

DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

# POLIT-BAROMETER

Year 24 Issue 6  
June

**Boris Popivanov**



Pre-term elections produced a fragmented parliament, unable to overcome the political crisis.



The intra-party conflict in MRF becomes a major factor of tension in Bulgarian politics.



There is a growing risk that the spiral of pre-term elections will continue.

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## 1

## THE DYNAMICS OF FOREIGN POLICY

**On the eve of the NATO summit.** The meeting of the Alliance in Washington is the main foreign policy event expected in connection with the development of the war in Ukraine. It is believed that it will give impetus to a new, tougher policy towards Russia. In the agenda of Bulgarian politics, the forum is present with two topics, which refer to the leadership of the Bulgarian delegation and the official position of the country. The first topic provoked a dispute between the presidential institution and the caretaker government. Traditionally, the head of state, in his capacity as commander-in-chief, represents Bulgaria at these meetings. In this case, the Prime Minister expressed his desire to take this place in the proceedings. Without being publicly declared, it was suggested that this was due to concerns over the pro-Russian attitudes of President Rumen Radev. At the same time, Prime Minister Dimitar Glavchev did not want to single-handedly impose himself and turned to the newly elected 50<sup>th</sup> National Assembly to determine the head of the Bulgarian delegation. However, Parliament refused to become an arbitrator in the dispute. For this reason the Council of Ministers resorted to a “Solomonian solution” - to leave both Radev and Glavchev. In a statement, Radev rejected this option, citing a disagreement with the government on the policy of military aid to Ukraine. The second topic, concerning the Bulgarian position, remained shrouded in obscurity. The government has never made public what standpoints it intends to defend in Washington and has justified itself with security concerns. The reassuring explanation was given that everything will be subject to the previous decisions of the parliament. However, under the pressure of some of the parties, Glavchev was forced to submit the Bulgarian position in question for information, albeit as “secret”. Rather, these complex moves have a negative effect on the image of Bulgaria as a full member of NATO. On one hand, they do not show a serious attitude to participation in the collective security system, and on the other hand, they create the belief that the country does not have a position, but will develop it on the spot in accordance with the views of the leading factors in the Alliance.

**The meeting in Riga.** A nuanced Bulgarian point of view was also presented at the meeting in Riga of the presidents of B-9 (the heads of state of the countries of the Eastern flank of NATO). At the suggestion of the Bulgarian President Radev, the idea that the participating countries undertake to provide military aid to Ukraine was dropped from the final declaration of the forum. Instead, it was written that each country would provide such assistance as it saw fit. What is interesting in this case is that the change was adopted without public objections from Radev’s partners, but also that it did not cause official disagreement from the Bulgarian Council of Ministers. It is debatable to what extent it is about caution in the new stage of the war in Ukraine, or about waiting before NATO’s common position. In any case, however, the divergence did not lead to a clash.

**The tension with North Macedonia.** The elections in North Macedonia have predictably increased the degree of tension between Skopje, on one hand, and Sofia and Athens, on the other. It is obvious that the new government, with the dominant role of VM-RO-DPMNE, legitimises its victory by revising the pro-European course of the social democrats, who had been in power until recently, and begins to appeal to the national dignity and interests of the country on a new account. Prime Minister Hristijan Mitskoski not only excluded from the agenda the long-discussed changes in the Constitution, which were supposed to include the Bulgarians as a people in it and unlock the process of European integration. But in his statement he described Bulgarian politics as “medieval” and recalled the old claim that there is an oppressed Macedonian minority in Bulgaria. Overall, this toughening approach serves the foreign policy positions of Bulgarian President Radev and demonstrates the ineffectiveness of the tolerant course of the Kiril Petkov cabinet two years ago. At the same time, however, there is a risk that the mutual accusations between Bulgaria and North Macedonia will return the problem to the sphere of bilateral relations, where there is clearly no solution for it, instead of maintaining it as a European problem related to the terms of membership negotiations.

