

DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

# POLIT-BAROMETER

Year 22 Issue 6  
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**Boris Popivanov**



Bulgarian-Russian relations are stretched to the limit with potentially serious repercussions for politics and the economy of the country.



The political crisis in the country points either to a short-term unstable cabinet or to pre-term elections in the early autumn.



The tension between the President and the leading party remains a key axis of the political debate.

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## 1

## THE DYNAMICS OF FOREIGN POLICY

**The anti-Russian escalation.** The decision of the Bulgarian Prime Minister Kiril Petkov to expel 70 Russian diplomats from Bulgaria due to allegations of espionage is truly an unprecedented act in the recent history of the country. Diplomatic relations between Bulgaria and Russia have actually been brought to a halt. Russia's aggression in Ukraine has provoked the entire Western world, including in Bulgaria, towards actions to extradite diplomats, but with the number "70" Bulgaria exceeded all such one-time moves of its European and Euro-Atlantic partners. Two factors further complicate the picture. The first is that it is an initiative of a resigned Prime Minister. The second is that, according to public statements, the action turned out to be a surprise to the President, the coalition partners, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the prosecutor's office. In other words, doubts inevitably arise about the extremely risky use of foreign policy for domestic political purposes, and in the conditions of a crisis.

The Ukrainian conflict has become a permanent dividing line in Bulgarian politics. Over time, Prime Minister Petkov made serious efforts to fully identify with the pro-Western and anti-Russian position. This gradually turned out to be his leading claim to power. Petkov tried to use the anti-Russian card to achieve supremacy in three directions - against Slavi Trifonov's "There is such a people" (ITN) party, against the opposition in the form of GERB and the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF), and against President Rumen Radev. Petkov's conflict with ITN found expression in the acute tension with ITN Foreign Minister Teodora Genchovska. The impression was created that Genchovska (with the backing of ITN) was preventing the Prime Minister from implementing a real European policy in relation to the Ukrainian conflict. GERB and MRF have been repeatedly accused by Petkov of behind-the-scenes connections with pro-Russian circles (on the occasion of the "Turkish Stream" project and the sanctions under the "Magnitsky" law). The fall of the government due to a successful vote of no-confidence fueled claims that Moscow was staging a "coup" and ousting the cabinet. The Russian ambassador in Sofia, Eleonora Mitrofanova, was directly named by Petkov as the culprit for his fall from power. And President Radev was openly attacked by Petkov in an interview

with the British newspaper "The Guardian" for planning to resume negotiations with the Russian gas giant "Gazprom" and to weaken Bulgarian support for Ukraine. The extradition of the Russian diplomats came as a new, higher stage in this process of escalation. It is apparent that the Prime Minister wants to present all opponents of his cabinet as overt or covert supporters of Russia and thus to press for international support for his future new administration.

**The resolution of the "Macedonian nodus".** The case with the Bulgarian veto on the beginning of the integration process of North Macedonia in the EU received an unexpectedly rapid development. At the end of May, it appeared that the Bulgarian veto would remain in place indefinitely. The situation was determined by four elements – first, prevailing public attitudes against lifting the veto; second, a widespread and publicly acknowledged perception of systematic pressure from abroad to support the lifting of the veto; thirdly, a conviction being established that Prime Minister Kiril Petkov was looking for options to lift the veto, but did not find how to do it without endangering his power; and fourth, a majority in the National Assembly against lifting the veto.

The "resolution of the nodus" occurred for two main reasons, related to foreign and domestic policy. One of them was related to the initiative of France. In the middle of the year, the end of the French rotating presidency of the Council of the EU was approaching. The ambitious Paris programme ended with mixed results. Among its priorities was the start of the negotiation process of North Macedonia and Albania for EU membership. This took on added significance against the background of the generally consensual understanding that Ukraine and Moldova should be granted EU candidate status. It was clear to all that an "open" European perspective for Kyiv and Chisinau did not correspond well with a "frozen" European perspective for Skopje and Tirana. For this reason, France focused on mediation between North Macedonia and Bulgaria and came up with a proposal that largely included European guarantees for Bulgarian demands during the negotiation process. And since one of the main complaints of Bulgaria was that the

European partners refused to understand the country's problem with North Macedonia, the so-called a "French proposal" showing just such an understanding could hardly be rejected.

