

SÜDOSTEUROPA

Mitteilungen

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Schwerpunkt Bulgarien

Ognian N. Hishov

Griechenlands Schuldenkrise:
Welcher EU-Rettungsmechanismus?

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Bulgarien im Wahljahr 2011

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Krisenmanagement – Strategien
in der bulgarischen Bevölkerung

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Batak – Erinnerungsort im
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Main Focus Albania

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Nicholas C. Pano / Miranda Vickers /
James Pettifer / Sašo Ordanoski /
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Ognian N. Hishov

Greece's Imminent Default: What is the EU Supposed to Do?

Greece is expected to default on its unbearably heavy public debt soon. All hitherto attempts to help the country avoid an insolvency failed because the "rescue" provided by the EU and the IMF wasn't a rescue at all. Worse, the 110 billion Euro financial package came at an interest rate too high to be borne and the accompanying austerity program only darkened the growth prospect of the economy.

What is needed is a real relief in the form of a transfer of some 50 percent of Athens's outstanding debt to the EU. To fund the deal some 160 billion Euros now available in the European Financial Stability Facility have to be drawn. Germany's share would be roughly 1.36 percent of GDP – an acceptable cost of avoiding an out of control contagion across the entire euro area.

Main Focus Bulgaria

Marc Meinardus

Bulgaria in the Election Year 2011

2010 marks the first full year of the conservative government of Prime Minister Boiko Borisov, elected in July 2009. Popularity is an imperative for him and as a consequence erratic turnarounds in his decision-making are the "red file" of his leadership. The economic crisis in Bulgaria still needs political concepts how to tackle the burning issues. The urgently needed structural reforms of social security systems, of health care and of education are stuck. The public combat against corruption and organized crime has led to no significant sentences yet. Bulgarian politics more and more resemble a political soap opera with "Boiko" as director and main actor.

Nevertheless, there is no real political alternative for the governing party GERB (Movement for a European Bulgaria). On the centre-right all other political parties would not make the electoral threshold of 4 %. The Bulgarian Socialist Party BSP is still recuperating from its electoral defeat in 2009. The new "political project" of Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov may be a future factor, but will not turn into a political party before the upcoming local elections, to be held jointly with the elections for president in October 2011. GERB will use all instruments of the executive power to ensure its victory in these elections.

Klaus Roth

People's Strategies for Coping with Economic Crises in Bulgaria

Bulgaria – like other Southeast European countries – has a long history of economic crises which have their origins in (a) the Ottoman system of landownership and agriculture, (b) the neglect of, and conservatism in, agriculture after the liberation of 1878, and (c) the misguided industrial and agricultural policy of the socialist state. On the level of everyday life, people developed a variety of strategies and practices to cope with the almost permanent economic crisis. Under socialism, these practices and strategies of crisis management developed into a full-fledged system of “weapons of the powerless”, among them total reliance on personal networks, which made life bearable but also contributed to the collapse of the system. Given the deep economic crisis of the first decade of post-socialist transformation, most people, particularly the losers of transformation, had every reason to cling to their habitual practices. The present financial and economic crisis has given them new relevance for the losers, but ironically also for the winners of transformation.

Grażyna Szwat-Gylybowa

Batak – a Commemoration of Collective Consciousness in Bulgaria

The article reflects one viewpoint in a discussion recently prevalent in Bulgaria which concerns places of remembrance in the national culture. As exemplified by the Batak scandal it analyses meanders of pre-modern and modern discourse devoted to the commemoration of a trauma.

Based on two cultural sources, a well-known and officially approved painting by the Polish 19th century painter Antoni Piotrowski entitled “Slaughter in Batak” and his “Autobiography” currently published only in fragments, the author shows tensions between the intention of the painter and the social function of his artwork in the era when “little narratives” were legalised and changed their status into “great narratives”. A special place in the analysis is taken by the issue of *victimhood nationalism* as a specific tool used by small nations in their political strategies.

Main Focus: Albania

Nicholas C. Pano

Albania 1990-2010: Promise and Fulfillment

The author, who was in Albania in 1990 during the first weeks of the movement that culminated in the overthrow of the communist regime, surveys and evaluates the accomplishments and shortcomings of the country's post-communist transition within the context of the expressed aspirations of the leaders and participants in the events of December 1990. He concludes that the most significant achievements during the past two decades lay in the field of Albania's foreign policy and the country's economic transformation.

As reflected in recent public opinion polls, Albanians express greatest disappointment

with the pace of progress in the evolution of a responsible, competitive multiparty political system and the establishment of the rule of law in their homeland. The future course of Albania's political transition will be heavily influenced by the response of its political leaders to these and related issues.

Miranda Vickers

Albania's Last Twenty Years: Achievements and Failures

Over the past twenty years, Albania has made tremendous progress in a number of fields, most notably in matters relating to social and economic development. Daily life for ordinary Albanians has improved significantly since the end of the one-party state in 1991. Law and order has been restored to make the country one of the safest in Europe, whilst the massive road-building programme has opened up previously inaccessible parts of Albania. In the field of foreign affairs, Albania has joined NATO and striven to improve relations with all her neighbours, becoming a force for stability in the region rather than conflict.

Despite these notable achievements, the country's failures are all too apparent. Democratic structures remain chronically weak, whilst corruption is rampant. There has been serious neglect of the environment, causing erosion of the country's forests, pollution of a large number of rivers and destruction of much of Albania's coastal environment. Meanwhile, chronic and incessant political infighting has caused the opposition to boycott parliament and take to the streets, leaving Albania in a state of political uncertainty.