## 2

## INSTITUTIONS AND THE AGENDA OF SOCIETY

***The elections for the 50th National Assembly and for Bulgarian representatives in the European Parliament.*** The “2 in 1” elections held on June 9th, for the national and European Parliament, were generally predicted as results in the research of sociological agencies, but they give reasons to comment on some trends. The first of these concerns the remarkably low voter turnout. Disputes are possible regarding the real values of the electorate in Bulgaria, but it is a fact that only 2.268 million voters voted for the National Assembly, and about two hundred thousand fewer for the European Parliament (EP). This is a drastic collapse compared to the previous “anti-record” of April 2023. The Bulgarian democratic game permanently covers less than half of the citizens with the right to vote. It follows that a relatively small number of votes can lead to high percentages and parliamentary representation that is not bad.

The second trend is that of erosion of electoral support for most major parties. For the first time, the winner of an election (GERB-UDF) received only 530,000 votes. This is too narrow a basis for any claim to political hegemony. In addition, there has been a decline in GERB’s former main competitor, the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), but also in the party that in recent years has most fiercely presented itself as an alternative to the entire political model – “Vazrazhdane” (“Revival”). The coalition with ambitions to embody the hopes of change in Bulgaria, “We Continue the Change (Produlzhavame Promianata) - Democratic Bulgaria” (PP-DB), suffered a veritable collapse and lost more than half of its voters in just one year. The electoral growth of two parties, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) and “There is Such a People” (“Ima Takuv Narod” - ITN), was vociferously advertised, but it was reduced to attracting only twenty thousand voters each. It is categorically impossible to speak of any radical change of attitudes in one direction or another. Bulgarian citizens are apparently punishing the political parties for their systematic inability to offer long-term options for a way out of the political crisis.

Thirdly, the elections for European Parliament remained in the shadow of the national elections. This

was probably to be expected. In fact, none of the parties received more votes for their European list than for their national candidates. This is also true of the formations that most advertised themselves as pro-European and who insisted that their strong result in this vote would legitimise their geopolitical cause. Compared to the previous EP elections in 2019, the configuration of the Bulgarian representation remains similar, with some nationalists replacing other nationalists, and the traditional left clearly losing positions at the expense of the traditional right.

Fourthly, voting abroad is practically losing its political significance for the national picture. Yet again, the myth that Bulgarian citizens abroad are the pivot of the country’s pro-European and democratic development with their electoral preferences has been disproved. On June 9<sup>th</sup>, the vote for PP-DB abroad, amounting to only 27,000, significantly lagged behind the number who voted for nationalist formations with a clearer or more covert Eurosceptical orientation. With their 44 thousand votes received abroad, MRF are undoubtedly the leader in this type of vote, but in the position of “big one among the small ones”. These votes do not determine the electoral weight of MRF, and what is more, if we follow the trend, they are decreasing from one election to the next.

Fifthly, with all the essential provisions made, the political evaluation of the past elections is expressed in the victory of the “status quo” over the “change”. The first two political forces are the ones that over the last 4 years have been causing protests, discontent and hopes for change. The so-called “political model” so far does not meet, at least on the electoral field, a clear challenge. There is a protest vote, but not one that is capable of eroding the political positions of the established formations. Even the parliamentary debut of a new party like “Velichie” (“Greatness”) is not an indicator of a new situation. Ideologically, the parliamentary configuration indicates a continued retreat of the left at the expense of right-wing hegemony in three of its varieties: right-conservative, right-liberal and right-nationalist.

