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The impact of domestic political challenges towards the accession of Bulgaria to the European Union in January 2007

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2008-10-03T12:24:27Z
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/5720

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International Relations

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Word Count: **27 065.**

Research Title: ***"The Impact of Domestic Political Challenges towards the Accession of Bulgaria to the European Union in January 2007".***

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Johannesburg, 2007.

Abstract

The following research report will look at a series of domestic factors that posed a threat to Bulgaria's integration into the European Union in January 2007. In this light, this research report will evaluate the efforts that Bulgarian political leaders have taken to meet those existing domestic political challenges and thus assess Bulgaria's progress towards meeting the political and economic criteria towards EU membership. This research study will be explained by the theoretical tradition of the *multi-level governance* approach, which assumes the involvement of supranational, national and sub-national actors in the processes of European integration.

Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other university.

Valentin Tassev

5th of September, 2007.

Signature:

Preface

The following research report is an analysis of the dynamics and underlying themes leading up to Bulgaria's eventual accession into the EU. Therefore, the end point of this analysis is the actual event of Bulgaria's accession into the EU on the 1st of January 2007. In this light, the following research report will not try to predict what the political implications of Bulgaria's membership into the EU would be on Bulgarian politics, European politics or on the processes of European integration and enlargement per se. Put simply, this present work will not go so far as to offer an analysis of Bulgaria's membership into the EU from a post-enlargement perspective.

This research report will also not try to illuminate the controversy surrounding the debate of widening versus deepening or integration versus enlargement with regards to the study of European integration. Essentially, this present study will be an attempt to describe the process of Bulgaria's accession into the EU from a clearly enlargement perspective and not necessarily from an integrationist perspective. The main focus of this present study will be therefore the internal dynamics of the accession process seen mainly from a domestic perspective. The choice for this research topic has been deliberate, indeed.

My primary intention was to describe that the agenda towards integration has dominated Bulgarian foreign politics since the early days of democratisation and it has occupied a central place in Bulgaria's transition towards democracy and its whole pre-orientation to the West. I believe that this idea has not received much attention in the scholarly work on European integration and this present study could provide some insight into the link between democratisation and European integration by drawing a reference to this particular case-study.

On the other hand, there has not yet been a vast amount of literature published on this topic or looking at the process of Bulgaria's accession into the Community from a purely domestic perspective. In this regard, I think that the literature on European integration published lately (in fact, since 2004) tends to portray the process of EU enlargement mainly from an EU perspective and thus it neglects the cost of the enlargement process

for the small EU candidates and their long road towards accession. Therefore, my primary attempt throughout this study was to illustrate what it really meant and what it costs Bulgaria to become an EU member, and what series of domestic reforms needed to be implemented so Bulgaria could eventually reach the EU membership criteria.

Last but not least, this present work has been sort of a new experiment for examining the process of EU enlargement with a fairly new research technique. Firstly, the research report aims to describe the process of EU enlargement from a general integrationist perspective. Then, it narrows down the analysis with specific reference to the theme of Bulgaria's accession into the EU (domestic perspective). Lastly, it applies this present case-study back to the theme of European integration and illustrates the essential meaning of integration from the perspectives of both Bulgaria and the EU, and highlights their contribution to the process of integration. In this regard, the aim of the last chapter will be indeed, to illuminate *who* did *what* in the process of Bulgaria's accession into the Community.

I hope that this study may contribute to any older or younger scholar or fellow of European integration, and to anybody who is interested in this particular topic. I also hope that the readers might learn something new from this present work and could probably use it for further work in this area despite the existing limitations of this research report.

Acknowledgements

This present work would not have been completed without the help of a number of people.

First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Ms Natalie Zahringer. Throughout the process of conducting this research, she has helped me a lot. She dedicated most of her time and effort to help me understand the main issues involved in the processes of European integration and apply them to the present study of this research report. At the same time, she constantly followed my progress and encouraged me in times when the research was not going too well or when I was experiencing other sorts of difficulties. Therefore, I would like to express my deep gratitude to her for her patience, understanding and encouragement throughout the process of conducting this research.

I dedicate this present work also to my family in Bulgaria and in South Africa for their continuous support, encouragement and intellectual stimulation throughout all these years. This research report would not have been completed without their help, emotional support and the opinions they have expressed with regards to the choice of a topic for this research report- and more precisely, the theme of Bulgaria's accession into the Community. Perhaps, now is the time to say that actually my family inspired me to conduct this research and they also helped me go in depth with this research question and love it with all my heart. Therefore, I would like to express my deep gratitude to them as well.

Last but not least, I would also like to thank my ex-classmates in Bulgaria whose help, understanding and encouragement throughout the process of writing this research report have been also extremely precious.

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List of Abbreviations

Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP)

Chief Directorate for Combating Organised Crime (CDCOC)

Committee of the Regions (CoR)

Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)

Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)

Court of First Instance (CFI)

Economic and Monetary Union (EMU)

Economic and Social Committee (ECOSOC)

European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM)

European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA)

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)

European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC)

European Community (EC)

European Court of Justice (ECJ)

European Economic Community (EEC)

European Investment Bank (EIB)

European Parliament (EP)

European Union (EU)

Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-Accession (ISPA)

Integrated Administrative and Control System (IACS)

Intergovernmental Conference (IGC)

Joint Aviation Authorities (JAA)

Justice and Home Affairs (JHA)

Members of the European Parliament (MEPs)

National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis (NPAA)

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)

PHARE (Poland and Hungary Action for Restructuring the Economy)

qualified majority voting (qmv)

Single European Act (SEA)

Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (SAPARD)

Treaty on European Union (TEU)

Warsaw Treaty Organisation (WTO)