

DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

POLIT-BAROMETER

Year 23 Issue 7
July – August

Boris Popivanov



The government is stabilising under the increasing political influence of GERB and MRF.



The tension between the President and the government determines the political agenda to a very great extent.



Disputes related to values, culture and history increasingly dominate the media debate and polarise society.

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1

THE DYNAMICS OF FOREIGN POLICY

Ukraine as legitimisation. Clearer and more decisive support for Ukraine in the war with Russia was one of the reasons with which GERB-UDF and “We Continue the Change (Produlzhavame Promianata) - Democratic Bulgaria” (PP-DB) justified the strange coalition between them. That is why the visit of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to Sofia at the beginning of July represented a kind of culmination for this motive. On the day of the visit, the media widely commented that Zelensky had in fact “legitimised” the new government. Despite the contradictions with each other, GERB-UDF and PP-DB together and unreservedly confirmed their commitment to the Ukrainian cause. A month and a half later, recognition of the “Ukrainian legitimacy” also came on a political line - the former chief of staff of the ex-Prime Minister Kiril Petkov and an important figure in PP-DB Lena Borislavova stated that the coalition was formed only because of concerns that the President Rumen Radev with his caretaker governments had distanced Bulgaria from Europe and the general pro-Ukrainian position.

The results of Zelensky’s visit still seem contradictory. Two things seem to have been agreed upon - an additional supply of military equipment to Kiev, mainly armoured personnel carriers, which are yet to come, and the sale of the nuclear reactors planned for the Belene nuclear power plant, which has also failed to materialise. The non-public nature of the negotiations inevitably gave rise to various rumours. Claims that Bulgaria would help Ukraine with missile systems, or that it would begin the rearmament of the northern Bulgarian Black Sea coast, alarmed public opinion and were used by opponents of the government. The activation of relations with Ukraine is undoubtedly making an impression. Prime Minister Nikolay Denkov met with Zelensky again, at a forum in Athens, and Defence Minister Todor Tagarev visited his Ukrainian counterpart Oleksiy Reznikov in Odessa. The ambition to break away from the Russian orbit was also expressed in the decision of the National Assembly to terminate the concession of the company Lukoil for the port in Rosenets.

As regards the institutional side of things, the “Ukrainian legitimisation” has visibly increased the

tension between the government and the President. During Zelensky’s visit to Sofia, the cabinet and Radev seemed to present “two faces” of Bulgarian politics. While Denkov and Zelensky mutually assured each other of their appreciation for each other and the complete concurrence of their views, Radev and Zelensky did not really reach an understanding of the intersection between the Bulgarian interest and solidarity with the victim. Controversies escalated later when Radev expressed the thesis that “Ukraine insists on fighting this war”, Denkov retorted that he was repeating the main points of Russian propaganda, and the Ukrainian embassy in Sofia officially criticised the Bulgarian head of state. In both Bulgarian and foreign media the impression is being formed that the government and the President are divided regarding Western and Russian orientation. In fact, beyond the rhetoric, there is no discernible disagreement in principle, except on the issue of military aid. At the NATO summit in Vilnius, Prime Minister Denkov supported the general decision that Ukraine would not receive a timetable for joining the Alliance for the time being, something that also corresponds with Radev’s view. It is still too early to judge whether the Bulgarian policy towards Ukraine really represents a “new course” or just “legitimation” for internal purposes.

The international authority of Bulgaria. The new government came with the request to strengthen the image of the country as a serious and respected partner in the EU, NATO and in the region. Of the five main priorities in the government programme, two are directly related to Bulgaria’s integration into Europe – membership of Schengen and the Eurozone. There are no great reasons for optimism at this stage. Soon after the inauguration of the cabinet, Austria and the Netherlands confirmed their negative stance about Bulgaria’s application for Schengen. Moreover, the only Bulgarian action in this direction that has received European recognition, namely the mechanism initiated by the former Minister of Justice Krum Zarkov to investigate the chief prosecutor, was practically blocked with new legislative changes. Membership in the Eurozone also motivated the government’s firm decision to keep the budget deficit within 3%,

so as to cover the convergence criteria even at the cost of frozen social payments. But already with the adoption of the new budget, Finance Minister Asen Vassilev has expressed reservations about the realism of this ceiling, and there is a lack of clearer incentives from the institutions of the eurozone itself.

