

THE ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PROCESSES OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

The author proves that political parties are an important element of the political system, a force that represents the interests of various social groups, provides communication between them and forms the domestic and foreign policy of the state. It is noted that Bulgaria's path to the European Union was quite diverse in historical and political context and contributed to positive changes in the political and economic sphere of society. Political parties played an important role in the European integration processes of the Republic of Bulgaria. In the early 1990s a consensus had been formed among the leading political parties on the need for its accession to the EU. Due to this, the course of European integration of Bulgaria was successfully implemented, despite the change of socialist, liberal or conservative political forces in the government.

The official programs on European integration of the most influential political parties in Bulgarian society that had representation in the Parliament and were part of the government since 1989 – the Bulgarian Socialist Party, the Union of Democratic Forces, the National Movement “Simeon II”, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, the “Attack”, the Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB) – were analyzed.

It is pointed out that political consensus between political parties is extremely important in achieving the main goal of Bulgarian society – accession to the European Union and development of the Republic as a member of this international organization.

Keywords: Republic of Bulgaria, political parties, political programs, European integration.

РОЛЬ ПОЛІТИЧНИХ ПАРТІЙ В ЄВРОІНТЕГРАЦІЙНИХ ПРОЦЕСАХ РЕСПУБЛІКИ БОЛГАРІЯ

Автор доводить, що політичні партії є важливим елементом політичної системи, силою, яка представляє інтереси різних соціальних груп, забезпечує комунікацію між ними та формує внутрішню й зовнішню політику держави. Наголошено, що шлях Болгарії до Європейського Союзу був досить різноплановим в історичному і політичному контексті та сприяв позитивним змінам в політичній та економічній сфері суспільства.

Важливу роль в євроінтеграційних процесах Республіки Болгарія відіграли політичні партії. На початку 1990-х рр. склався консенсус провідних політичних партій щодо необхідності її вступу до ЄС. Завдяки цьому курс на європейську інтеграцію Болгарії був вдало реалізований, незважаючи на зміну при владі соціалістичних, ліберальних чи консервативних політичних сил.

Проаналізовано офіційні програми щодо питань європейської інтеграції найбільш впливових політичних партій болгарського суспільства – Болгарської соціалістичної партії, Союзу демократичних сил, Національного руху «Симеон II», Руху за права і свободи, Атаки, Громадяни за європейський розвиток Болгарії, які починаючи з 1989 р. мали представництво у парламенті та були в складі уряду.

Вказано на необхідності політичного консенсусу між політичними партіями як надзвичайно важливого у досягненні основної мети болгарського суспільства – вступу до Європейського Союзу та розвитку Республіки Болгарія як члена цієї міжнародної організації.

Ключові слова: Республіка Болгарія, політичні партії, політичні програми, європейська інтеграція.

Statement of the scientific problem and its significance. Political parties in both Ukrainian and Bulgarian society occupy a special place and play a significant role in social and political life, influence the formation and the activities of the state authorities, economy, social processes and foreign policy of the country. The phenomenon of political changes and European integration of the Republic of Bulgaria should be considered as a kind of experience that is useful in the context of modern political processes in Ukraine. That is why it is advisable and especially relevant to study the role of Bulgarian parties in the process of European integration and their support of the government's policy of joining the European Union.

Analysis of recent research on this issue. Scientific approaches to understanding the essence of the concept of “political party” are defined in the works of M. Duverger, G. Sartori, K. Janda. Some aspects of Bulgarian society's adaptation to the EU membership and the influence of political parties and European integration processes were analyzed by V. Burdiak, M. Milova, and H. Karasimeonov. The reference of the article also includes analysis of the official programs on European integration of the main political parties in Bulgaria.

Formulation of the purpose and objectives of the article. The purpose of the article is to determine the role of the political parties of the Republic of Bulgaria in the European integration processes. To achieve this goal, the author sets tasks to determine the essence of the concept

of “political party”, analyze the official programs of the Bulgarian political parties and find out the role of the most influential political parties in determining the European course of Bulgaria.

Presentation of the main material. The constant high level of scientific interest in political parties is related to the theoretical and practical significance of these political institutions.

In modern political science, there are many definitions for the term “political party”. In particular, the founder of modern party research, M. Duverger, defined parties as organizations that “try to seize power or participate in its implementation” and rely on “the support of the general masses”, in contrast to the pressure groups¹. By G. Sartori’s definition, a party is “any political group that has an official name and participates in elections and is able to fill public positions with its candidates through elections”².

K. Janda proposed a broader definition of a political party³. He considered it as an organization that has the goal of filling in government positions with its own designated representatives. Therefore, it is obvious that political parties are an important element of the political system, a force that represents the interests of various social groups, provides communication between them and forms the domestic and foreign policy of the state.