James Pettifer

Albania: From Hunger to Consumer Society – A Price?

The article considers the dramatic and unprecedented changes in Albania since 1990 and the scale and depth of the transition over those years from an impoverished autarkic communist state to a neo-liberal economy. Although this has brought many material advantages to all the Albanian people, and has opened the country to a normal position in the international relations system, it has not come for free.

Like all small country cultures and languages, Albania is threatened by the homogenising forces of globalisation, and there is a danger of a loss of national cultural identity and cultural tradition. Serious problems have developed affecting both the environment as well as the failing infrastructure, including problems of pollution and environmental degradation. Insufficient attention is paid to basic local agricultural production, producing a food import bill that threatens to destabilise the economy.

Nevertheless, there are grounds for some optimism given the youth and energy of the population, increasingly close pan-Albanian relationships with kinship groups in neighbouring countries and the prospect of developing more secure and functional state institutions.

Sašo Ordanoski

Social and Economic Transformation in Albania When Science Meets Politics

Albania is no different than most of the other Balkan societies: politics is too confrontational, solidarity and compassion almost don't exist. Everyone competes in populist platforms, feverous mantras about EU and NATO integration, and in general, waits for yet another transitional day to pass.

The *winner-takes-all* logic of domestic political contest implies that opponents have nothing to lose, but to win by any cost in order to survive! In the meantime, youngsters are trying to leave the country and to join huge Albanian diasporas, while widespread corruption and *partization* of the institutions obstructs the country's progress into a modern market economy and society with equal opportunities for everyone. Albanian socio-economic and political transition really needs "rethinking." But where to start and who to do it?

Michael Schmidt-Neke

The Development of Albania's Political Party System

Albania's party system does not have any roots in the political systems in power before the take-over of the communist Party of Labour of Albania. Unlike in several East European countries (and Kosovo), but according to the general West European pattern, the main cleavage today is between "right-wing" and "left-wing" parties which corresponds to a regional cleavage between the conservative North and the progressive South. Since 1990/91 the Albanian party system has been divided between a right-of-center camp dominated by the Democratic Party of present Prime Minister Sali Berisha and a left-of-center camp rallied around the – former communist – Socialist Party. Several attempts to set up parties or groupings of parties which acted independently from these two camps had only short-lived success, if any. All parties have strong and stable leaderships, some leaders being on duty now for twenty years.

The decisive factor for the formation of the Albanian party system has been the constantly changing legislation on elections. The electoral system applied in the still controversial general elections of 2009 served the interests of the two major parties and eliminated or marginalized the minor ones. It is well possible that Albania heads toward a pure two-party system which would correspond to the US model, not to the usual European pattern.

Gabriel Partos

Why Are Albanian Elections so Controversial?

Twenty years after the start of Albania's transition from totalitarian communist rule to a multi-party political system, Albanian democracy remains riddled with shortcomings. The conduct of elections, in particular, has remained highly controversial, with the losing side frequently disputing the results.

The brief article seeks to provide a few tentative answers as to why election

outcomes are so fiercely contested in Albania. Among the reasons suggested for this state of affairs is the survival of a Stalinist regime until the eve of the first multi-party elections in 1990, without any process of limited “liberalisation”, as experienced elsewhere in Eastern Europe. This, in turn, led to serious failings in the early post-communist elections, which gave rise to a legacy of intense mutual suspicions between rival political parties. These suspicions have become ingrained, outlasting the improvements in the technical conduct of elections. Besides, as in many other democracies, electoral success provides the winner with a wide network of patronage to dispense favours in return for material benefits. Furthermore, in Albania in some cases the leaders of defeated parties are required to stand for re-election by their parties; and electoral defeat often leads to a loss of trust invested in leaders by their supporters.

<p>Petra Bläss-Rafajlovski The Work of the Albanian Parliament</p>

The lacking functioning of institutions was the main reason for the negative evaluation of the European Commission concerning Albania’s application to the European Union in November 2010. The parliament plays a key role in the still ongoing transition and in the EU integration process.

The article assesses the work of the Albanian parliament. Its main focus lies on the necessary priorities to overcome the lack of political dialogue between government and opposition, to fulfill the parliamentary oversight function as well as the parliamentary duties during the EU pre-accession process. The overcoming of traditional power and clan structures is considered to be the only way to improve the atmosphere in the Albanian parliament which is dominated by heated speech and accusations.

<p>Franz-Lothar Altmann Albania’s European Integration Perspective</p>

On 1 December 2009, the Lisbon Treaty went into force allowing the accession of new countries by an appropriate adaptation of EU institutions. However, one should keep in mind that enlargement these days is only one of several actual political hotspots where the EU is deeply involved and challenged: the regulation of the financial sector following the global economic crisis, energy policy, climate change, migration, and recently the political unrest in the Middle East and Maghreb. In addition, enlargement fatigue in some of the core EU member countries has prompted a problematic rift between those countries and the European Commission which clearly promotes further enlargement.

Another issue is the discussion on “regatta” or “convoy” approach: in the latter case the slowest vessel would determine the accession speed of all applicants. Anyhow, due to the inherent reform and transformation delays, after Croatia’s accession none of the remaining Western Balkan countries can be expected to become EU member before 2020.