

Institutional Risks in Bulgarian Political Life: 2020-2022

Ivaylo Hristov

University of national and World Economy Sofia, 19, 8th December Blvd. Bulgaria¹
ivaylo.d@unwe.bg

Abstract: *the text is focused on the crises in contemporary Bulgarian political life in the last two years and the institutional risks they hide. Special attention is paid to the distrust of the public in parliamentary democracy and the unwillingness of political parties to take responsibility in crisis situations. The role of President Rumen Radev and the importance of the presidential institution in the regime of caretaker governments are highlighted.*

KEYWORDS: RISKS, CRISES, INSTITUTIONS, SOCIETY

1. Chronology of events and facts

The facts are as follows: four parliaments, three elections, the last of which "2 in 1" (presidential and early parliamentary ones), two caretaker cabinets and a regular government at the end of the year. This is the balance in figures from the political 2021. The first three months of 2021 were also the last for the 44th Parliament and for the management of the Borisov 3 cabinet - a coalition between GERB-UDF and the United Patriots. For the first time, a government headed by Boyko Borisov has served its full four-year term after two that ended early with resignation.

Regular parliamentary elections were held on 4 April. The popular vote defined GERB-UDF again as the first political force, the new formation of Slavi Trifonov - "There is such a people" (ITN), was second, "BSP for Bulgaria" retreated and took third position. Then the MRF, "Democratic Bulgaria" (DB) and "Stand up! Thugs out." The 45th Parliament had too short, but far from boring, life. As the first political force, GERB-UDF received the first mandate from President Rumen Radev to form a government. Their draft cabinet with Prime Minister candidate Daniel Mitov did not meet with support, the invited for talks ITN and DB, which they recognized as logical partners, categorically refused to enter into negotiations. Both formations of the protests announced a course of "scratching" GERB and Borisov from power. Thus, GERB-UDF remained in isolation, returned Radev's mandate.

The second political force - that of Stanislav Trifonov, which was declared overwhelming support by everyone in the National Assembly (NA), also did not take responsibility on the grounds that it does not have its own majority. ITN-nominated world chess champion Antoaneta Stefanova immediately returned the mandate. The same was done by the BSP, which received the third exploratory mandate. This led to the inevitable foretold end of the 45th parliament and the first for this year early parliamentary elections in the summer - on July 11, and the first caretaker cabinet appointed by President Radev, in which ministers of economy and finance were Kiril Petkov and Assen Vassilev.

The second early parliamentary elections were held on July 11, 2021. They were at the height of the summer break, but nevertheless "launched" the party of Slavi Trifonov to the first position. Again, the same six parties and coalitions fell into the 46th People's Assembly, but with exchanged seats GERB-UDF remained second, followed by "BSP for Bulgaria", "Democratic Bulgaria", MRF and "Stand up! Thugs out!", which changed their name to "Stand up BG! We are coming!" /IBGNI/. The leaders of the 2020 protests, Nikolay Hadzhenov and Arman Babikian, part of IBGNI, created a civil movement "We come!" to participate in political life. However, much of the change from ITN, DB and IBGNI again did not have the necessary 121 deputies to govern the country.

The second early parliamentary vote coincided with the November 14 presidential election. At the head of the second caretaker cabinet remained Stefan Yanev. Former caretaker ministers Kiril Petkov and Assen Vassilev took part in the election race, and their seats in the executive power were taken by Daniela Vezieva and Valeri Belchev. The fourth for 2021 National Assembly and the 47th in a row included seven coalitions and

parties - „Continuing the Change“, GERB-UDF, MRF, "BSP for Bulgaria", "There is such a people", "Democratic Bulgaria" and PP "Revival". IBGNI fell below the four-percent threshold. "There is such a people" fell to fifth place in the final standings and in a post on Facebook their leader Slavi Trifonov said that he will do everything possible that depends on him this time to have a government.