In the sphere of domestic politics, the disintegration of the ruling majority proved to be a driving force. Slavi Trifonov's party ITN ("There is Such a People") left the government coalition for two reasons, according to one of which Prime Minister Petkov had the intention of "betraying" Bulgarian interests and lifting the veto. Personally, Trifonov emphasised that "Macedonia" was the reason for his exit from power. In this situation, paradoxically, the veto issue could have been accelerated. The potential negative had already been consumed with the behaviour of ITN. Moreover, the main opposition GERB, accused of toppling a pro-EU government due to behind-the-scenes dependencies and (probable) ties to Russia, had to do something to present its behaviour as pro-European. GERB not only changed its position on North Macedonia and supported the removal of the veto, but also submitted such a proposal to the National Assembly. Thus the "anti-Macedonian" majority for conjunctural reasons suddenly disappeared to be replaced by one that was "pro-Macedonian".

In the Bulgarian political elite concerns about negative public reactions stimulated an impulse to blur responsibility on this delicate topic. The conditions were

suitable because, as was logical, the political crisis displaced the Macedonian problem from the agenda. Warnings that lifting the veto on North Macedonia could topple the government had lost their meaning - and this is because the government had already been toppled. However, in an effort not to disappoint voters, the Bulgarian political forces looked for rescue tactics. The leading party - "We Continue the Change" - insisted that it was not their government that lifted the veto, but parliament, in which they no longer have a majority. GERB, on the other hand, pointed out that the event happened during the term of office of Kiril Petkov. All together claimed that they were not proposing anything and did not have the initiative, but were simply supporting a foreign (French) proposal. And last, but not least, everyone emphasised that the Bulgarian decision actually frees Bulgaria from initiative and turns the problem from a Bulgarian one into a Macedonian one.

Of course, the matter has not been definitively closed. The French proposal offers a framework, the specifics of which should be determined by governmental protocols. North Macedonia itself has not yet unequivocally accepted the proposal. The information also appeared that France's proposal to Bulgaria does not completely coincide with the proposal to North Macedonia. It is not of insignificant importance how and with what majority the Bulgarian institutions will continue their work on the case.

## 2

## INSTITUTIONS AND THE AGENDA OF SOCIETY

**The Government.** The “Petkov” cabinet turned out to be unique in at least two dimensions – it was the shortest functioning parliamentary government since the beginning of the transition, and the only one to be toppled by a vote of no confidence. The end of the government, although repeatedly predicted by various quarters, was rather surprising. Three circumstances illustrate this statement. First, the impression was created that the contradictions between the parties in the quadruple coalition always led to a compromise. Even in such a delicate case as military aid to Ukraine, a solution was reached with joint efforts. Second, a few days before the collapse of the coalition, MPs from the majority started to bandy about the idea of a mayoral term limit, thus clearly showing ambitions for a long government and political plans for the next year. Third, the angry attack against “There is Such a People” (ITN), who left the coalition, expressed the surprise at their actions more than any words.

The reasons for the downfall of the cabinet are varied, but can be encapsulated in three persistent trends. The government became hostage to foreign policy topics, on which it was much more difficult to find consensus within the governing coalition and much easier with parties outside the coalition. It should also be noted the growing unilateralism of the Prime Minister, who increasingly took actions and made statements without consulting his partners, and was clearly oriented towards the politics of *fait accompli*. And also, signals from ITN that their proposals were systematically belittled and rejected were decisively underestimated.

The situation in which ITN left the coalition was inadequately evaluated by the other representatives of the majority. A persistent desire to “move forwards” in the same way, without any significant changes, was declared. The “minority government” formula was put forward, which would keep the same cabinet, but without ITN. This formula rested on the expectation that the ITN parliamentary group would be split and enough MPs from it would complete the government majority. Five members (later six) did actually leave, but this did not help the cabinet to survive. Instead, it allowed a negative reading - that MPs were “bought”. The removal of the head of the parliament

Nikola Minchev and the cabinet itself with a vote of no confidence, one after the other, provoked the government parties to promote a double thesis: that a “new majority” had already appeared in the form of GERB, MRF, ITN and “Vazrazhdane” (“Revival”), and that this majority was already making decisions and leading the country to an apocalypse in the autumn and winter. To talk about a “new majority” was not serious, because it was obvious that at this stage the four alleged participants in it could not unite around any positive programme. The bigger problem was that this “packaging” of cabinet enemies put paid to any dialogue with them and made it extremely difficult for a new cabinet around “We Continue the Change” (PP) in the current National Assembly. The candidacy of Deputy Prime Minister Asen Vasilev for new Prime Minister on behalf of PP is a new example of reluctance to look for options for a political perspective other than those known so far.