Actually, what turns out to be a bigger problem is the negative contexts in which the name of Bulgaria appears in international politics. In the space of just a few weeks Britain reported a Russian spy network on its territory made up of Bulgarian citizens; French President Emmanuel Macron compared Bul-

garia to Niger as a country where a coup could potentially take place; and Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama admitted that, just in the same way as Russia invaded Ukraine, Bulgaria could do the same to North Macedonia. Sofia obviously seems an easy subject for sarcastic comments at the highest political level. Of course, responsibility for the unenviable situation can scarcely be borne by the "Denkov" cabinet. The point is that the current cabinet is confronted with the task of using its own behaviour to refute the international image of a country, the mockery of which is understandable to everyone, without bearing any diplomatic or other consequences.

2

THE INSTITUTIONS AND THE AGENDA OF SOCIETY

The government and the parliamentary majority.

The current configuration of government has been called an “assemblage” - a word that is difficult to translate into foreign languages and is often quoted in the Bulgarian original by the media of the world. In the first weeks, the majority partners, GERB-UDF and PP-DB, did their best to prove that they were not in a coalition, but only in a temporary agreement, but it seems like this concern has gradually disappeared. The majority has overcome the obvious stumbling blocks, executive appointments, parliamentary committees and public regulators, and stands relatively stable. In most important votes they have also received the support of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF), a fact that allowed critics to speak of a *de facto* “triple coalition”. The government programme adopted at the end of July with five priorities - Schengen, the Eurozone, the fight against inflation, the absorption of funds under the Recovery and Sustainability Plan, and the efficiency of municipal projects - is important not so much for its feasibility as for the impression that the government intends to stay in power for at least a year and a half.

In fact, the cabinet does not bring its programme to the fore, but emphasises two interconnected processes - the constitutional reform and the conflict with President Rumen Radev. The project for changes to the basic law was submitted to the parliament with the backing of GERB-UDF, PP-DB and MRF, and created expectations for fierce discussions during the autumn political season. Four major amendments are stipulated - additional separation of judges and prosecutors within the Supreme Judicial Council; introduction of the right to an individual constitutional appeal; revoking the power of the President to appoint a caretaker Prime Minister and the composition of a caretaker cabinet at his discretion; and fixing May 24th as the national holiday. As expected, the motives of those introducing the project are aimed at strengthening the rule of law, the separation of powers, and national sovereignty. Critical reactions are also to be expected. According to them, it is precisely the division of powers that is called into question (with the majority of the parliamentary quota in the future prosecutor’s collegium) and the

principle of institutional responsibility is undermined (by putting the President in a position to be responsible for a government in whose composition he has almost no say, and the problem of the protection of constitutional rights will be delegated almost entirely to the Constitutional Court). As for the national holiday, the question is legitimately raised as to whether the government, which has limited the funds for culture in the state budget, has the moral right to promote the day of culture as the most important one.

The constitutional changes, unlike all cases hitherto, were neither accompanied by a serious public and expert discussion, nor by a thorough analysis of the consequences. The fact that one project was initially announced, which also included a limited number of mandates for the mayors, and only a week later another was introduced, suggests a process of conjunctural agreements. It is no coincidence that the Justice for All civil initiative, which actively promoted the idea, subsequently ceased its participation. The suspicion remains that a leading factor for the changes is precisely the conjunctural disagreement with the current president of the country, Rumen Radev. The tension between the government and the President certainly dominated the political debate during the summer months. Prime Minister Nikolay Denkov almost completely refuted the positive self-assessment of Radev’s caretaker governments, with the clarification that his cabinet had to “put out fires from day one.” Accusations were levied that Radev and his governments had entered into a dubious contract with the Turkish energy company Botash, thereby opening the door to circumventing anti-Russian sanctions; that they illegally postponed the adoption of a state budget, and once adopted, their budget turned out to have the wrong parameters; that they did not prepare the bills under the Recovery and Sustainability Plan on time, thus putting financial transfers to Bulgaria at risk; and that they tacitly supported the chairwoman of the Electronic Media Council despite her unconvincing stances on free speech. The “supporting pillars” of Radev’s political self-confidence were attacked - the strategic vision on energy, maximum budgetary prudence, the active legislative line,

and the lack of his "own" media support. Attempts to push the President out of operational politics have been under way from the first moment. At the beginning of July, the cabinet suspended the practice of the head of state representing the country at NATO forums, and at the end of August, it was proposed as an imperative that he dismiss the chief secretary of the Ministry of the Interior appointed by him. It even went as far as the initiative of PP-DB member of parliament Yavor Bozhankov, with him coming up with a possible future bill to liquidate the presidential quotas in public and political bodies.

