

DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

# POLIT-BAROMETER

Year 24 Issue 9  
October

**Boris Popivanov**



The pre-term parliamentary elections did not offer a clear way out of the political crisis in Bulgaria.



The problem of the fairness of the electoral process has permanently entered the political agenda.



A coalition around GERB-UDF and PP-DB and a GERB-UDF minority government so far seem to be the most likely alternatives to new pre-term elections.

DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

# POLIT-BAROMETER

Year 24 Issue 9  
October

# Contents

<b>1.</b>	<b>THE DYNAMICS OF FOREIGN POLICY</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>INSTITUTIONS AND THE AGENDA OF SOCIETY</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>THE STATE OF THE PARTY SYSTEM</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND FORECASTS</b>	<b>9</b>

## 1

## THE DYNAMICS OF FOREIGN POLICY

On the eve of parliamentary elections, it is probably expected that the foreign policy activity of institutions will decrease. Unlike previous cases, however, the *de facto* refusal of the political parties to use international topics as a tool in their pre-election clash was noteworthy.

***The importance of the war in Ukraine*** for Bulgarian politics seems to be decreasing. The country respects, practically without serious disputes, its commitments as a partner in the European Union (EU) and NATO. Some of them are the start of negotiations for a bilateral security agreement between Sofia and Kyiv. Such agreements exist with the majority of NATO member states and are intended to facilitate Ukraine's future integration into the Alliance. At the same time, Bulgarian President Rumen Radev used the Arayolush Group Summit in Krakow to once again make his call for a peaceful settlement of the conflict - this time without provoking international and national disagreements.

***The tension between Bulgaria and North Macedonia*** continues to dominate bilateral relations. Skopje tries to alternate between ostentatious constructiveness and new attacks, but does not fundamentally change the context of its European perspective. The summit of the so-called Berlin process regulating the integration of the Western Balkans into Europe has confirmed the previous requirements for North Macedonia in starting membership negotiations. Formal-

ly, North Macedonia does not deny its obligation to include Bulgarians in its constitution, but it does not initiate this procedure either. The argument is from the sphere of reciprocity - Bulgaria should in turn recognise a Macedonian minority. In parallel with this, North Macedonian Prime Minister Christian Mitkoski said he was ready for a meeting with Bulgarian President Radev and complained about the political instability in Bulgaria. Mickoski's party, VMRO-DPMNE, is indeed in a delicate position, not only because neighbouring Albania is starting to open negotiating chapters, but also because the pro-European pressure of the government partner from the Albanian coalition VLEN is intensifying. However, the deterioration of the Sofia-Skopje dialogue seems long-term. An example in this direction is the negotiations for the construction of European Corridor No. 8, which reached some kind of agreement, but the content of this agreement was immediately disputed by the North Macedonian negotiators themselves.

***The escalating conflict in the Middle East*** became the reason for the convening of the Advisory Council for National Security under President Radev. The conclusions were drawn that there is no immediate danger for Bulgaria, but there are threats of terrorist acts and a wave of migration. Despite expectations, political leaders attending the Council did not express opposing positions and rallied behind a moderate declaration that suggested a consensus of reluctance to take sides in the Middle East case.

## 2

## INSTITUTIONS AND THE AGENDA OF SOCIETY

**The election campaign.** The pre-term elections for the 51<sup>st</sup> Ordinary National Assembly in Bulgaria, held on October 27, pitted 28 political parties and coalitions against each other. The official election campaign, which lasted exactly one month, was not distinguished by particular intensity, nor by dramatic events. We can summarise several characteristics of the campaign itself. First, the tendency of parties to self-enclose in their own electoral “bubbles” is deepening, whereby an ever-increasing proportion of public positions is expressed not in traditional media, but in social networks or specially-made podcasts. Second, there were no major scandals or scandals. A major exception to this observation was the mutual attacks between the two factions of the until recently unified Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF), culminating in the rumour that one of the factional leaders had fled Bulgaria because of his ties to an exposed counterfeit money printing house. Essentially, however, the other parties did not allow the scandals in the MRF camp to change the tone of their pre-election behaviour. Third, unlike previous times, when the attitude to the war in Ukraine became a dividing line, now international topics remained in the shadows. And here there is one possible traditional exception in the form of the party “Vazrazhdane”. It must, however, be noted that two international issues found a rather vague and undefined presence on the agenda - the supposed danger of a migration wave and the supposed importance of the US presidential election for future government negotiations. Fourth, it is very difficult to talk about common themes in the campaign. Nevertheless, the topic of the future of Bulgarian thermal power plants is an issue almost everywhere. The position that they must be protected in order to preserve the Bulgarian energy industry and to save jobs, opposes the position that the funds under the European Recovery and Sustainability Plan are a more important priority.

