

DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

POLIT-BAROMETER

Year 22 Issue 7
July-August 2022

Boris Popivanov



The pre-election campaign in Bulgaria begins under the circumstances of the dilemma for or against relations with the Russian gas giant Gazprom.



The possibility of a long presidential rule is entering the political debate.



For the second successive elections, the main political battle is shaping up to be between GERB and "We Continue the Change".

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1

THE DYNAMICS OF FOREIGN POLICY

For Bulgaria, just as for Europe and the world, the war in Ukraine continues to be a leading challenge for foreign policy. July and August are traditionally less busy months for diplomacy. Nevertheless, the official Bulgarian position against Russian aggression has been confirmed on various occasions. Bulgarian President Rumen Radev congratulated his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky on the national holiday of the country, expressing Bulgaria's support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine. At a forum of defence ministers from the region, convened at the initiative of Turkey, Bulgarian Deputy Minister Teodora Genchovska categorically condemned the unprovoked military invasion by Russia. Bulgaria, along with 41 other countries, demanded with a special declaration that Russia withdraw from the captured Zaporozhye Nuclear Power Plant and hand it over to Ukraine.

And if, in terms of foreign policy, there has been no significant dynamic in the Bulgarian position up to now, then in domestic politics the topic of the war is increasingly becoming a central dividing line. The transition to a new government and the starting campaign for the early elections on October 2nd have undoubtedly contributed to this. In general, the election campaign is being formatted in the form of a geopolitical clash, the ultimate stake of which is the European and Euro-Atlantic affiliation of Bulgaria. The focus of this clash is the relationship with the Russian gas giant Gazprom, and more specifically the question of whether to seek the restoration of gas supplies from there. This is presented in the media debate as a civilizational choice, on which the decision as to whether Bulgaria will break away from the Russian orbit of influence and finally rank among the European states depends.

The geopolitical axis of the campaign is fuelled to varying degrees and in various forms by the former rulers of "We Continue the Change" (PP) and "Democratic Bulgaria" (DB), as well as by the non-governmental sector. The clear aim of the initiative is to present PP and DB as the only political forces defending Bulgaria's choice of Europe, in opposition to all other parties and institutions, to which in one way or another sympathy for Russia and the regime of Vladimir

Putin is attributed. From here follows the suggestion that Bulgarian citizens supporting the EU should vote for the "European powers" and give them the governance of the country. A vote for other parties would be considered a collective vote for the so-called "Gazprom coalition", a collection of otherwise disparate political entities united only by their overt or covert loyalty to Moscow. As in 2013 and 2020, so now, the civic energy expressed in protests in the streets and squares must show the ruling bodies behind the scenes that they cannot achieve their goals.

The format of the Gazprom Coalition seems to be as broad as it can be. Since PP and DB are striving for a monopoly on pro-European and anti-Russian politics, then all those who are against them are in fact against Europe and for Russia. The removal of the "Petkov" cabinet in June is explained in this context (even then, former Prime Minister Kiril Petkov suspected the Russian ambassador in Sofia of complicity). If at the beginning of the year only "Vazrazhdane" ("Revival") and "Bulgarian Rise" of Stefan Yanev were accused of a pro-Russian agenda, in July and August the accusation was extended to most other parties as well. GERB have been vilified for building Russia's last major infrastructure project, Turk-Stream, for delaying work on the gas interconnector with Greece, and for now openly calling for negotiations with Gazprom. BSP are seen as a cooperative but dangerous party, always ready by virtue of their genesis to look towards Moscow. MRF and ITN with their silence, and with their other political "sins", are seen as potential participants in the "turning to Gazprom". Among the supporters of such a turn are big business (in the person of the head of the Association of Industrial Capital - Vasil Veleve), trade unions (in the person of the economic adviser to the trade union "Podkrepa" ("Support") - Vanya Grigorova) and a significant number of journalists (exposed in a study by the Foundation for Social and Humane Studies as mouthpieces of Russian propaganda). However, the bearer of the greatest power in this situation, President Radev, through his appointed cabinet, is recognised as the most prominent exponent of the "Gazprom trend".