The days after the resignation of the cabinet reinforced the feeling of a lack of political responsibility. Important decisions, such as the lifting of the veto on North Macedonia and the extradition of Russian diplomats, were taken “in resignation”, and with an unclear partnership between ruling and opposition players. The budget update was accompanied by chaotic adjustments that made both the opposition and experts question the realism of the final product. When all is said and done, the resigned government turned out to be more of a “government with limited liability”.

**The President.** The month was dominated by the confrontation between Prime Minister Kiril Petkov and President Rumen Radev on almost all issues of the agenda of domestic and foreign policy. Regular criticism of the President was met with counter-accusations from the government. It became obvious that the first political force PP (“We Continue the Change”) and Prime Minister Kiril Petkov openly viewed Radev as a threat to their political prospects. The government made an effort to “geopolitically brand” Radev under the motto “the masks have fallen”, implying his proximity to Russian interests, and not so much to European and Euro-Atlantic ones. The line of the President emphasised the “anti-institutional” charac-

ter of governance, which tramples on rules and laws, and gives rise to chaos. Two of the three remaining parties in the majority, PP and BSP, directly refused to participate in consultations with the President. Among the motives of the coalition to form a new cabinet, the desire to avoid a caretaker government of Radev began to stand out more and more clearly. The head of state was also suspected of being close to GERB and MRF. All this draws dividing lines that decisively change the public positioning of the President. At least at this stage, he is no longer able to balance between pro-Western and pro-Russian forces in Bulgarian politics. The media and political capabilities of pro-Western forces would put Radev in rather a "siege position". The fact that he defends points of view close to those of the majority of Bulgarian citizens, however, increases his chances of influencing political attitudes in times of crisis. The question of whether, when and in what context his caretaker cabinet will be formed becomes paramount for his political role from now on.

**The Chief prosecutor.** Ivan Geshev gradually won the position of "last player standing". Despite all the attacks against him, his bottom line so far is positive – the government has fallen, and he remains in office. Moreover, conditions have been created for Geshev to go on the counter-offensive and turn the prosecutor's office into an effective tool for political influence. The investigation launched against the head of the Prime Minister's office Lena Borislavova for her career in the Bulgarian Development Bank shows just such an intention. Moreover, Geshev has become an important factor in the political process for two other reasons. The first is due to the leader of "Vazrazhdane" Kostadin Kostadinov, who referred the chief prosecutor against Prime Minister

Petkov. The second reason stems from the scandal with the extradition of the Russian diplomats. Geshev is trying to balance between the "West" and the "East" - on one hand, to highlight his joint work with the European chief prosecutor Laura Kovesi and, on the other hand, to flirt with Russophiles by declaring ignorance about the diplomats and instilling suspicions of violations of the law.

**Public opinion.** The political crisis in Bulgaria affects people's attitudes mainly due to fears related to economic and foreign policy. The desire for political stability in crisis conditions is high. Support for the outgoing cabinet has been shaken, but no serious alternative to it has been recognised. An express Gallup International poll after the vote of no confidence showed a split in attitudes - 48% of respondents preferred the government to go, while 50% thought it would be better to stay. Along with this, people judge internal political confrontation as the main factor for the crisis, and not so much the geopolitical motives that have been so vociferously advertised. 65% are of the opinion that the government is solely to blame for its fall from power, while only 19.5% support the version that it was toppled by Russia.

The geopolitical divide should not be underestimated, however. It is latent for Bulgarian society, and the political elite has been fostering it too actively in recent months. The consequences can be long-term. It is important not to define identity according to pro-European and anti-Russian attitudes, as is sometimes done in the media. Data from various surveys indicate that a significant number of Bulgarians prefer the EU to Russia and do not approve of Russian aggression in Ukraine, but this does not in any way imply support for breaking off relations with Russia.