From the point of view of ideological trends, the predominance of parties defining themselves as “sovereignists” called to defend the national interest against all encroachments is overwhelming. Some of the leading parties have pro-European platforms – be it due to

conviction or benefit – but they are a minority in the general background. From the point of view of political legitimacy, the 2020 protests once again return as a chronological frame of reference. On one side there are those who recall the protests as an unfulfilled promise to crush the mafia, while on the other there are those who see the protests as the beginning of the crisis and chaos in Bulgaria. From the point of view of political intrigue, the greatest interest is undoubtedly awakened by the internal conflict in MRF between the factions of Ahmed Dogan and Delyan Peevski.

There have also been assessments that the other parties are waiting for the development of this conflict to determine their attitude towards a possible future government majority - with Dogan or with Peevski or against both. And from the point of view of the post-election perspective, the clash between the two leading formations, GERB-UDF and “We Continue the Change” (“Produlzhavame Promianata”) - Democratic Bulgaria (PP-DB) turned out to be the most striking. This clash took the form of a dispute over the figure of the future Prime Minister of a regular government, whether he should be a party nominee, as insisted on by GERB-UDF, or an expert equidistant from the partners in the majority, as proposed by PP-DB.

**The government.** The caretaker government of Dimitar Glavchev gave a positive self-assessment for its main task in October, related to the organisation and holding of pre-term elections. In fact, there is an abundance of criticisms of unfinished work. They mainly concern the activities of the Ministry of the Interior, accused of not imposing drastic restrictions on the bought and rigged vote.

As in the previous elections, Glavchev’s cabinet did not manage to protect its political authority during various public disputes. The disputes between the parties about the size of the real budget deficit never received a categorical and clear answer from the government.

**The President.** For the second time since the changes in the Constitution, an election campaign proceeded

in which the caretaker cabinet was not an expression of the will and intentions of the President. Just as in May, the head of state chose to distance himself from the electoral process. However, he managed to estab-

lish himself as the main spokesperson for the concerns of a rigged and bought vote. His statements on the subject rang clear in the election month, and the election results further showed them to be an issue.

## 3

## THE STATE OF THE PARTY SYSTEM

**GERB-UDF.** The GERB-UDF campaign was primarily focused on attacks against PP-DB. Boyko Borisov's party claimed that the political crisis would be contained only if GERB got more than 80 representatives of the people. In the end, GERB once again achieved first place in the elections, with a huge lead over the second participant, PP-DB, and with a remarkable surge of support of over 110,000 votes. This feat has several explanations. In all probability, GERB's persistent propaganda that only they can restore stability in Bulgaria was effective. There are voters, mostly from the circles of small and medium-sized businesses, for whom the permanent budgetary, legislative and administrative uncertainty of recent years seems a more serious problem than the "status quo" embodied by GERB. Scrutiny of the electoral data indicates that nearly half of the new voters of GERB come from regions in which popular mayors from the party were the leaders of lists (Burgas, Stara Zagora, Smolyan), and from Sofia. The mayors clearly contributed to the better mobilisation than that which is traditional for a parliamentary vote, and in the capital the collapse of the local elections in October 2023 was overcome. The powerful daily campaign against the new mayor of the capital Vasil Terziev and his team seems to have had an effect on the "reverse movement" of voters to GERB.

However, with their 69 MPs in the new parliament, GERB are not so strong as to dictate the character of the future government configuration, nor so weak as to avoid responsibility for the initiative in the upcoming negotiations. During the campaign, Borisov suggested a solution that included "natural partners" - PP-DB, with the participation of "There is Such a People" ("Ima Takuv Narod" - ITN) and the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP). In fact, after the elections, Borisov is facing the same problem as after the elections on June 9<sup>th</sup>. His ambition to be the leader of a coalition that balances between PP-DB and MRF once again seems very difficult to achieve. Of all the 8 parties in the National Assembly, only PP-DB have the pro-European image in the country and abroad, which Borisov needs for legitimation. At the same time, Borisov does not want to come out openly against Delyan Peevski's faction in MRF,

which does not accept a similar format with PP-DB and which seems to have various tools to put pressure on GERB and on Borisov himself. In such cases, as a rule, Borisov tends to slow down the pace of the political process and looks for the most favourable variant for himself.