**Parliament.** The 50<sup>th</sup> National Assembly functioned in the conditions of the already traditional deadlock on the election of the speaker. In the absence of a majority that does not include the first political power, it is normal for a representative of the first political power to assume the presidency. This is what happened after Raya Nazaryan from GERB-UDF was elected, but not without scandals and accusations of behind-the-scenes deals. A substantial problem of this fragmented parliament is that only the interaction between GERB-UDF and MRF (which together do not have a majority) is perceived as expected and, in this sense, acceptable, even if criticised, while any other interaction is presented as a betrayal of the voters' interests. This conviction, persistently imposed by both the media and the parties themselves, will undoubtedly undermine the work of parliament and reaffirm the contentions of behind-the-scenes machinations.

**The government.** Dimitar Glavchev's caretaker government from the very beginning, but also in the weeks after the elections, was seen as a hidden cab-

inet of GERB-UDF and MRF. Such assessments are circulated mainly because of the government's appointments of personnel, mostly related to close associates of MRF, and because of Glavchev's clear tendency towards compromises after every comment by the leaders of GERB and MRF. In this way, the cabinet really looks like a transition to the rule of these two parties, or at least as a backup variant for their rule.

**The President.** The low turnout in the elections of June 9th and the disputes between the parties have once again given President Rumen Radev a chance to stand out as an alternative to the crisis in the party system. In essence, Radev does not comment on the political process, but with his emphasis on principles he indirectly attacks the supposed unprincipled nature of the parties. It should be noted that the parties themselves are generally avoiding direct attacks against Radev, as has been the practice for the past 2 years, and are aware of his role in the current political situation. This applies with particular force to a traditional opponent of Radev, such as the party GERB.

## 3

## THE STATE OF THE PARTY SYSTEM

**GERB-UDF.** GERB were the undisputed winners of the elections on June 9th, but found themselves in the strange situation of being losers. GERB reduced their electoral weight by about 130,000 votes, which marks a rather alarming trend. Symptoms of erosion in the solid base had already been observed in the local elections in Sofia in October last year, when the list for municipal councillors in the most important city for the party received a catastrophically low number of votes. It can be assumed that the traditional business clientele of GERB is increasingly withdrawing, both attracted by the MRF offers and repelled by the behaviour of the leader Boyko Borisov, which is incomprehensible for them. Not only for the clientele, but also for a large part of the GERB party elite, it is not clear why Borisov is inclined to cede positions of power to others and constantly provoke pre-term elections. Non-stop pre-term elections are known to represent a serious blow to business plans.

GERB failed to realise their aim for more than 80 representatives of the people. But the distance by which the winners beat the second party in the elections, MRF, obliged GERB to take the initiative for a new government. Borisov's very first steps did not promise a positive development. He delegated the negotiations with the other parties to his traditional team, which in previous situations had not yielded any effectiveness. In the meantime, Borisov did not stop repeating that he would form a government in partnership with PP-DB, which unequivocally refused such a partnership. The two parties that responded to the negotiations, MRF and ITN, were suspected even before the elections of intentions for a government configuration with GERB. But the messages of the leader of GERB definitely led in another direction. Finally, Borisov proposed a minority cabinet headed by the former speaker of parliament, Rosen Zhelyazkov. The formula and composition of the cabinet seemed like a provocation to the other political actors. In the weeks after June 9<sup>th</sup>, the leitmotif of the political discussion was oriented towards a "government of shared responsibility", with rather an expert character, and which excludes prominent political figures. Instead, GERB, without consulting anyone, launched

a one-party cabinet with the most influential party figures, some of whom (such as Delyan Dobrev, for example) were perceived extremely controversially in the political space. Despite everything, MRF declare their support for this cabinet. There were rumours of support from other political forces as well. Then Borisov announced that he did not believe that the government would be elected, but also warned that if such an election did happen "with a trick", he was ready to withdraw his cabinet. In the end, the National Assembly voted against the cabinet.

The conclusion of all these strange moves is unambiguous: Borisov failed his own government. There are several reasons. His attempts to attract PP-DB and to balance in one government configuration between them and MRF proved unsuccessful. Left alone with MRF, and with the resources of only 67 representatives of the people, Borisov would become completely dependent on the movement and especially on their leader Delyan Peevski. To avoid this, the GERB leader clearly preferred to take the risk of new pre-term elections.