## 3

## THE CONDITION OF THE PARTY SYSTEM

**“We Continue the change” (“Produlzhavame Pro-mianata” - PP).** In the days around and after the resignation of the cabinet, PP became a kind of “party-government”. The leading political power have given up balancing between their partners and their interests. They also gave up imposing their opinion on the partners. Instead, they preferred unilateral actions, often without the knowledge of the partners, but on their behalf.

The big change brought about by PP was the revival of the Sofia protest and its accompanying themes “mafia”, “oligarchy”, “status quo” and “Russia”. The protest was transformed into a tool to support not just the cabinet, but also PP, especially as represented by the ousted head of the parliament Nikola Minchev and Prime Minister Petkov. There is an almost obvious seizure of this terrain by “Democratic Bulgaria” (DB). Moreover, even public speakers sympathetic to DB openly began to call for a pre-electoral coalition between PP and DB, which would in all likelihood lead to the depersonalization and marginalization of DB. Discrediting BSP is the second effect of this behaviour of PP, which succeeds in suggesting that the party of Korneliya Ninova, in its ambition to retain power, is ready for any compromises and will be a “crutch” even in an anti-Russian and right-liberal political configuration. With their rhetoric about “enemies” and the “coup”, PP managed to achieve consolidation, to interrupt the downward trend of trust, but also they took the risk of closing themselves and finally repelling the electoral fringes that supported the “change” against the GERB and MRF model, but who do not identify with the themes of the centre of Sofia, with anti-Russian behaviour or with anti-presidential actions. The main goal of the PP, apparently, is to monopolise unequivocally and without nuances the geopolitical commitment of Bulgaria to the West, on the basis of which they will later seek partnerships. The belief that external support will compensate for internal failures is visible, and that in the end none of the parties that defines itself as Euro-Atlantic will be able to refuse long-term cooperation with PP and a secondary role in this cooperation. The nomination of Asen Vasilev for Prime Minister clearly indicates that PP will be uncompromising and will continue the confrontation with the President.

**GERB-UDF.** The main opposition force, contrary to expectations, showed no enthusiasm for the collapse of the ruling coalition. This is logical. The party GERB itself have repeatedly emphasised that they rely on the slow and gradual erosion of the “Petkov” cabinet, until a moment when the situation becomes unstoppable and only GERB would be able to stabilise the political situation. The departure of ITN preceded this process and preserved certain expectations towards PP, shared among the supporters of other parties. The vote of no confidence that actually brought down the government was instigated by GERB almost under duress. There was no way, after all the accusations of incompetence and with the collapse of the majority, that the opposition would refuse to demand the ousting of the cabinet. This would not be understood by anyone and would erase GERB’s claim that they want power and can rule.

In the current situation, GERB are aware of two things. The first is that for a large part of the society their return to power is unacceptable, at least for now, and the second is that they need external support, for which the biggest obstacle is the personality of the leader Boyko Borisov himself, who has been suspected for years of playing a “double game” with Russia. This is why GERB are postponing any attempts at a “bid for government” until after some early elections, when it might seem inevitable. Along with this, Borisov chose to answer none other than the former President Rosen Plevneliev that he does not intend to take a step back, and in this sense his role as the leader of the party is not subject to negotiation. And as an addition to this role, Borisov is trying to prove that without him personally, a stable Euro-Atlantic majority is impossible. We have seen it in the changed position on the veto on North Macedonia, in the support for the extradition of the Russian diplomats, and in symbolic terms – in his presence at a reception at the American embassy.

**Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF).** MRF seem to be the political force that put the most energy into discrediting and overthrowing the cabinet. It was the first parliamentary party to have been warning since March that it was preparing for early elec-



tions, and also the most radical on the parliamentary ground in its disagreements with the majority. Certain actions of PP further strengthened this intransigence - the threats against MRF and their representatives with the "Magnitsky" law, the demand that MRF be removed from the family of European liberals, and the proposal that Interior Minister Boyko Rashkov should head the anti-corruption body KPCONPI (the Commission for Countering Corruption and Confiscation of Illegally Acquired Property).

The suspicion arose that the decision of ITN to leave the coalition was dictated by MRF. This could hardly be confirmed or refuted with certainty, but the fall of the cabinet at this moment is actually beneficial for MRF. Their role in a future even more fragmented parliament would probably increase, and the political weight of their opponents, conversely, would probably decrease.