**"We Continue the Change" ("Produlzhavame Pro-mianata") - Democratic Bulgaria (PP-DB).** The coalition campaign effectively involved two parallel campaigns. One, mainly practised by PP, had schemes for the fight against corruption and GERB as their natural opponent as its emphasis. The other campaign, represented by "Yes, Bulgaria" and civil organisations close to them, sought to attack the "Peevski model". The topical reasons for their messages were the arrest of the MP Jeyhan Ibryamov, who is close to Dogan, and the nomination of Borislav Sarafov as the chief prosecutor. Speculations about a deep internal division in PP-DB are not new. They refer not only to the relations between PP and "Yes, Bulgaria", but also to the internal party relations in PP, where there is a suspicion that Asen Vassilev is the face of the more radical line, while Kiril Petkov and Nikolay Denkov are more inclined to compromises. Regardless of this speculation, however, the collapse of the coalition is unlikely for now, because the chances of the formations participating are determined only by their unification.

The elections saw PP-DB achieve second place, with an increase of nearly 40,000 voters and 37 MPs. In terms of party affiliation, there is practically parity between PP candidates (19 people) and DB candidates (18). The post-election strategy is subordinated to the intention of "driving a wedge" into the supposed unofficial alliance between Borisov and Peevski. For this reason PP-DB sent a declaration to all parliamentary parties, with which they formulated as the basis for government negotiations the imposition of a "sanitary cordon" around Peevski, the formation of a parliamentary commission for the election results and the suspension of the procedure for electing a new chief prosecutor. The practice of such declarations had already been tried once by PP-DB in July of this year, but then it was ignored by others.

Now PP-DB faces another danger of failure. It stems from the counter-declarations of the other parties, which do not *a priori* reject the proposals of PP-DB, but call on them to accept their proposals: ITN for the revision of the voter lists; “Vazrazhdane” (“Revival”) for a referendum on the preservation of the national currency and the preservation of the Bulgarian thermal power plants. A possible delay in the case with the declaration would give GERB the opportunity to wait and come up with their initiative without necessarily rejecting the “sanitary cordon” unequivocally. The presumption on which PP-DB base their actions is that GERB and Borisov would not form a government without them. If this presumption is not correct, however, the meaning of all post-election activity on the part of the second political force remains open to question.

**“Vazrazhdane” (“Revival”).** The party’s campaign was based primarily on fears - of illegal immigrants, of behind-the-scenes decisions on military aid to Ukraine, of plans to involve Bulgaria in the Middle East conflict, and of LGBT propaganda. “Vazrazhdane” tried to revive the mass public demonstrations during the election campaign, which had died down in recent years, by organising marches under the slogan “Give Peace a Chance”. In parallel, “Vazrazhdane” also continuously attacked the “Morality, Unity, Honour” (“Moral, Edinstvo, Chest” - MECh) and “Velichie” (“Greatness”) parties, convinced that they were hypocritical in their patriotism and authentic in their service to the mafia.

We can assume that it is a fight for the same electorate between the three parties. In this struggle, “Vazrazhdane” achieves a leading role, but not marginalisation of competitors. The assessment is somewhat justified that in the absence of MECh and “Velichie”, Kostadin Kostadinov’s party would achieve a better result than the 325,000 votes and 35 MPs won. Once again, second place in the parliamentary elections has eluded the party. However, it should not be forgotten that in 15 districts in the country, second place has been achieved, and PP-DB perform better due to the significantly higher values in Sofia and Plovdiv.

If there is a “sanitary cordon” in the Bulgarian parliament, without doubt it fences in “Vazrazhdane”. At this stage, it is not conceivable that there could be a majority in which “Vazrazhdane would participate on an official partnership basis. It is not by chance that Kostadinov tries to turn the defect (impossibility of participating in government) into an effect (a manifestation of principle). The post-election rhetoric of the party is dominated by the thesis that there will be a government, and it will be a “government of the bought vote”, while “Vazrazhdane” will protect the interests of the people in opposition.