It should be pointed out that the geopolitical context of the political struggle outlined in this way is not shared openly by everyone in PP, DB and the non-governmental sector. But with the help of the geopolitical axis, it becomes possible to tell the party axis of the pre-election campaign in the form of PP vs. GERB, as the strongest party representatives of each of the two tendencies. For different reasons, this geopolitical narrative serves both PP and GERB. PP - because it enables them to hope to unite the pro-European majority in Bulgaria, and GERB - not because they want to be perceived as a pro-Russian party, but because they agree to be perceived as the main alternative to PP, who were formerly in power. GERB have no qualms with

this geopolitical narrative. Instead, they attack it along two lines - First, by accusing the "narrators" themselves of Russian dependencies (more specifically, that those in PP are connected to the Russian oligarchy through the company Gemcorp, and also that they purchase gas precisely from Gazprom, albeit through intermediaries). And second, by constantly changing their position on relations with Gazprom (one day they call for negotiations with the Russian gas giant, then the next day they appeal against any negotiations). Thus, paradoxically, GERB agree to be the leader of the mob in collaboration with Gazprom, but on the condition that they do not actually support Gazprom at all... to be the leader of whoever is not PP.

2

INSTITUTIONS AND THE AGENDA OF SOCIETY

The Government. The new caretaker government was appointed by President Rumen Radev after a month of evidently fruitless negotiations to form a regular government, in which the political forces wanted to show constructiveness rather than actually agree. This is Radev's fourth caretaker cabinet, and the third in the last year alone. His personal team synthesises four approaches of the Head of State. First of all, these are people from a circle close to the president, his secretaries and advisers or ministers in his earlier offices (such as Prime Minister Galab Donev, Minister of Defence Dimitar Stoyanov, Minister of Education Sasho Penov and Minister of Transport Hristo Alexiev). Secondly, these are representatives of the second echelon of previous administrations such as deputy ministers or deputies (such as Social Minister Lazar Lazarov, Finance Minister Rositsa Velkova and Minister of Tourism Ilin Dimitrov). In third place are less popular experts in the respective branches, without memorable political appearances (such as Health Minister Asen Medzhidiev, Minister of Environment and Water Rositsa Karamfilova and Minister of Energy Rosen Hristov). And in fourth place come members of BSP, known as critics of the course of the chairperson Korneliya Ninova (such as the Minister of Justice Krum Zarkov, the sport shooter Vesela Lecheva and the agriculturalist Yavor Gechev). The principle of selection says several things. The President is increasingly building a network of experts and political figures who are associated in public opinion with his governments and with him personally, and whose political careers seem dependent on his political path. What is more, the public presence of the new Prime Minister and his ministers is for now in the shadow of the President, who sets the political strategy of the cabinet and formulates its main messages. The difference is visible compared to 2021, when at least two figures from Radev's offices - Stefan Yanev and Kiril Petkov - stood out in the media as figures with their own influence, later capitalised in the political process. As in previous cases, there is a certain balance of political and ideological views in the cabinet, but now more than ever the "red" element stands out. Radev's orientation towards socialist ministers is not just a gesture towards the socialist party, but also

an opportunity to strengthen its cadres beyond the narrow circle of chairperson Ninova, an opportunity which is otherwise completely eradicated under the current leadership.

The activity of the caretaker cabinet during the first month of its functioning shows three main areas of emphasis. The first is energy as the government's obvious central priority. Even in its first days, the cabinet characterised the situation in the sector as "chaos and ruin" and proposed an institutional solution in the form of an Interdepartmental Crisis Headquarters. In this way, the new powers themselves "chose" the terrain of the battle against the previous government. On the other hand, both PP and other formations and civil structures focused their criticism against the caretaker cabinet and the President precisely along the line of energy. By all accounts, the topic will dominate the election campaign. However, this topic, as it is presented, does not allow for a meaningful debate, but rather a struggle to impose a hegemonic interpretation. The reason for this is that the participants in the discussion do not share common understandings about the nature of the problem and the basic facts related to it. Each of the claims is based on premises that the other side denies.