Participation of Bulgarian parties in preparation for EU membership. It should be noted that Bulgaria’s road to the European Union was quite diverse both in historical and political context. In 1995, the Republic of Bulgaria officially declared its desire to join the European Union. Preparation for EU membership stimulated and financially ensured the implementation of economic reforms in the country. During this period, new political and managerial institutions were created and legal norms were adopted that contributed to the development of business and competitive environment.

At the end of the negotiation process on the European Union accession (2000-2004), the Republic of Bulgaria, according to the European Commission, mostly fulfilled the Copenhagen criteria: formed a functioning market economy, a democratic state that ensures the observance of human rights; mostly harmonized the national legislation with the common law of the European Union⁴.

However, the reforms that were carried out did not improve the standard of living of the population, and the Republic of Bulgaria was not admitted to the European Union on May 1, 2004, like the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe. However, in April 2005, the European Parliament voted for the Republic’s accession to the European Union on January 1,

¹ Александров К. Картельные политические партии: особенности возникновения и политического участия. 2011. URL: <http://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/kartelnye-politicheskie-partii-osobennosti-vozniknoveniya-i-politicheskogo-uchastiya>.

² Sartori G. *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976. 370 p.

³ Janda K. *Comparative Political Parties: Research and Theory*. URL: http://janda.org/comparative%20parties/Janda_on_parties.htm.

⁴ Бурдяк В. Особливості адаптації Болгарії до умов розвитку в складі Європейського Союзу. URL: <http://politologia-rdgu.v.ua/images/pan14/59.pdf>

2007. Thus, the Republic of Bulgaria joined a large European community, which joined more than 500 million people, and the economy, which at that time totaled about 5 trillion euros. This allowed the Republic of Bulgaria and its citizens to assess their own capabilities and make rational use of the billions of dollars of investment that it receives from the European funds in order to improve infrastructure and solve the development problems of other sectors⁵.

It is worth noting that political parties played an important role in the European integration processes of the Republic of Bulgaria. In the early 1990s a consensus was formed among the leading political parties of the Republic of Bulgaria on the need for its accession to the European Union. Due to this, the policy of European integration of the Republic of Bulgaria was successfully implemented, despite the changes of political forces in the government.

The consensus on the priority of the European Union membership persists even now in the Republic of Bulgaria, which contrasts with the spread of eurosceptic sentiments in some European countries. To confirm this idea, we consider it appropriate to analyze the official programs of the most influential socialist, liberal, conservative, nationalist political parties in Bulgarian society, which have had representation in the Parliament since 1989, as well as were a part of the governments that directly dealt with issues of European integration.

Analysis of the programs of the most influential political parties in Bulgaria concerning European integration. The initial foreign policy of the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) fully corresponded to the Soviet policy of “new political thinking”, but quickly evolved: if in December 1989 the relations with socialist countries were declared a priority, then in February 1990 the emphasis was placed on Bulgaria’s participation in the creation of a “common European home”. We should note that in 2008, delegates of the 47th Congress of the Bulgarian Socialist Party adopted a new party program, which consolidated the changes that occurred in the foreign policy strategy of the socialists. Membership in the European Union was seen as an opportunity to realize the full potential of the country, ensure economic development, strengthen democracy and social justice⁶.

An alternative foreign policy to the Bulgarian Socialist Party was pursued throughout the 1990s by the center-right Union of Democratic Forces (SDS), formed on December 7, 1989, from a wide range of opposition parties and movements.

The block’s heterogeneity affected its foreign policy program. The first leaders (Z. Zhelev, P. Dertliev, P. Beron) took moderate positions, focusing on the “new political thinking” of M. Gorbachev. It was believed that Bulgaria should participate in the creation of a pan-European system of collective security. Close relations with the USSR were to be maintained, but the

⁵ Мілова М. Проблеми європейської інтеграції в діяльності Народних Зборів Республіки Болгарія: уроки для України // Наукові праці [Чорноморського державного університету імені Петра Могили]. Сер.: Політологія, Т. 175, Вип. 163, С. 45-48. URL: http://nbuv.gov.ua/UJRN/Npohdipol_2011_175_163_11

⁶ Програма на Българската социалистическа партия „За България: свободни граждани, справедлива държава, солидарно общество“ // Съвременен показател. 2008. № 21. С. 35–37.

need for greater economic independence was proclaimed at the same time. The Union of Democratic Forces advocated the development of friendly relations with all the Balkan States and the restoration of good neighborly relations with Turkey⁷.