Critics of the cabinet summed things up by saying that the alliance of GERB-UDF with PP-DB had ended the hope of "change" in the last 3 years and returned the "status quo" to power. A return to topics and plots of the past, probably unconsciously, has occurred in the sphere of order and security. The disfigurement of a girl from Stara Zagora prompted the majority to bring an urgent end to the parliamentary recess and adopt new legislation against domestic violence. The murder of the well-known businessman Aleksei Petrov caused many to recall the gangster wars of decades ago. And the return of the major oligarch Vasil Bozhkov from emigration to Dubai raised a number of questions about the rearrangement of business and political strata in Bulgaria. As a whole, the majority, but especially PP-DB, reacted with promises of reforms in the security sector - ones that, among other things, would limit the influence of the President in the sector.

The President. It is a well-founded assessment that since the first day of the new government, the head of state has made efforts to declare himself as their main opponent and their principled alternative. Radev's criticism covers literally all fields of activity of the "Denkov" cabinet - from the way it was formed, through its foreign policy and the fight against crime to constitutional changes. The President indirectly deemed his political opponents to be "nihilists" and "orphans", and later raised the suspicion of them having connections with the murdered Aleksei Petrov; he warned that the "toll" for the war in Ukraine would be paid by "the whole of Europe"; and he directly called the constitutional draft "legally illiterate and politically iniquitous". It was not by chance that quite a number of the ministers in the erstwhile caretaker cabinet, including Prime Minister Galab Donev, received invitations to join the team of advisers to the President. This seemed to create a kind of "shadow government" in the presidential institution. The climax, for now, came with Radev's speech on Mount Shipka, where he urged that there be a "people's movement" in defence of the national holiday on March 3rd. It was logical for politicians and the media to interpret the statement as a call for a new "presidential" party.

It is true that in his function as a political opposition, inevitably overshadowing the parliamentary opposition, the President is stepping on the limits of the Constitution. At this stage, however, these limits have not been crossed. There are no indications that the "people's movement" is the first step towards a party, as it is seen in the concerns of Radev's opponents. If Radev really wants the government to fall, one could argue that with his constant attacks he is achieving the opposite - consolidating it and encouraging their anti-presidential legislative behaviour. It would appear more important for Radev to focus entirely on himself as being in the role of opposition. This undoubtedly works, although the price is not to be neglected. It incurs a current cost (establishing an unambiguously pro-Putin image of the President in the media), but in all likelihood also a future cost (the tendency for powers to be limited).

The Prosecutor's Office. The situation in the prosecutor's office after the removal of Ivan Geshev became deadlocked. The expiry of the mandate of the Supreme Judicial Council gave those in power a reason to call a halt to the procedure for electing a new chief prosecutor. And so it came to pass, just that the other request - that the acting chief prosecutor Borislav Sarafov should resign - was not satisfied. Thus, in anticipation of hypothetical constitutional changes, the prosecutor's office largely preserved its previous appearance as regards staff composition. The National Assembly even helped in this respect by blocking the mechanism already adopted to investigate the Chief Prosecutor. And the decision of the prosecutor's office itself, by which it exonerated former Prime Minister Boyko Borisov in the investigation of wads of banknotes and gold bars photographed in his room, strengthened the belief that the pressure of the "forces of change" against the state prosecution in the last 3 years has subsided.

Public opinion. A variety of public opinion polls over the summer have shown that attitudes toward institutions and major political forces have not changed dramatically. However, the focus of public attention is increasingly not political processes, but the so-called culture wars, which, by the way, are strongly encouraged by those in power. Here are a few examples. The procedure initiated, albeit delayed, to move the Monument to the Soviet Army in Sofia led to human chains and tent camps of its supporters, but also to outbursts of football agitation and threats of physical violence by its opponents. Controversies were rekindled about the role of the Soviet Union and Russia in Bulgarian history, about communism and fascism, and about dependence and sovereignty. Then, the initiative supported by President Radev to erect a flagpole with the Bulgarian flag on the meadow in the Rozhen area in the Rhodope Mountains provoked a storm of disagreements. Topics across the spectrum from na-

tional inferiority complexes to civilisational choices and modern European behaviour, as well as environmental pollution were fiercely debated. After that, the incident in Stara Zagora, in which a girl was disfigured with a knife by her alleged boyfriend, not only brought the lamentable topic of domestic violence back to the public agenda, but also demonstrated different camps in explanations - some that take a good, hard look at the Bulgarian national character and the

unlived patriarchal past; others who find in the incident a conspiracy called to update the rejected Istanbul Convention; others, who explain everything with the unfinished judicial reform. Clashes over these and similar cases have filled the media to a considerable extent. Without leading to any clear solutions, they only seem to have deepened the polarisation in Bulgarian society and favoured civilisational-geopolitical issues at the expense of socio-economic priorities.