**Movement for Rights and Freedoms - A New Beginning (MRF-NB).** In their new format, MRF, head-

ed by Delyan Peevski, wagered on a campaign outside traditional media and events. Allegations that the party engages in pressure, vote-buying and vote rigging have not been proven, although they are widespread in the public eye. Sociological agencies predicted a weaker performance of MRF-NB compared to their main competitor from Ahmed Dogan’s faction, but also a gradual increase in electoral support. In the end, MRF-NB received 281,000 votes and 30 MPs, ahead of Dogan’s coalition by as many as 100,000. MRF-NB is the first political force in three regions - Kardzhali, Shumen and Targovishte. Exit polls show that Peevski’s party win voters far beyond the borders of the Turkish ethnic group and are opening up to voters in larger towns and with higher education. The geography of the parliamentary group is telling. MRF-NB have MPs in Veliko Tarnovo, Plovdiv, Vidin, Vratsa, Montana, Kyustendil and Pleven. The business model on which the party is largely based is paying off. What the price of these results is in the context of the democratic process is another question.

In the post-election situation, the leader of MRF-NB Delyan Peevski has reduced his appearances. This is probably due to two reasons. The first is that he traditionally prefers to negotiate his future political positions away from the television cameras, but he is probably waiting for the “sanitary cordon” plot to gradually subside. The second reason is one of an internal party nature. For Peevski, the success of October 27<sup>th</sup> is only a stage in the battle against the honorary chairman of MRF Ahmed Dogan. A national conference of the party has been called for the end of December, which will almost certainly signal a showdown with Dogan’s supporters. The preparation for this hypothetical purge is undoubtedly of great importance, no less so than the public cross-party discussions.

**The Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP).** The United Left campaign ran under the guise of mostly pragmatic messages stressing the need for national unification and stabilisation. BSP had to fight on two fronts – against its political opponents and against the supporters of the former leader Korneliya Ninova, who were keen to make every effort to undermine the claim of the new left coalition to embody principles and an alternative. The result of 181,000 votes and 20 MPs represents an increase of 30,000 compared to the previous vote in June. An optimistic reading of the data allows one to speak of “breaking free from the bottom” and the beginning of overcoming the negative trend. On the other hand, the left-wing coalition has not performed any better than the sum of the votes that the left-wing parties participating in it today got in June. Positive dynamics are seen mostly where Ninova previously fought against the local structures of the party (Sofia) or against the local mayors from the party (Plovdiv region). The effect of the appearance of young people in leading positions (Ga-



briel Valkov and Atanas Atanasov as leaders in Sofia regions) and of the personal popularity of civil candidates (constitutionalist Natalia Kiselova) should not be underestimated. Therefore, at this stage, one can cautiously speak of only a partial recovery of confidence, not yet a clear upward movement.

The post-election situation for the left can be seen in two contexts. The first is connected with the negotiations for a parliamentary majority, regarding which BSP has declared in advance a readiness to participate for the first time since 2021. And the second context stems from the upcoming election of a new party chairperson. All three names discussed at the moment (the current acting chairman Atanas Zafirov, the chairman of the parliamentary group Borislav Gutsanov and the former leader of the capital socialists Kalyan Pargov) need to formulate a political strategy and gather wider support in the party ranks.

***The Alliance for Rights and Freedoms (ARF).*** The coalition, founded by MRF honorary chairman Ahmed Dogan, focused their campaign on efforts to convince the party's traditional voters that they embodied the "authentic MRF" as opposed to the "usurper" Delyan Peevski. The ARF was subjected to many blows, among which the most significant was the arrest of the MP close to Dogan, Jeyhan Ibryamov, suspected of buying votes and trading in influence. The line of self-defence dominated the behaviour of ARF until the elections themselves. The final result – 182,000 votes and 19 MPs - shows them to be lagging seriously behind MRF-NB. The data from the exit poll reveal that ARF voters are located almost exclusively in the lower social strata - almost entirely in the villages, among the Turkish ethnic group, among persons with low education and low income. At the same time, it should not be underestimated that ARF have emerged as the first political force in Razgrad and Silistra, received only two thousand votes fewer than MRF-NB in Kardzhali, and retain a significant influence in Targovishte and Smolyan. Most Bulgarian emigrants in Turkey support ARF, not MRF-NB. It would be rash to claim that Peevski has irreversibly won his fight with Dogan.

The post-election political behaviour of the ARF is logically aimed at the upcoming stages of the same battle. Judging by Dogan's official statements, ARF are inclined to support a coalition between GERB-UDF and PP-DB without formally participating in it. This is a realistic position that gives the greatest chances of minimising Peevski's power resources. But, as is known, there are other scenarios that are not so favourable for Dogan's formation.