At the end of 1990-1991, after moving away from the moderate wing of the party and strengthening the positions of radicals (F. Dimitrov, S. Savov, S. Ganev), the foreign policy program of the Union of Democratic Forces had changed⁸. The SDS begins to focus its activities on moving away from the USSR, withdrawing Bulgaria from the Soviet sphere of influence, and forcing a rapprochement with the West, primarily with the United States. F. Dimitrov said: "We do not want the former dependence on Moscow. And we don't need allied relations as well"⁹. In relations with neighboring States, the Union of Democratic Forces favored multi-lateral cooperation, and advocated close cooperation with NATO members in South-Eastern Europe – Greece and Turkey.

New splits of the party in 1992-1994 led to the fact that reformers headed by I. Kostov, whose foreign policy orientation was determined by pragmatic motives, were put forward for the first positions within the Union of Democratic Forces¹⁰. In their opinion, only cooperation with developed Western States, primarily the European Union States, can lead Bulgaria out of the economic crisis. Regarding the South-Eastern Europe, the reformists continued the course of their predecessors, advocating cooperation with Greece and Turkey, but condemned Serbia's policy of the day. However, it should be emphasized that the economic component of regional cooperation has been strengthened as an important condition for the development of the Bulgarian economy and the strengthening of stability in the Balkans¹¹.

After the loss in the parliamentary elections in 2001 and several splits in the Union of Democratic Forces, this political force has significantly lost its influence, and a sharp drop in the popularity of the SDS caused the strengthening of new center-right political leaders. A conservative party Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB), created in December 2006, immediately took the leading position of electoral preferences.

The main foreign policy objective of the party was declared a "full integration of the Republic of Bulgaria into the European Union." GERB opposes euroscepticism, believing that "in a dynamic, rapidly changing world, the European Union is Bulgaria's only chance to protect and implement national interests on a global scale"¹².

⁷ Предизборна платформа на САС „45 години стигат. Времето е наше“ (1990). URL: http://www.omda.bg/page.php?title=%D0%9F%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B4%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%B1%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%BD%D0%B0_%D0%BF%D0%BB%D0%B0%D1%82%D1%84%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%BC%D0%B0_%D0%BD%D0%B0_%D0%A1%D0%94%D0%A1_1990&IDMenu=209&IDArticle=1631.

⁸ Katsikas S. *All change: The reform effect of image modification within Bulgarian political parties on their foreign policy agendas during the 1990s* // Etudes balkaniques. 2006. № 1. P. 70.

⁹ Млечин Л. И курица птица, и България за граница. Новое время. 1991. № 34. С. 20.

¹⁰ Карасимеонов Г. Партийната система в България. София: Nik, 2010. С. 101–102.

¹¹ Katsikas S. *All change: The reform effect of image modification within Bulgarian political parties on their foreign policy agendas during the 1990s* // Etudes balkaniques. 2006. № 1. P. 74–75.

¹² Политическа рамка на ГЕРБ. URL: <http://www.gerb.bg/Political-frame>.

Centrist parties tried to overcome the split between the left and the right by offering a compromise foreign policy program. In 2001, centrist groups united around the former Bulgarian Tsar Simeon II, who returned to Bulgaria.

As the head of the newly formed party – the National Movement “Simeon II” (NDSV) – Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha won the parliamentary elections and was elected Prime Minister. He led the Government until 2005. Subsequently, during another parliamentary cadence (until 2009), the NDSV was part of the Parliament and Government coalitions. The main foreign policy priority for this political force was for the Republic of Bulgaria to achieve full membership in the European Union¹³. The NDSV advocated for the country’s integration into the EU as quickly as possible, supporting accession to the currency union and the introduction of the Euro as the national currency¹⁴.

The political orientation of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (DPS), which is close to the NDSV, is influenced by two key factors: the ethnic (Turkish) character of the party and its liberal ideology. Since its creation, the DPS has supported the European integration of the Republic of Bulgaria¹⁵, as this would ensure the protection of the rights of national minorities¹⁶. But in the early stages, this process was associated with the normalization of relations with Turkey. In June 1990, party leader A. Dogan declared that “Bulgaria’s path to Europe runs through the Bosphorus”¹⁷.

Since the mid-1990s, after leaving the religious wing of the party (M. Khoja, N. Gendzhev) and in the context of a sharp deterioration in the economic situation of the Turkish minority, the DPS has strengthened the provisions of the party’s program regarding the Republic’s accession to the European Union as its main priority in foreign policy and significantly reduced the intensity of relations with Turkey.