3

THE CONDITION OF THE PARTY SYSTEM

GERB-UDF. The leading political power continued their strategy of publicly distancing themselves from the government in which they participate, whilst gaining control of more and more political and economic positions. The practice of GERB leader Boyko Borisov to shy away from responsibility is not something new, and now it is additionally motivated by the campaign for the local elections. GERB formally stand in solidarity with all government initiatives, but carefully avoid conflicting topics. In the first days of the cabinet, there was the suspicion that issues concerning personnel would keep the tension between the GERB-UDF and PP-DB partners acute. In fact, the tension was overcome relatively easily and, it can be said, almost entirely in favour of GERB. The distribution of chairpersons of parliamentary committees with a ratio of 14 for GERB against 3 for PP-DB is indicative. The representatives of GERB Valentin Nikolov and Dimitar Glavchev took over the running of the Kozloduy nuclear power plant and the Audit Chamber, respectively.

An unspoken agreement for minimum concessions to the partner is evident in the case of the selection of the head of the National Health Insurance Fund, in which GERB withdrew their candidate in favour of that of PP-DB, but not without causing a scandal. It would appear that the cases with road construction and in-house contracts are resolved satisfactorily for companies that have connections with GERB. Borisov has a lot to be personally satisfied with, since the investigations against him are gradually being dropped, and the parliamentary commission tasked with dealing with this is losing its focus of activity. The election of the leadership of the Bulgarian National Bank is a suitable metaphor for the balance of power in the majority – GERB representative Dimitar Radev received a second term as governor, while the National Assembly nominated PP-DB candidate Andrey Gyurov and the candidate for MRF Petar Chobanov as deputy governors. From such a point of view, the primary task for GERB now seems to be to maintain its powerful presence in local government. This task only months ago was charged with uncertainty, due to the electoral breakthrough of PP-DB in a number of large

regional centres. However, the lack of strong local structures of the partner-opponent in places, and the hesitations about the nominations and the misunderstandings between PP and DB create conditions for better results of GERB than expected. The noticeable reluctance of GERB to exploit Russophobic plots with the same determination as PP-DB seems to be aimed at the voters of BSP and “Vazrazhdane” with a view to the second round of the local vote.

“We Continue the Change (Produlzhavame Pro-mianata) - Democratic Bulgaria” - PP-DB. The coalition are in a somewhat paradoxical state. They control most ministerial portfolios, but are completely dependent on GERB-UDF and to some extent MRF for almost all their actions. And yet, if we judge by sociological surveys, PP-DB are managing to retain the vast majority of their sympathisers, despite the barely explicable partnership with the “status quo”. Perhaps the inculcated awareness of a geopolitical challenge (with the West or with Russia) plays a mobilising role, although it might also become an Achilles’ heel.

The behaviour of PP-DB looks like an endless series of concessions to GERB-UDF and MRF. In the first days of the cabinet, the criticisms and ultimatums to Borisov and the MRF member of parliament Delyan Peevski poured forth in an irrepressible stream. They have almost disappeared now, replaced by constant consultations, general signatures on bills and short comments that “it is impossible without them”. PP-DB quietly gave up their staffing ambitions in a number of echelons of the legislative and executive power and in public regulators. Their initial announcement to introduce constitutional changes to the mandate of mayors, which would primarily have been damaging to GERB and MRF, was withdrawn almost immediately. The results of pieces of analysis show that only in the field of financial government did the minister Asen Vasilev have the opportunity to accumulate significant power.