**The Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP).** The party experienced a severe blow with the fall of the cabinet. It was clearly the belief of the leadership that the coalition would have a long mandate that would have provided some comfort to the party elite with regard to government and personnel. The political crisis returns the debate to the continuing electoral erosion of BSP, related to their unconvincing participation in power. That is why the primary goal of the leader Korneliya Ninova is to postpone possible early elections as much as possible, including at the cost of any ideological and political compromises.

The policy of "red lines" that BSP enjoyed boasting about collapsed. In recent months, two "red lines" were drawn - no military aid to Ukraine and keeping the Bulgarian veto on North Macedonia. Both are over and done with. The fact that Bulgarian weapons reach Ukraine, and in large quantities, was confirmed by Ukrainian and Austrian sources, by representatives of Bulgarian military factories and personally by the resigned Prime Minister Kiril Petkov. Attempts to cover this up are becoming more and more unconvincing and in fact they direct attention to the personal role of Deputy Prime Minister Ninova and her Chief of Staff Kaloyan Metodiev. The fall of the veto on North Macedonia was quietly passed over with the excuse that BSP MPs abstained in the vote. This vote in no way delayed the decision itself, nor did it even make it a topic for public discussion. After the resignation of the cabinet, BSP proposed a new "red line" in consultations with PP for a future government - renewal of negotiations with Gazprom. It is obvious that this "red line" is doomed to failure, especially against the background of the incident with the expelled Russian diplomats. Indeed the very story with the diplomats is another heavy blow to the public authority of the socialist party. Korneliya Ninova agreed to negotiate with PP for a new cabinet only on the condition that Kiril Petkov be replaced by another Prime Minister.

The nomination of Asen Vassilev, who called the reluctance to help Ukraine "disgraceful", does not change the picture in any way. In practice, BSP insists decisively on entering into a coalition with a party that has brought relations with Russia to breaking point.

The new phase of confrontation between the leadership of the party and President Radev is more pronounced than all previous phases. Every day, Radev is accused of all possible sins, from building a party to collaboration with GERB. This line is probably intended to serve as Ninova's alibi for future electoral failures. But at the same time it is also a tool for influencing PP. Apparently, according to Ninova's understanding, PP have to be convinced to retain power in this parliament at all costs, in order to prevent a caretaker cabinet being formed by Radev.

Against the background of this series of gross political mistakes, the figure of the MP Krum Zarkov is emerging as an ever clearer factor in the alternative direction for the development of the left. The debate he organised in parliament to repeal the flat tax is an ambitious attempt to return the party to an authentic left-wing agenda, rather than losing their identity in inept political intrigue. There are more and more frequent rumours that Ninova is preparing another showdown with internal party opponents. If this is indeed to come, then the overall political perspective for the 130-year-old party is starting to look bleak, to say the least.

**"There is Such a People" ("Ima Takuv Narod" - ITN).** Slavi Trifonov's party caused the collapse of the coalition with two official arguments: non-alignment of the PP with its partners and an intention to "betray" the Bulgarian interest in North Macedonia. Both arguments were categorically rejected and denounced by those in power. The suspicions that it was actually about economic commitments made by ITN that could not be fulfilled probably have some grounds. In any case, a powerful campaign was launched to crush ITN, which led to the departure of MPs and the disbanding of local structures. The party is on the brink of survival as a political entity. There are many who actively attribute to it the public image of a "servant of the oligarchy" to it. Perhaps the most serious and credible accusation is that it is a destructive, not a constructive, political force, which for the third time in a calendar year has caused the failure of governments and obstructed the governance of the country.

The two arguments for leaving the coalition are, however, not so superficial. It is already clear to the public that PP and Petkov do not consider any of their partners at all, not just ITN. And with regard to North Macedonia, Trifonov was ultimately right. This, along with Trifonov's place in Bulgarian culture, does not allow us to lightly write off his party, as many have done. Of course, a lot will depend on whether or not it simply disappears in the coming weeks.