### ***The Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF).***

The huge mobilisation of the party, stimulated by the pressure of their co-chairman Delyan Peevski, eventually made MRF the second political force, for the first time in the democratic history of Bulgaria. The achievement is undoubted and there is no guarantee that it would be repeated without the resources of the executive branch. That is why it was extremely important for Peevski to bring MRF into direct participation in the government. This, by the way, was one of the reasons for the change of former party leader Mustafa Karadayi and his replacement with Peevski - getting out of the ethno-national niche and the syndrome of a small formation. Peevski's pressure corresponded to a considerable extent with the attitudes of a significant number of MRF activists who, after the Triple Coalition government in 2009, increasingly felt distanced from national politics and administration. The danger of gradual squandering of the notorious personnel potential of MRF in this sense was clear. And Peevski's own strategy for reversing the trend implied turning GERB into a

springboard for seizing power. There are indications that efforts have been made by MRF to secure a majority for a GERB cabinet that could later be used to transform it into an MRF government.

On the way to these goals, Delyan Peevski also set about consolidating his internal party power, which he needed to act without resistance in this complex situation. A political purge began in MRF, which affected many influential figures, including those close to the honorary chairman, Ahmed Dogan, Filiz Hyusmenova and Ramadan Atalay. At this stage Peevski came into practically open conflict with his political mentor Dogan. Moreover, he tried to secure his foreign policy back in this conflict by organising a meeting with the ambassador of the Republic of Turkey in Bulgaria literally hours before the vote for a government. The tension appears to focus on three areas: the purging of the party leadership, support for just such a government, and the intervention of Turkey. In the history of MRF, conflicts have always ended in two ways - the disaffected break away into a new party or quietly leave political life. Now a third thing has happened. Ramadan Atalay, who was expelled from the parliamentary group, refused to leave parliament, and not just two or three, but as many as 15 MPs openly rejected Peevski's decision to support the "Zhelyazkov" cabinet. It is certain that within this parliament MRF are in no condition to regain their central political role, but they are becoming a major factor in the political crisis.

***"We Continue the Change (Produlzhavame Pro-mianata) - Democratic Bulgaria" (PP-DB).*** The electoral result of the coalition is undoubtedly catastrophic. It was not just their significant names (Ivaylo Mirchev, etc.) that failed to enter parliament. In electoral terms, PP-DB was reduced to the parameters of the so-called "traditional right" of the last 15 years. Both the Reformist Bloc and the original Democratic Bulgaria ranged within the limits of about 300,000 voters, as many as PP-DB currently have. All the anti-GERB fringe that PP had managed to attract in 2021 have been lost. The question of political responsibility was practically not raised. PP leaders steered clear of this matter. The leader of "Yes, Bulgaria" from DB, Hristo Ivanov, was the only one to resign and even left parliament. His colleague from Democrats for a Strong Bulgaria, Atanas Atanasov, refused to follow suit, demanded a vote of confidence from his already greatly reduced and centralised party, and again made efforts to hold the political initiative with various revelations about the behind-the-scenes behaviour of the special services.

PP-DB sought a solution to the crisis in a new fierce opposition course against GERB and MRF. The former alliance with these two parties was cited as a factor in the electoral defeat. In a post-election statement,

the term "rematch" was used. Almost officially, PP-DB declared their intention to oppose the "already established coalition" between GERB and MRF, to encourage public dissatisfaction with it and wait for the moment to return to the scene. And indeed, all the calls of GERB leader Boyko Borisov for a partnership in power were rejected. PP-DB, in addition to an oppositional role, also faced increasing attacks on their presence in local government. In Sofia, Mayor Vasil Terziev became the object of strong criticism and protests because of controversial urban planning decisions, and a procedure to remove the mayor from the PP-DB in the Ilinden district of the capital began. The same practice was carried over to the national level. A signal of incompatibility due to business interests led to a procedure for the removal of the Deputy Governor of the Bulgarian National Bank Andrey Gyurov, who was also nominated by PP-DB. It is a matter of time to see how far this campaign will go, which is gradually limiting the positions of power of the former rulers.