The basis on which solutions to the gas crisis could be sought could be liberal or realist. The liberal approach presupposes that it is not moral to buy gas from Gazprom at a time when Russia is carrying out aggression against another sovereign state. The realist approach states that the criteria for a gas supplier should be cost effectiveness and reliability of supply. The two approaches are mixed up all the time. On one hand, "Gazprom" is rejected for moral and geopolitical reasons; on the other hand, it is argued that there is no problem in buying from Gazprom if the price of Russian gas is not higher than its alternatives and if the supplier has not proven to be unreliable and ready to break arrangements. Further, there is a series of questions to which Bulgarian society does not receive a clear answer and it would be difficult to make an informed choice. There is no agreement on what Gazprom's scheme of payment is, whether countries

other than Bulgaria use it, and whether it violates EU sanctions against Russia. It is not clear whether the relationship with Gazprom is about the preparation of a new contract or the fulfilment of the old contract, and who is responsible for the non-fulfilment. It cannot be known with certainty what alternative gas supply options the previous administration prepared, with what degree of readiness, and at what price. It is unclear whether intermediaries are being paid and what gas these intermediaries are operating with. There are irreconcilable disagreements on all the topics listed. Therefore, it all boils down to which plot will prove more credible to public opinion - that we are witnessing an unacceptable turn in foreign policy or that it is a matter of working in the interests of Bulgarian business and citizens.

The second area of emphasis in the work of the cabinet concerns changes in personnel. The government has targeted appointments and dismissals not only in the second echelon of power, but also in a significant number of state-owned companies and independent regulators. Accusations of political purging and revanchism have not been long in coming. The scale of the reshuffle in personnel is indeed to such an extent that is unusual for a cabinet whose existence horizon is usually about 100 days. However, the very fact that so many figures have agreed to take the respective positions at the risk of soon being dismissed is indicative of the belief that the President's influence over the executive branch will not come to an end so quickly.

The third area of emphasis rather remains in the shadows, but its long-term importance cannot be ignored. It is related to the institutional strengthening of Bulgaria's European and international integration. The government is assiduously preparing the bills that are necessary for the full implementation of the European Recovery and Resilience Plan, so that the next National Assembly can immediately proceed to discussing and voting on them. Work is being carried out (mostly by Deputy Prime Minister Atanas Pekanov and Foreign Minister Nikolay Milkov) on the answer to the road map for Bulgaria's membership in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), so that the process can be launched in November. The documentation for real membership of the country in the Schengen area is being developed at an accelerated pace (especially by the Minister of Justice Krum Zarkov), with the ambition to make a breakthrough in the frozen procedure in December. The entirely positive position of German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on this issue raises the hope that the ten years of stagnation are a thing of the past. All this shows a serious commitment to foreign policy of the caretaker cabinet, the results of which will be able to be assessed relatively soon.

The President. In the media and mass consciousness, the understanding is gradually strengthening that one of the options facing Bulgaria is a relatively long presidential rule. Since April 2021, the time of executive power has been equally shared between regular and caretaker cabinets. The confrontation between the political forces increases scepticism that the future parliament will be able to form a stable regular government. Thus, the presidential institution is increasingly becoming the centre of power. For Rumen Radev, this means a great risk that all governmental failures during a crisis will be attributed to him. But at the same time, this is also a chance to further strengthen his power tools in the long term. Radev's main resource continues to be high public support. However, it is decreasing. Even from his first term, Radev has been trying to build some kind of balance between the right and the left wing. The "right wing" today seems lost to him due to accusations of geopolitical and anti-democratic sins. The President used to lead protests, while today he is being protested against. The "left wing" is also in question because of the increasingly strained relations with BSP, whose leadership is now openly assuming anti-presidential positions. The constitutionally impossible initiative of the "There is such a people" party for a referendum on a presidential republic does a "disservice" to Radev, because it diverts attention from how he is handling the crisis to what his future ambitions are. In addition, the mass rhetoric about impeachment suggests future options for "anti-presidential coalitions".

The Chief Prosecutor. The decision of the Supreme Judicial Council to refuse to remove Chief Prosecutor Ivan Geshev from his post was expected, but ultimately confirmed his firm positions. Geshev aims to turn the weapons of his opponents against themselves. After a considerable time of the rhetoric of judicial reform being associated with the request for Geshev's resignation, now he has openly declared that he is against judicial reform with the thesis that its only purpose would be to elect a chief prosecutor obedient to politicians. With the unexpected admission that the invasion of the presidential administration by prosecutor's office in July 2020 was a mistake, Geshev is trying to bring the President into his "camp of status quo". The short-term perspective of the Chief Prosecutor depends on two factors. One is related to the composition of the personnel in the parliamentary quota of the Supreme Judicial Council, towards which the future National Assembly will be oriented. The second factor concerns the result of the announced intention of the Minister of Justice Krum Zarkov to appeal to the Constitutional Court regarding the powers of the Chief Prosecutor. In the event of a positive outcome in the Court, Geshev's opportunities to influence political and administrative cases would be significantly reduced.