**“Democratic Bulgaria” (DB).** The danger of the coalition being completely defaced in the shadow of PP, as has been the case since last summer, is on its way to coming to pass. PP has expropriated not only the topics, but also, as was seen from the protests in support of the cabinet, the main supporters and public speakers of the “old right wing”. It is already very difficult for DB to explain why they do not become a single political entity with PP. The gloomy and cautious behaviour of DB leaders in recent weeks indicates that they are aware of the risk, and also that they cannot advocate an alternative line that would set them apart. As an old custom, it seems more likely that DB will wait in the hope that the current enthusiasm around PP will fade and people will still remember the “old” right-wing parties. Hence the ambition to postpone early elections as much as possible. If they were to happen immediately, DB would be faced with a choice for their participation in which there would be no useful move.

**“Vazrazhdane” (“Revival”).** The party of Kostadin Kostadinov has unconditionally benefited from the political crisis. The electoral tide with the party is beyond doubt. The anti-Russian priority of the gov-

ernment, combined with the collapse of the same government and the political indecision of the opposition, serve all the claims of “Vazrazhdane” and allow them to position themselves as an alternative to the entire political system. Moreover, the party’s radicalism is no longer necessarily a disadvantage for it. Under ordinary conditions, this radicalism would set a certain electoral ceiling that could not be surpassed. With the current developments, the number of people who would like to “punish” all politicians in one election is growing, and this gives a chance for the “ceiling” of “Vazrazhdane” to be exceeded. Warnings that the party may lose due to the fact that it systematically voted with GERB and MRF and even participated in protests with them are overestimated. Kostadinov’s explanatory line in this regard is sufficiently convincing. It is a matter of a principled vote against any “treacherous” government, no matter with whom one votes. Of course, “Vazrazhdane” also faces risks, and these are related to their political impatience to have new elections immediately. If this does not happen, it is not certain whether they will be able to maintain indefinitely the image of a party on the rise that gives the people a “punitive” tool against politicians.

## 4

## MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND FORECASTS

Bulgaria's relations with Russia have been brought to breaking point, something unprecedented in the last 80 years. The economic and political ramifications of this conflict probably still have to be seen. It is possible that Moscow will be tempted to use a European country like Bulgaria as an example to demonstrate the potential of an internationalisation of the East-West conflict, but also to check how far European and Euro-Atlantic solidarity with Bulgaria extends in practice. A test of statesmanship of the Bulgarian government, whether regular or caretaker, will be to enter into an active dialogue with the country's partners in order to minimise the effects of destabilisation.

The politically encouraged rift "Russophiles-Russophobes" will in all probability also have electoral dimensions. The chances of the parties announcing a balanced policy towards Russia or an outright pro-Russian policy will increase. On the other hand, precisely the alleged growth of such pro-Russian formations will allow the "Euro-Atlantic" parties to denounce them as a "threat" to the future of Bulgaria and thus legitimise multi-party governing coalitions with a "Euro-Atlantic" profile. The leading vector of Bulgarian politics in the coming months will increasingly be pro-Western.

There are two possible outcomes to the political crisis in the country. One is the formation of an unstable government in a format similar to that of the "Petkov" cabinet, perhaps with the support of MPs from ITN or some floating support. In practice, this is also the only chance for a cabinet in this parliament. At this stage, a cabinet with the participation of GERB is not

particularly realistic, although not absolutely excluded. If a government were formed, it could be either with the mandate of PP or if the third mandate were given to DB. The other options are unconvincing. But once this government was formed, it would operate on the brink of survival, with uncertain parliamentary support, and would encounter serious difficulties in implementing any more substantive changes (in the judiciary, with regard to the Recovery Plan, etc.). The time horizon of such a configuration would probably not be long, and would generally work in favour of further strengthening GERB. The other way out of the crisis would be early elections held at the end of September or the first half of October. Given the political and ideological uncertainty of most parties, one could predict that their election campaign would be subordinated to their attitude towards the President's caretaker government and its actions. Radev's role in Bulgarian politics as the main institutional authority would grow further, but the ambitions to delegitimise him would also grow. Concerns about his future political plans, in line with the ever-higher public expectations for him, are already there to be seen.

The personalisation of the political process masks the desire of most political players to reach mutual understanding. Political differences are practically no longer talked about, only those related to personages. BSP do not accept a cabinet with Prime Minister Petkov, ITN do not want a cabinet with the participation of Petkov and Vasilev, PP do not agree to partner with GERB while Borisov is in charge. We could go on giving examples. But even these alone illustrate the hopes for a political configuration without "red lines".

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## 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

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Further information on the topic can be found here:  
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