***"There is Such a People" ("Ima Takuv Narod" - ITN)*** In their campaign, ITN preferred to strengthen the national-populist image, which is generally inherent to them. The audience could hear messages

about rethinking the Green Deal, protecting Bulgarian thermal power plants, against migrant pressure, and the so-called LGBT propaganda. After all, with 165,000 votes and 18 MPs, ITN have improved on their previous result by 35,000 voters and consolidate their trend of electoral growth in all elections after the ill-fated 2021.

Immediately after the elections, ITN leader Slavi Trifonov intervened actively in the political debate. His first intervention - a call to clean up the electoral rolls - met with quite positive reactions. The second – a call for partial annulment of the elections in the sections with established major violations – provoked more emotions, but fits in with the mass sentiments about the unfairness of the vote. Standing behind President Radev in his assessment of the scale of the bought and rigged vote, ITN are undoubtedly gaining the favourable position of an important player in future government negotiations.

***"Morality, Unity, Honour" ("Moral, Edinstvo, Chest" – MECh – 'Mech' means 'Sword' in Bulgarian)*** The party of Radostin Vasilev, with 111,000 votes and 12 MPs, is the only new participant in the National Assembly. MECh owe at least some of the support gathered to their radical populism, turned against the entire political system. The call for "Bulgaria without Borisov and Peevski" rings out most clearly and unambiguously against the background of the half-hearted or nuanced positions of other parties. Vassilev tries to present himself as a new version of the early Boyko Borisov - an avenger who will deliver justice after years of corruption and mafia. Of course, it remains to be seen to what extent this is propaganda, and to what extent it is real radicalism.

The post-election statements of MECh are more likely to exclude the party from possible government combinations. Radostin Vasilev emphasises that the "sanitary cordon" around Peevski should also include Borisov, and the only way to fight against mafiosification is for him to personally head the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Such an announcement does not sound serious to many, but it is somewhat to be expected from a party that is convinced that the loss of confidence in the leading parties will bring it bonuses in possible new pre-term elections.

***"Velichie" ("Greatness")***. The party conducted an extremely active campaign not only in the country, but also abroad (in the pre-election month, 9 meetings were held in various European cities!). As before, the messages of "Velichie" are full of metaphors and rather hollow in terms of specifics, directed against the status quo as a whole. The "20-year plan for the recovery of Bulgaria" bandied about by them also remains undefined. To some extent, in this sense, the observations that "Velichie" is the party with the

highest levels of sectarian behaviour and conspiratorial thinking, clearly impressing quite a few Bulgarian voters, are justified.

The final result of 97,000 votes was only about 2,000 fewer than that of the previous vote in June. It is clear that the party's scandals and collapse in the previous parliament did not affect support for it, and that Nikolai Markov's breakaway group did not enjoy significant influence. "Velichie" remains the party of Ivelin Mihailov. However, the elections put "Velichie" in the spotlight because of the very small number of votes they lacked to surpass the 4% barrier for entering the National Assembly - only 25. Taking into account the numerous irregularities in the counting of votes and the filling in of protocols, this minimal difference cannot but raise doubts. There are reasons to ask for the election to be annulled. And because the

decision is in a request to the Constitutional Court, the question immediately arises as to who would be ready to appeal it in order to help a party that has never been able to evoke positive attitudes among anyone in the Bulgarian party system and whether they would do so.

**"Blue Bulgaria"**. The coalition tried to distinguish itself in the election campaign by intensively exploiting two themes: anti-communism and the right. The rhetoric against social populism, which according to "Blue Bulgaria" is characteristic of all parliamentary parties, however, failed to gather support outside extremely narrow circles. The 26,000 votes received, 7,000 less than in the elections in June, clearly show that the ambitions to offer an alternative to the "insincere anti-communism" of GERB and the "insincere right" of PP-DB are not being met with understanding.

## 4

## MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND FORECASTS

The seventh successive parliamentary elections in Bulgaria in a period of three and a half years quite expectedly did not generate enthusiasm among the voters. It lacked both a new major participant in the race to mobilise hopes for change, and some brighter topic on the public agenda to gather expectations for positive development. However, the turnout of 2.570 million voters was about 300,000 votes higher than in the elections of June this year. Many spoke of symptoms of overcoming electoral apathy. It is too early to draw such conclusions. It is good to recall that the turnout of October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024, although visibly higher than that of June, still remains lower than that of all parliamentary elections held before 2024. Seasonal circumstances related to labour movement strength, the furious mobilisation of the two factions in MRF, the alleged scale of bought and rigged votes probably play no less a role in the turnout than the return of people's confidence in the parties.