An advantage of PP-DB is that they rather managed to consolidate their hard-line supporters around the version of "resistance of the status quo" to the reforms they proposed. Despite the claims of the new right-wing coalition "Blue Bulgaria", PP-DB still remain practically without serious competition in their niche. Just as before, the stability of the coalition and the relationship between the partners must be carefully monitored. In the context of the European elections, it is important that with the same PP-DB list MEPs were elected, who joined the liberal "Renew Europe" family and the right-wing European People's Party. A chance for stabilisation of PP-DB in this situation is given not so much by their strategies as by the crisis in the camp of GERB and MRF.

***"Vazrazhdane" ("Revival").*** After all the concerted effort to present themselves as an alternative to the entire political model, "Vazrazhdane" failed in the elections. These are the first parliamentary elections in the last 3 years in which the party not only did not increase, but indeed decreased their result. The internal turmoil at the start of the year probably has some bearing, but no less important is the sense of political isolation that has been created. The dynamic Bulgarian political process, essentially a chain of pre-term elections, constantly updates the issue of power and governance. The abiding position of "Vazrazhdane" that they want to govern independently if they get an absolute majority, or in the last case in full compliance with their program, faces realities that do not come close to this prospect. There comes a point when voters, even if they sympathise with the messages of the party, begin to look for other representatives who are more likely to enforce their decisions in practice. This could explain the new, unexpectedly cooperative course of leader Kostadin Kostadinov, who proposed a coalition of all parliamentary parties against GERB



and MRF and even announced talks with PP-DB. Of course, this did not lead to anything, but it hinted at a certain change in the behaviour of "Vazrazhdane".

In the case of "Vazrazhdane", the performance in the elections for the European Parliament is also interesting. The "breakthrough" of the party, which secured three seats and replicated the strongest result in the nationalist camp so far, that of "Ataka" in 2007, was due in no small part to the charisma and popularity of former radio show host Peter Volgin. An important factor for the European perspective of the "Vazrazhdane" is that they are decisively oriented towards the excluded party from the nationalist European family "Alternative for Germany", with the intention of being the leading participants in a new grouping that is more radical than groups with leadership positions like those of Marine Le Pen and Giorgia Meloni.

**The Bulgarian Socialist Party. (BSP)** The socialists suffered yet another electoral defeat, which reduced their electorate by another third and turned them into a small party on the brink of participation in parliament. A political analysis of the causes was not made. Instead, party chairperson Korneliya Ninova unexpectedly resigned.

Ninova's overall behaviour did not suggest that the resignation implied a sincere intention to take responsibility and withdraw from the leadership. Ninova's actions indicated rather that she plans to preempt her critics and prepare the ground for the party's return to power after a short period of timeout and chaos. Ninova was probably counting on the fact that she still controls the processes in BSP through her loyal associates, such as Georgi Svilenski, Hristo Prodanov and Ivan Chenchev at the head of the party and the parliamentary group, and meanwhile the candidates for her post are still at odds with each other and will repel the red sympathisers. However, Ninova was foiled by the quick actions of her close associates, who organised a plenum of the National Council and elected a temporary party leadership in her absence. Atanas Zafirov became head of the party, while Borislav Gutsanov became head of the parliamentary group. Despite being among the most loyal to Ninova before the elections, they suddenly came out against her and announced a radical change in BSP. The new leadership made a symbolic gesture of breaking with the past by excluding Kaloyan Metodiev, the closest person to Ninova, from the parliamentary group. Aspirations for cooperation with other left-wing parties and for rapprochement with President Radev have been announced.

