the most important reason for the high level of euroscepticism in Croatia is the fear of losing national identity as well as sovereignty, which is in part caused or at least strengthened by the independence war in the mid 1990s and its consequences.

Croatia's political elites on the other hand strive for a quick accession to the EU. This socio-political constellation poses a complex situation for the political stakeholders, who have to consider both the public opinion as well as external reform pressures, often resulting in loss of credibility.

Jürgen Henkel
Psychological Phenomena of Coping with Change – the Example of Romania

The essay refers to the different ways of reflecting the past and of dealing with the new political, social and economic conditions and realities in the post-communist countries after 1989 using the example of Romania. As for the totalitarian systems people had lived in until 1989, both their life style and mentality had to be changed within a few years towards an open society with democracy, pluralism, free market economy and a competition system in all ranks. Living conditions have changed radically, therefore people are still searching for a new identity.

Since 1990, many people have based their lives exclusively on economical success. Accepting egoism, dog-eat-dog-society and loss of social competence and thinking have been accepted as new circumstances and adverse effects in politics, economics and society. Thus, after the communist ideology people are now confronted with the Western ideas of materialism and consumerism in the sense of a preoccupation with and an inclination toward the buying of consumer goods. On the other hand there also exists a considerable religious boom, especially in Romania. The Churches play a stabilizing role offering orientation and moral stability, asking for political and social justice and the conservation of traditional values.

Michael Hein
The Bulgarian Elections to the European Parliament and the National Parliament in 2009

The article analyzes the elections to the European Parliament and the elections to the National Assembly in Bulgaria held on 7 June and 5 July 2009, respectively. First, it outlines the major developments of the Bulgarian party system during the past four years. Second, the reform of the parliamentary election law and the subsequent constitutional court decision are investigated. Finally, the article analyzes the results of the elections, electoral behaviour and voter migration, as well as the formation of the new government. Special attention is paid on the problems of the so-called "controlled vote", i.e. several illegal influences to the results like vote buying or "voters tourism".

In addition to the personal charisma of Bulgaria's new Prime Minister Bojko Borisov,

two main factors are identified as decisive for the GERB party's election victories: the widespread belief that politics makes no difference fed by the "transition consensus" and the EU accession process, and the serious confidence crisis of the Bulgarian political institutions and elites.

Sonja Schüler

Social Networks in Bulgaria: Challenges and Opportunities

In Bulgaria and the macro-region of "Eastern Europe" the collapse of socialism put an end to more than 40 years in which the states had exerted a monopoly of power not only on a political and economic level but also in the sphere of social life. In view of this past and regarding manifold problems of the transition period it becomes clear that democratization – not only in terms of the introduction of an equivalent legal framework and democratic institutions but also in terms of social pluralisation and diversification – represents an important challenge.

Nevertheless, a considerable scope of civic interest groups, clubs, foundations, movements, think tanks and associations emerged in Bulgaria after 1989/90.

The article deals with the scopes and the limits of action of self-organized social networks in Bulgaria and draws conclusions concerning their socio-cultural significance and potentials. Thereby it particularly spotlights civic engagement for the protection of the environment.

Klaus Schrameyer

Filip Dimitrov – A Political Career in Bulgaria

In July 2008, Filip Dimitrov, the former Prime Minister of Bulgaria (1991-1992), left the Bulgarian political scene and the country for a teaching job in the United States. His leaving Bulgarian politics was a heavy loss for all democrats in Bulgaria, because he was one of the very few authentically liberal, democratic and pro-European politicians in his country. He was a statesman, and in addition incorruptible, as even his opponents had to admit when they took leave of him in parliament on 10 July 2008.

During his premiership Dimitrov laid the foundations of the modern Bulgarian state which were: rule of law, democratic institutions, market economy and the fight against the remnants of the old communist order.

Unfortunately he failed after one year as Prime Minister due to the lack of trust of some of his political followers, due to the overwhelming political experience, the financial means and the ruthlessness of the former communists and, as some say, due to the mistakes he made.

It is very regrettable and at the same time significant that since 10 November 1989 millions of young Bulgarians have turned away from their motherland as recently did Filip Dimitrov: Because they lost their confidence in an improvement in the political situation of the country.