3

THE CONDITION OF THE PARTY SYSTEM

“We Continue the Change” (“*Produlzhavame Pro-mianata*” - PP). The former first political force head into the elections with the clear ambition of repeating their first place and ruling again. The decision to appear independently, and not in a coalition with “Democratic Bulgaria”, is an expression of self-confidence, but also of political calculation. A coalition with “Democratic Bulgaria” could bring the advantages of a “common pro-European front”, but risks positioning PP entirely in the right-wing space, politically. However, they have decided that it is time to once again present themselves as a “centrist” party, open in all directions, in order to attract as wide a periphery as possible.

A major element of the pre-election rhetoric of PP is the division along the “past-future” axis. Many of the other parties are presented as part of the past that has to be overcome. They speak out against the “old politics”, and against the “retro flavour” of the political process. The call is to “retire the old models”. Conversely, PP claim to embody the “future”, which is concretised in the rejection of the old dependencies (mostly from Russia and Gazprom) and from the old corruption (mostly the illegal and uncontrolled traffic through the Kapitan Andreyev checkpoint). In this sense, the leading opponent of PP is GERB. The party leaves an open door to GERB, but with the condition of the “retirement” of the leader Boyko Borisov. At the same time, despite the series of revelations of the caretaker cabinet against the “Petkov” cabinet, there is almost no rhetoric against the President. It seems that there is an intention not to repel supporters of Rumen Radev, who also like PP, after all. In general, PP have skilfully distanced themselves from the protests and want to instil pragmatism in order to repeat the prerequisites for their success in November of last year. However, it is difficult to predict the electoral effect of the revision of their government. The participation of breakaway splinters from “There is Such a People” (“*Ima Takuv Narod*” – ITN) in the lists could cause disgruntlement in some places among PP supporters, who rightly doubt the electoral added value of these politicians. Also, the presence of two leaders (Kiril Petkov and Asen Vassilev), each of whom has officially been nominated for Prime Minister, creates conditions for media exploitation of

the differences between them. More specifically, claims that Asen Vassilev’s circle is getting rid of Kiril Petkov’s cronies (such as his former chief of staff Lena Borislavova) will inevitably be part of the campaign.

GERB-UDF. Boyko Borisov’s party is preparing for the elections with the conviction that they will not only be the first political force (as sociological surveys indicate), but also that they will be able to govern. The messages are predictable. The brief mandate of PP should be regarded as a kind of political intermission, as the time of the amateurs, which must be got over with quickly so that the professionals can return to politics. Leader Borisov is the standard bearer of the campaign, which is an indirect negative response to calls for his resignation. He behaves like a political patriarch and constantly gives condescending advice and recommendations on what should be done in the administration to get out of the crisis. Borisov does not mind fuelling the thesis that the President wanted to restore the GERB model, deliberately not criticising Radev and even congratulating him on some of his steps. For Borisov, of course, it would be favourable if the revision of the caretaker cabinet weakened PP enough to stop them being an alternative to GERB. A hypothetical situation in which GERB were not only first in the elections, but far ahead of the second party, would be the strongest argument for their participation in power. However, the problem for partners remains open. GERB clearly hope that other political forces will finally be inclined to enter into a coalition with them - firstly, due to concerns about early elections yet again; secondly, due to fear of long-term rule of Radev; and thirdly, because of the alluring sound of labels such as “Euro-Atlantic governance” or “government by professionals”. In this sense, the tactical opponent of GERB is now PP, but the strategic one is Radev. GERB could cement their positions in power only with new success in the local elections in 2023. For this to happen, it would not be good for them if Radev were to control or balance Bulgarian politics in the coming year as well.

Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF). The ambition of the MRF, expressed by leader Mustafa

Karadayi, is not just a strong result in the elections, but also a share in power. A major problem, just as before, is getting out of political isolation. This is also a personal task for Karadayi, and his political perspective depends on the successful solution of it. The comments in the media close to the movement that the moment is for a campaign on the ground, and not for television appearances, are hardly accidental (as shown, for example, by the MEP from the party, Ilhan Kyu uk, who has devoted himself almost exclusively to the case with North Macedonia). A strong result for MRF could turn it into an unavoidable factor for getting out of the political crisis. There are several prerequisites. Karadayi's visit to Ankara for a meeting with Turkish President Recep Erdogan is probably a sign that a strong vote for MRF can be expected from Bulgarian expatriates in Turkey. This visit has not only an electoral but also an economic dimension. If it is true that Turkey could mediate additional gas supplies to Bulgaria, this would give MRF a chance to establish themselves as a true nationally responsible party in the difficult winter season. There are indications that MRF expect an electoral decline in PP. With serious mobilisation, in such a case, Karadayi's party could even claim second place in the elections. In this hypothesis, a coalition with GERB would sound logical. If we judge by the messages so far, this is the option preferred by MRF - governing together with GERB.

Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP). Two aspects distinguish the electoral behaviour of the left wing. First is the emphasis on the "calendar of successes." More than any other party of the former quadruple coalition, BSP place emphasis on their achievements in the social field and call on voters to support them. In second place is the new phase of the tension between party chairwoman Korneliya Ninova and President Radev, which has reached a public and open conflict. The "calendar of successes" strategy is risky not because BSP cannot boast social results from their stay in power, but because inflation has largely minimised those results and they cannot be seen as a tangible step forward.

The attack on the President, beyond the emotional logic, probably also has political goals. This is an attempt to further consolidate the internal party power of Korneliya Ninova. After removing or silencing most of her party opponents, the task is now to avoid the "dual loyalty" of party sympathisers - to her and to Radev. Ninova's rhetoric against the "revanchism" of the caretaker cabinet should justify her own personnel changes in the Ministry of Economy and in state-owned enterprises. The current "purge" should downplay the previous "purge". Apparently, the focus on Radev conceals the hope that the campaign will continue against this background (BSP against the President), and not against the background of the PP-GERB conflict. If BSP are viewed as Radev's main opponent, it could probably attract voters who are

dissatisfied with the President. And last but not least, the accusations against Radev also serve as an advance justification for a future electoral failure. Here one can mention the warnings that the President's alleged actions against the left wing "could affect the election results". We should not forget either that, according to the leadership of BSP, machine voting alienates many of their voters. And it is precisely the President who is behind machine voting.

All this, however, at this stage points to BSP closing in on themselves instead of expanding their electoral and political periphery. The tendencies of internal party disintegration are visible in a number of local structures (Vidin and Pernik), and the reorganisation of entire organisations (Plovdiv) does little to increase the motivation of the removed party activists. The choice of leaders in the party lists is extremely unconvincing. These are the same people who have lost three successive elections. A number of them are also perceived as alien and external in their constituencies. There is also an open struggle for the party's symbolic legacy. The institute which was founded by the former Sofia leader Kaloyan Pargov, and the "Progress" Platform, launched by left-wing sympathisers, are examples of how the discussion of social and progressive policies is moving irrevocably beyond the party structures. The election of BSP members as caretaker ministers (and especially of Krum Zarkov as Minister of Justice) in turn testifies that party cadres can successfully assume positions of power even without the blessing of Ninova and her team. This puts the BSP leadership in a position of helplessness regarding guiding and dictating the processes. Their only hope remains the loyalty of a die-hard electorate.

"There is Such a People" ("Ima Takuv Narod" - ITN). Slavi Trifonov's party is subjected to powerful media and political ostracism because of the suggestion that it is an entirely destructive force, incapable of contributing anything positive to Bulgaria. However, it is still too early to write off members of ITN as participants in the future parliament. Initiatives such as the constitutionally impossible referendum on a presidential republic come as a serious populist blast and show the ability of ITN to impose an agenda on society.

"Democratic Bulgaria" (DB). The coalition did its best to appear together with PP in the elections, but was rejected. Probably, the reasons for this effort were twofold: concerns that DB voters could flock to PP, and in a general format this would not be evident; and a belief that with their greater political and organisational experience, the leaders of the DB would be able to effectively dictate the policy of PP. Concerns about voters drifting away now remain. It is true that PP have distanced themselves somewhat from the "niche" of DB: they declared themselves a centrist party, they did not participate in the protests against the President, they did not use moral argumentation

against Gazprom. This gives DB a certain chance to consolidate their traditional voters. But the problem with motivation has not been overcome, and the personal leadership authority of Hristo Ivanov and Atanas Atanasov has seriously suffered in the past months. A “niche” does indeed exist, but it is quite limited.