The priority of solving economic problems forced the DPS to reconsider its approaches to developing relations with Greece and Russia. The party leadership actively promoted the opening of new checkpoints on the Bulgarian-Greek border, as well as the development of Bulgarian-Russian relations in the field of tobacco production and trade, which would have a positive effect for the Bulgarian Turks¹⁸. Unconditional support for the Bulgaria’s integration into the European Union and NATO continued into the next decade. The DPS played an important role in the negotiations on the Republic’s accession to the EU. At that time, according to A. Dogan, the policy of European integration was a top priority for the country¹⁹.

¹³ Декларация за основните ценности на НДСВ. URL: <http://www.ndsv.bg/content/28.html>.

¹⁴ Манифест на НДСВ «Политиката, от която се нуждае България». URL: <http://www.ndsv.bg/content/1139.html>

¹⁵ *III* Велико народно събрание. Първо тържествено заседание (София, вторник, 17 юли 1990 г., продължение). URL: http://www.parliament.bg/pub/StenD/2013030802490517071990_1%20тържествено%20заседание.pdf

¹⁶ *Доган А.* Под знака на евроинтеграцията. [w:] България и новият световен ред. София: Институт за либерални изследвания, 2001. С. 68.

¹⁷ Katsikas S. *Negotiating Diplomacy in the New Europe: Foreign Policy in Post-Communist Bulgaria*. London: I. B. Tauris, 2011. P. 70.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* P. 71-72.

¹⁹ Baeva I., Kalinova E. *Bulgarian Turks during the Transition Period* [in:] *Bulgaria and Europe: Shifting Identities* / Ed. by S. Katsikas. London: Anthem Press, 2011. P. 76.

A significantly different position is held by the right-wing party “Attack”, which proclaims a departure from the one-sided orientation to the West. Amongst the new foreign policy areas that the Republic of Bulgaria should focus on, representatives of this party name India, the Far East, Russia, post-Soviet and Arab States. The party insists on Bulgaria’s neutrality and non-participation in military blocs. At the same time, “Attack” does not seek the Republic’s withdrawal from the European Union, although it insists on revising some of the conditions for its stay in this organization²⁰.

Analyzing the main results of the Bulgaria’s membership in the European Union, the Bulgarian political party researcher G. Karasimeonov notes that, firstly, the Bulgaria’s experience has shown that membership is possible if there are several factors: a democratic, reformist government that clearly aims its activities at joining the European Union and NATO; a strong civil society that is ready to join the political elite and support such efforts and a favorable international environment, especially from the largest and most important countries of the European Union²¹.

Second of all, since Bulgaria and Romania had been somewhat behind in their own political and economic development, their membership was accompanied by strict conditions and control from the European Union. The same, and even more severe, situation should be expected for other countries that will join the European Union in the future, including Ukraine. However, in the end, such measures fully met the interests of Bulgaria²².

Third, there is a significant difference between being at the door of the European Union during the negotiation process and being inside the European Union as a full member. Then such requirements of the European Union members for new members are much higher, and the criticism is more severe, compared to the period of negotiations²³.

Fourth, the main challenge for a country like Bulgaria, same as for the most other post-Communist countries, is the transition from a clientelist political system to a modern democracy. The most difficult task is to strengthen the supremacy of law and eliminate the influence of organized crime on the economy and political system. At the same time efforts should be directed towards creating a new type of legal, open and transparent market economy and destroying the so-called shadow economy that still dominates Bulgaria. In other words, the main task is to introduce transparency and responsibility in political and economic processes, while resisting those political and economic forces that use the old ways of conducting negotiations based on the protectionism of the state bureaucracy and corrupt practices²⁴.

²⁰ 20 точки на партия Атака. URL: http://www.ataka.bg/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&cid=13&Itemid=51.

²¹ Карасімеонов Г. Досвід Болгарії як члена НАТО та ЄС (що може використати Україна?) URL: http://gurt.org.ua/uploads/news/2009/02/04/book_ukr.pdf

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

Conclusions. The overthrow of Todor Zhivkov's regime and the dismantling of the command and administrative system became a reality because the Bulgarian society said "no" to the totalitarian past, planned economy, socialist internationalism, and chose the path of democratic development and European integration. The consensus dialogue of the leading parties declaring socialist (BSP), liberal (NDSV, DPS), conservative (SDS, GERB) nationalist ("Attack") ideologies played a key role in determining the European integration course of the Republic of Bulgaria and contributed to positive changes in the political and economic spheres of society.

It should also be emphasized that the study of the Bulgarian experience of European integration is also relevant for other post-Communist States – it is an opportunity for the political elite to take advantage of effective experience by learning individual lessons, and create conditions for more constructive interaction of the most influential political parties in strengthening democratic transformations on the way to EU membership.

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