For the first time, the legitimacy of the electoral process has been so seriously undermined. The government and the parties have allowed the Ministry of Internal Affairs to become widely perceived as a tool to cover up underhand electoral practices. Disputes about the involvement of various institutions in the campaign contributed to the general climate of mistrust. The result of the party "Velichie", which was a handful of votes away from entering the National Assembly, also provoked suggestions that election results are adjusted "from above". This is a crucially important topic for the sustainability of democracy, which will undoubtedly continue in the coming weeks and months and will engage various institutions - the new parliament, the President, perhaps the Constitutional Court and the courts. It is difficult to predict how things will develop, but for now it seems more likely that the problem will be ignored and palliative solutions will be sought in the form of some institutional and normative innovations.

The possible future involvement of President Rumen Radev in the party life of the country is being discussed again. There is a lack of facts in this regard, but the hopes of some commentators and the concerns

of others speak of the need to change the political stakes in Bulgaria. The current parties are having difficulty formulating any kind of vision for development.

The issue of a regular government stands in a manner similar to that of June, perhaps complicated by the conflict and radicalisation in MRF. Once again GERB-UDF are the first political force with a large lead. Once again, however, GERB's desire to balance between different trends in Bulgarian politics collides with the reluctance of other parties, especially PP-DB, to accept such cooperation. Unfortunately, the political elite has become accustomed to the permanent cycle of pre-term elections and reckons that another vote is imminent in the short term. From such a point of view, pre-election behaviour merges with post-election behaviour. The parties model their public appearances as if they plan to make these their starting positions for a new election campaign. The rhetoric of "red lines" limiting interactions between parties, familiar from previous elections, is being reproduced now, albeit in new terms, being based on the idea of "preconditions".

At this stage, before parliament has been convened for its first session, there appear to be two options as alternatives to more imminent pre-term elections.

The first variant suggests a breakthrough in the previous regime of attacks between GERB-UDF and PP-DB, which would lead to a coalition agreement with the participation of one or more smaller parties. This is an option that comes close to Borisov's assumption of a "natural union". Apart from mutual accusations, GERB-UDF and PP-DB have remarkable programmatic similarities in many areas of current politics – the attitude towards the EU and NATO, the priority of the Recovery and Sustainability Plan, the view of the Eurozone, the attitude towards the budget and the budget deficit, and the tax philosophy. The relations of such a configuration with MRF-NB are outlined as the main stumbling block.

The second variant is a GERB minority government supported by various smaller formations. With the exception of "Vazrazhdane", PP-DB and MECh, the

others (ITN, the two factions of MRF, and BSP) would seem to be inclined to a similar formula for stabilisation. It is in their interest that the responsibility be borne only by GERB. On the other hand, in a very effective political game, GERB could avoid the logical risk of dependence by seeking the votes at times of some parliamentary parties, and of others at other times, and not allowing a single one to dictate their conditions. Such an option is easier to implement than the first, but far more difficult to navigate politically.

The campaign did not give social issues a chance on the political agenda. Without being able to enter this agenda, the new left coalition around BSP can hardly count on much more than its current results. It is existentially important for BSP to change its political image from a formation that serves only as a hypothetical reservoir of votes for coalitions to one that moves the political process in unexpected directions.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Boris Popivanov**, PhD., is an Associate Professor of Political Science at St. Kliment Ohridski University of Sofia. His research is concentrated in the areas of political ideologies, theory and history of the left, as well as the Bulgarian transition.

## IMPRINT

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung | Office Bulgaria  
97, Knjaz Boris I St. | 1000 Sofia | Bulgaria

Responsible:  
Jacques Paparo | Director, FES Bulgaria  
Tel.: +359 2 980 8747 | Fax: +359 2 980 2438  
English translation: Keneward Hill  
[bulgaria.fes.de](http://bulgaria.fes.de)

Contact:  
[office@fes.bg](mailto:office@fes.bg)

Commercial use of all media, published by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), is not permitted without the written consent of the FES.

## ABOUT THIS STUDY

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.  
[bulgaria.fes.de](http://bulgaria.fes.de)

## POLIT-BAROMETER

Year 24 Issue 9  
October



The pre-term parliamentary elections did not offer a clear way out of the political crisis in Bulgaria.



The problem of the fairness of the electoral process has permanently entered the political agenda.



A coalition around GERB-UDF and PP-DB and a GERB-UDF minority government so far seem to be the most likely alternatives to new pre-term elections.

Further information on the topic can be found here:  
[bulgaria.fes.de](https://bulgaria.fes.de)