So far, the new leadership is not demonstrating the potential to reverse the negative trends in BSP. All the representatives of this leadership have been known for years as uncompromising executors of Ninova's

will. Their legitimacy as her critics is highly contested. The debate on change in the party is mainly conducted as a debate on the revision of Ninova's decisions. That might embolden some factions within the party, but is unlikely to inspire disillusioned voters. BSP is facing a possible direct election of the party leader in the autumn. The two influential figures in the party, Zafirov and Gutsanov, hinted that they might run. Whether that will happen or not, we do not know, but it leaves the impression of internal discord. The public appearances of the former chairman of BSP-Sofia Ivan Takov and the former president of the Party of European Socialists Sergey Stanishev also speak of ambitions for power. On the other hand, potential bearers of a new, unencumbered beginning, such as the representatives of the Youth Union in the party, seem rather to be left on the back burner. There is a danger that BSP will continue along the lines of internal conflicts and tensions.

Although in resignation, Ninova has not lost the opportunity to influence the processes. She managed to impose the version of a "coup" in the media, i.e. of something illegal, even though her resignation was voluntary, and the election of a new leadership was carried out according to the statute. In addition, she apparently has control over almost half of the parliamentary group. The decision of the party's control committee not to allow Ninova to run for a new term as chairman was presented as a fear that she might be victorious. Relations with Ninova will be a test for the unity of the entire party. In the absence of ideological conversation, personal issues are always in the foreground, and the new leadership has not shown any differences with the previous one on the main issues of ideology and politics.

"There is such a people" ("Ima Takuv Narod" - ITN). The elections were a great success for the showman Slavi Trifonov's formation. They increased their score both in absolute numbers and in terms of number of MPs, and they also won a seat in the European Parliament. Obviously, the tactic of ITN to present themselves as a constructive force, alien to the negatives of the major parties, was successful. Moreover, this tactic continues to be used in the new National Assembly. ITN actually unlocked the initial parliamentary deadlock by supporting GERB's candidacy for leadership. The subsequent accusations that Trifonov and his entourage were serving GERB and MRF did not receive much weight. On the contrary, ITN proved that they can be a factor on which something depends in Bulgarian politics. The other important manifestation of the party was the proposal to the President to be given a third mandate to form a government, with which they will propose an expert cabinet. The likelihood of such an initiative succeeding is minimal, and besides, it endeavours to circumvent the actual intrigue with the first mandate, but again it sets an example of how

an agenda is formed. In the first case – in favour of those who want parliament to work; and in the second case - in favour of those who do not want to have a government in it.

**“Velichie” (“Greatness”).** This is the surprise of the elections and the first new party in the National Assembly after the turbulent year of 2021. “Velichie” never came to the attention of sociological agencies, but they were also hardly present in the space of official media. The impression was created that we are witnessing a new type of party, created and functioning through social networks, but also through well-organised numerous live meetings with voters. This undoubtedly sets them apart from the variety of nationalist and populist parties with modest electoral weight. It can also be said that this is the first serious party in Bulgaria that openly accepts and spreads conspiracy theories (secret plans for the country for the next 100 years, close contacts with the leadership of foreign countries and intelligence, secret knowledge of what is happening in Bulgaria, etc.). Other parties resorting to conspiracies have generally called for their verification. “Velichie” are a step ahead of them.

The genesis of the party is not entirely clear. The leading figures are the former employee of the National Security Service Nikolay Markov, dismissed on disciplinary grounds for disobeying orders and spreading rumours, and the patriotic businessman Ivelin Mihailov, who built as a feudal domain the so-called histor-

ical park near Varna and tied to dozens of companies with dubious accounting. This is an indicator that the behaviour of the two will be difficult to predict, and at the same time there is a risk of being susceptible to various influences. Velichie is not a typical leadership party, unlike most formations in this national-populist space. Not only does it have two central persons, but it also has a formal chairperson, Albena Pekova, who in this capacity has a key role in signing documents, distributing finances and registering everything. At this stage, persistent rumours in the media that it is a network promoted by the special services, which, after all the plans for their total reorganisation, want to ensure immediate control over the political process, cannot be confirmed.