“Vazrazhdane” (“Revival”). Kostadin Kostadinov’s party is undoubtedly gaining new chances from a permanent political crisis and delegitimisation of the entire party system. A significant advantage for “Vazrazhdane” is the fact that relations with Russia are at the centre of the political agenda, but despite mutual accusations between the other parties, it is the only party openly advocating for the improvement of these relations. Kostadinov’s course is logical for a radical anti-system player - a preliminary rejection of any future coalitions and the demand to rule independently. At this stage, this does not seem particularly achievable. And it poses a risk to the long-term motivation of party supporters. The secession of previous MPs (such as Elena Guncheva and Tsveta Galunova) is,

to some degree, a symptom of this. The behaviour of “Vazrazhdane” in the pre-election situation seems to suggest a desire to change the public image - to show not just the dark face of disagreement, but also the smiling face of perspective. Precisely that is the most difficult thing.

“Bulgarian Rise” (“Bulgarski Vuzhod”). The party of former Prime Minister Stefan Yanev is seen as one of the potential participants in future parliament, but has lost its initial momentum to a huge extent. The leader fails to position himself politically and has no solutions to a single one of the pressing problems of society. The ideas that sound out are strange and confusing (like the concept of a moral-political board over MPs with the participation of the Church). The practice of regularly challenging media rumours about the party puts the party itself on the defensive. And the coalition policy of “Bulgarian Rise” (for example, with the Union of Free Democrats and ABV) does not confirm the claims for something new and different. In short, the trend remains a downward one.

4

MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND FORECASTS

The geopolitical axis of the pre-election campaign launched in Bulgaria focuses public attention on relations with Gazprom and Russia, but in practice transfers the responsibility of the political elite to the international situation. The division thus created has the disadvantage of implying that important decisions for the country depend on external factors that have their own Bulgarian representatives. Moreover, the development of the processes in such a way is not under the control of the Bulgarian parties and politicians, because it depends on the international situation. Therefore, the motivation of the Bulgarian voter to vote also decreases.

It is a campaign in which the President, through his caretaker cabinet, is seen as a leading player. And since the President does not have his own party and does not officially support any of the existing ones, the risk of the political system becoming deformed increases. Not party against party, but parties for or against the President. It can be assumed that the period after the elections on October 2nd will be conducted against the background of the attitude of the parties towards Rumen Radev. The chance of a regular cabinet being formed will depend on this, at least to a certain extent - either Radev's mediation will be relied on, or, conversely, a coalition will be sought in opposition to Radev's power. The fact that quite a few political and expert figures in Bulgaria already associate their careers with the President's leading role in Bulgarian politics increases the stakes.

The summer season, which is usually characterised by lower social tension, is coming to an end. Eco-

nomically difficult months lie ahead, for which the Bulgarian parties do not seem prepared. It is noteworthy that most of them are oriented towards a strategy that has brought them success in past periods (especially GERB with the mantra of "stability" or PP with "left-wing goals and right-wing tools"). The common practice of substituting the question of "what is to be done?" with the question of "who is to blame?" can generally broaden political apathy. At present, there are no indications that turnout on October 2nd will perceptibly exceed the negative record from November 2021.

Unexpected international events (along the lines of the war in Ukraine and the role of the EU) or major domestic scandals (for example, along the lines of the revision of the previous cabinet) could hypothetically rearrange the agenda of the campaign. If this does not happen, the trend points towards a seriously fragmented parliament with relatively low representation of political players. In this sense, the negotiations for coalition government according to the previous criteria ("change" vs. "status quo") and with the new criteria ("Russia" vs. "West") would be even more complicated and ineffective than in the 47th National Assembly. The alternative variant would be a coalition of the largest political forces. At the moment, this would almost certainly mean a coalition with the participation of GERB. A new caretaker cabinet of President Radev would be the third option, which would postpone the way out of the political crisis, but would not resolve it.

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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

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