The internal tensions in the formation should not be underestimated either. Claims made in the media that companies close to the leadership of PP and DB have

won projects under the Recovery and Sustainability Plan have not yet been verified, but these could cast doubt on the moral assertions of the “forces of change”. In some places in the country (Burgas, maybe Ruse, and others) it already appears that PP and DB will not reach an agreement on joint participation in the local elections and will participate separately. Their joint candidate for mayor of Sofia, Vasil Terziev, has been subjected to serious tests, due to the continuous revelations of his family’s affiliation with the communist secret services. Against this background, the alternative “right-wing” candidacy of the proven anti-communist Vili Lilkov, although with modest potential, may turn out to be a stumbling block on the way to the mayoral post. Nor should the processes of erosion in DB parties be underestimated. Both “Yes Bulgaria” and “Democrats for a Strong Bulgaria” are shrinking their organisational network, while the Green Movement faces a split after a series of serious internal scandals and accusations of corruption. At this stage, there are no indications of a reversal of the negative trend for the entire coalition.

“Vazrazhdane” (“Revival”). The public presence of “Vazrazhdane” shows a decline against the background of the previous months. Earlier in the year, a series of public scandals kept the party in the centre of media and public debate. There were expectations, including some expressed in the last edition of Political Barometer that the fate of the party-initiated referendum on the Eurozone and demands to ban the party itself would dominate the summer political calendar. So far, these expectations have not been fulfilled. Of course, the leader of the party Kostadin Kostadinov and his associates do not fail to complain about how the voice of 600,000 Bulgarians is silenced, but they are not doing anything to increase the political tension in this direction. Two other lines of behaviour are visible – towards organisational strengthening and international legitimisation of the party. “Vazrazhdane” made the ambitious request to nominate candidates for mayors in all 265 municipalities of Bulgaria, independently, in order to express an alternative to the usual unprincipled and omnivorous local coalitions of other parties. In parallel with this, in a short period Kostadinov gave a speech before the congress of the German Alternative for Germany party, visited Bratislava to negotiate cooperation with the local nationalist “People’s Party - Our Slovakia” and joined with the leaders of five other radical right-wing formations to make and proclaim the “Declaration for a Free Europe of Nations” in Budapest. Such “recognition” definitely exceeds the achievements of all previous Bulgarian nationalist formations such as VMRO (The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation), “Ataka” and the National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria. “Vazrazhdane” is becoming a key representative of the “Nationalist International” which is forming in Europe.

On the whole, the stability of support for “Vazrazhdane” is beyond doubt. The party has acquired the public image of a counterpoint to any official policy and capitalises on the actions and messages of other potential “alternatives”. The example of the Monument to the Soviet Army in Sofia is relevant. President Radev carefully spoke out against moving the monument, the “Left!” coalition organised a tent camp to protect it, BSP held rallies with its supporters, but what was remembered was Kostadinov’s verbal confrontation with the fans of Levski football club.

Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF). The party did not realise their advertised goal of officially entering the government, but achieved a political result traditional for them for many years - informal participation in the ruling majority. An empirical indicator of the attitude of MRF to a government has long been known, and it is not support for one bill or another, but support for the budget. In this case, MRF supported the budget of the coalition and indicated its affiliation to it. The constitutional reform, constituting one of the legitimising pillars of the government, turned out to be an additional bonus for MRF, which very quickly, and quite publicly, joined the constitutional majority. The project was also submitted with their signatures. From now on, MRF will have to wait for the development of the situation in order to better market their political claims.

Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP). For yet another month, the Socialists have not shown the ability to take the political initiative and declare themselves as a key political player. During the budget deliberations, there were a number of reasonable proposals from BSP that were not only rejected, but did not become news either. The incessant switching from topic to topic is striking, which hinders the formation of a stable political agenda. The party-initiated petition for a national referendum against the so-called gender education in school ended with the expected failure. The slightly more than 200,000 signatures collected as a real number will probably be below the necessary minimum for discussion of the issue in the National Assembly. The thesis that such “nationally significant” issues would expand the public presence of BSP beyond the core of its sympathisers has also been disproved. The erosion of party support over a decade is noticeable. In their first petition for a referendum in 2012, dedicated to nuclear energy, BSP managed to deposit nearly 4 times as many signatures as in 2023. Now, instead of any conclusions being drawn, the party preferred to enter immediately into other topics of patriotic character and to declare themselves as a defender of March 3rd as the national holiday and of the allegedly threatened studying of the Bulgarian language. It can easily be predicted that the rating effect will not be greater than this either. In all their messages, BSP almost literally repeat President Radev

(more often) and the party “Vazrazhdane” (less often), but fiercely oppose them without being able to explain exactly what they disagree with.