The behaviour of “Velichie” in parliament is marked by daily scandals, which have no precedent in the political history of Bulgaria. There are constant open warnings from the leaders that MPs from the party may defect. The leaders themselves, Markov and Mikhailov, accuse each other of attempting to physically remove them. The situation seems completely absurd. It is possible to explain that the scandals are intended to divert the attention of the public from the real goals and plans of the party. It could also be a happenstance phenomenon that simply has no common language with the country’s political system. In any case, the appearance of “Velichie” is an important symptom of processes in Bulgarian society surrounding the political establishment.

## 4

## MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND FORECASTS

The upcoming NATO summit is loaded with expectations for a new policy of the Alliance towards the war in Ukraine. The divisions in Bulgarian politics on this topic, embodied most vividly by President Rumen Radev and the majority of parties in parliament, are likely to deepen and take new forms from now on. In the light of the ongoing political crisis, it is not out of the question that these divisions will also take on pre-election dimensions.

The elections for the National Assembly on June 9th were held with a catastrophically low voter turnout, which casts doubt on the legitimacy of representative institutions in general. It would appear that the large part of Bulgarian society do not accept participating in a process whose motives they do not understand, and which seems distant from the real problems of the people. There was a belief that the Bulgarian parties would endeavour to postpone possible new pre-term elections as much as possible, in order not to risk an additional outflow of voters. However, the behaviour of the parties rather points in the opposite direction.

Regardless of the complex schemes and interests of the leading forces in Bulgarian politics, the problem with the coalition culture is becoming more and more apparent. In Bulgarian conditions, the government coalition is perceived as the dominance of one party with a supporting role for many smaller formations. For several years, however, the winners of the elections have not been able to surpass the barrier of 70 people's representatives. In such a situation, their potential partners do not recognise their authority and make it extremely difficult to find feasible solutions. This is even more evident from the fact that in most cases it is not about drastic differences in political platforms. Out of the entire parliamentary debate on voting for the "Zhelyazkov" cabinet, for example, only one speech referred to issues on the agenda of Bulgarian society.

The legitimacy of the political establishment is being tested not only sociologically and politically, but also legally. A decision by the Constitutional Court on the appeals against the constitutional changes of last autumn is pending. If this decision overturns the changes as unconstitutional, which is quite likely, the crisis of confidence can only grow. The role of President Radev in this context will prove essential.

The probability of new parliamentary elections is also increasing significantly. The failure of the first mandate turns our focus towards the second mandate, which is unlikely to lead to a new government in practice. Hopes are focused on the third mandate and a possible formula for a rescue programme that would postpone the elections and give a chance for a more sober assessment of the political outlook. However, judging by the visible side of things, GERB do not want a government in this parliament, and an option without GERB sounds somewhat unrealistic.

In the general crisis of the Bulgarian political parties, the crisis in a party considered immune from crises - MRF - unexpectedly arose. It remains to be seen whether the tension between Delyan Peevski and Ahmed Dogan will take new forms and how it will end. In keeping with the traditions of this party, compromise is unlikely, with a victory form one individual being far more possible. The special status of MRF as an unspoken representative of the Bulgarian Turks, however, inevitably raises fears of ethnicisation of intra-party contradictions. This would be a very bad direction of development that could be avoided.

The crisis of the socialist party does not lead to the strengthening of new left-wing entities. The "Solidarna Bulgaria" project failed in the elections. But the failure of BSP and the resignation of their leader Korneliya Ninova do not create conditions for a rise of the left wing. Low trust in the party's elite speaks for itself. Bulgarian politics continues to tangibly suffer from the lack of adequate left-wing representation.

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Further information on the topic can be found here:  
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