It seems as though the local elections will be a very tough challenge for the socialists. For the first time, there are prospects not only of them not winning any regional centre, but also of not raising their own candidate-mayors in all regional centres (such as in Targovishte). An optimistic signal comes from the nomination of the popular trade unionist Vanya Grigorova for mayor of Sofia, jointly with the “The Left!” and other formations. In this case, however, as in others, there are suspicions that the central party leadership will distance themselves in one way or another from

the initiatives of the local structures that they have not agreed with. The vote will also answer the question as to what extent BSP continue to be a party with national electoral coverage.

“There is Such a People” (“Ima Takuv Narod” – ITN). Significant events in Slavi Trifonov’s party cannot be accounted for. Having assumed an oppositional role, the formation indulges in its typical negative campaign against the major parties, mainly focused on PP-DB. The fact that the upcoming local elections will be the first for ITN is also important. From the status of a parliamentarily represented force, they could prove to be an attractive participant in various local coalitions, including in a leading position.

4

MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND FORECASTS

Towards the end of its first 100 days, the new Bulgarian government seems to have stabilised. The “assemblage” has every chance of withstanding and even overcoming the first big hurdle with the local vote. Various factors explain this perspective - the need for geopolitical stability, the concerns of the President, and the highly compromising behaviour of PP-DB. In the current situation, the government depends almost entirely on the will of GERB and Boyko Borisov, but in the eyes of public opinion, it is associated with the responsibility of the mandate holder PP-DB. GERB is the party that could dissolve the majority with minimal damage. But there are no reasons to do so for now. Moreover, in its history, GERB has shown the ability to co-opt other political forces into its orbit and find them a place (albeit small) in its political combinations. What can be expected at this stage is more of an expansion of GERB’s weight in the governing majority, rather than orientation towards a new majority or pre-term parliamentary elections.

The local elections in October are a challenge not only for political parties, but also for Bulgarian democracy as a whole. Trust in the electoral process is a basic prerequisite for the legitimacy of the political system. The problems that machine voting would raise in such a complex type of election are already being seriously debated. There are proposals for yet another change to the legislation, including one that would make the gap between the two rounds a fortnight. With or without legislative changes, the risks of chaos cannot be completely eliminated. To this we should also add the widely circulated suspicions that the massive personnel changes in the regional directorates of the Ministry of Internal Affairs are aimed at guaranteeing some bonuses to those in power during the course of the elections themselves. Without evidence of these concerns, they are serious enough to suggest some kind of response from the authorities, which has not as yet been forthcoming.

The series of striking and tragic cases of domestic violence throughout the country, the murder of Aleksei

Petrov, and the return of Vasil Bozhkov draw attention to the problems of security and crime. It is difficult to talk about a connection between the events mentioned, but their simultaneity undermines the belief in the rule of law and the victory over backstage machinations. For the sake of the latter goals, those in power are likely to concentrate their efforts in the autumn political season on the submitted constitutional draft and on the legislative framework of the security services. Political discussions will be heated. It will be important which version will prevail in public opinion - whether it is all seen as opportunistic personal interests related to the control of power resources, or a real effort to strengthen security. The government is entering the fray at a disadvantage, first, because of accusations that it is following the plan of “We Continue the Change” from the leaked tape of their meeting, which reveals intentions for a vicious power grab, and second, because of admissions from many authoritative places that the murdered Aleksei Petrov was the key intermediary for the formation of the cabinet itself.

The parliamentary opposition stands in the background in the political debate, in which the majority is opposed not by a particular party, but by the presidential institution. Rumen Radev undoubtedly embodies the opposition to this administration, but it can hardly be claimed that he embodies the alternative, simply because he has not launched another option for political and social development. The temptation to develop such an option could deepen the political crisis in the country. Refusal to do so, however, could gradually squeeze the President out of the political spotlight.

The actions and messages of the majority, which so far have little in connection with solving social and economic problems and too much to do with symbolic battles and redistribution of power tools, create an image of a political configuration that do not know how to or cannot do much, and for this reason they prefer to divide and rule.

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FES Bulgaria has been publishing the „Polit-Barometer“ since 2000, analyzing current and long-term political processes and identifying trends in Bulgarian politics with a special focus on the political parties as democratic actors. In a situation where

the quality and neutrality of Bulgarian media is under question, we aim to provide a scientific basis for a political discussion for Bulgarian and international readers.
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Further information on the topic can be found here:
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