On the day of the early vote, President Radev firmly said that the stakes are huge and will determine whether the processes of establishing statehood will continue or whether the backstage will again be given institutional power. „The first immediate and most important horizon is to form a government that Bulgaria needs“, he insisted. In his address at the opening of the National Assembly, Head of State Rumen Radev said that hopes for the new parliament are high and the stakes are fateful. It's time for a national consensus. "It is up to you for this parliament to close the era of transition. We can no longer afford to waste historical time and resources. This parliament - the youngest in history - has the capacity to lead Bulgaria on the path of freedom and modernization." He said. On December 11, Head of State Rumen Radev handed the mandate for forming a government to the candidate for Prime Minister Kiril Petkov, nominated by „We continue the Change“, and he immediately returned it to him fulfilled. Later, the personnel and structure of the Council of Ministers were presented to Parliament. On December 13, the new government was sworn in before the National Assembly. Previously, MPs elected Kiril Petkov as Prime Minister and approved the structure and staff of the regular government with 134 votes in favor and 104 against in all three votes. Their support for the Council of Ministers (Council of Ministers) was given by „Continuing the Change“, "BSP for Bulgaria", "There is such a people" and "Democratic Bulgaria". "Against" were GERB-UDF, MRF and "Revival". Today is an important day to continue the change - of thinking and management, said Kiril Petkov. The government's motto will be "zero tolerance for corruption, for every single lev spent unduly, opaquely," he said.

Along with the early parliamentary elections, regular presidential elections were held on November 14, 2021. President Rumen Radev and Vice President Iliana Iotova won a second term in a runoff against Anastas Gerdzhikov and Nevyana Miteva.

Radev-Yotova were nominated by an Initiative Committee and supported by a wide range of political forces, including PP, ITN, BSP and IBGNI. [1]

2. Rumen Radev's Hour

The key role of President Rumen Radev during his first and second term is clearly visible from the data presented. What's that? As is known, Rumen Radev was elected by the protest vote as a negation of the status quo and as a carrier of change. In a significant sense this is due to the circumstance that in the very first months of his term he managed to impose the image of himself as a statesman defending national interests; As a man who does not succumb to party influence and as a person who wins sympathy both at home and abroad. For information, as early as January 2017 in Brussels, Rumen Radev demanded the cancellation of the "Dublin Agreement", which does not work in Bulgaria's interest,

stated a firm position towards Ankara, stressing that Turkey should not be allowed to use the refugee crisis as a lever of power to influence the EU and outlines our role in the EU and NATO not as an anti-Russian hawk who has taken a ridiculous posture towards the Kremlin, but as a worthy country in a common alliance that must find ways to dialogue with Russia. Thus, at the beginning of his term, Rumen Radev showed that he has all the qualities of a leader, of a strong and responsible man to the nation. His first 100 days undoubtedly show that a strong person with a serious capacity of knowledge and skills to gain his personal stately profile, not subject to the political forces and the public situation, enters Bulgarian politics: "At Rumen Radev's start as Head of State, all analysts emphasized that the lack of political experience would find him unprepared for the surprises in politics and in defending the difficult balance between the institutions. Radev, however, turned out to be a very good student and for three months he not only mastered the balance, not only showed emancipation from any political aspirations, but began to build his own pedestal of the presidential institution, which requires the rest of the country to comply with it. In the presidency, however, there is no power, there is influence, there is strategic visionary (who can do it), there are places of pillars for national priorities (who sees them) and judging by his recent actions, Radev will do just that. Hence the strength of the presidential power that was absent during Plevneliev's time."

In parallel, President Rumen Radev's behavior at the beginning of his term poses dangers. Why and what? It is true that Rumen Radev demonstrated a definite distinction from the Borisov-3 cabinet in terms of: an assessment of the development of democratic processes in Bulgaria, corruption, the state of the media environment, election rules, deepening social injustice, the work of parliament and the laws adopted by the majority. However, such a position is a double-edged sword. Because for many of the "Unifier of the Nation" he is becoming more and more the "Leader of the Opposition". That is why his words will increasingly divide rather than unite. The two camps will read, each in its own bell tower, what he says, and will stand more and more openly and fiercely against each other. And their grades will never overlap. This is the great danger facing President Radev. The more he says what people want to hear from him, the more he moves away from the possibility of a general view of things, deprives himself of the privilege of staying at a distance from everyone and of this position of giving assessments and suggestions for solutions that concern everyone. Because a priori people are dissatisfied with any government, today - especially many, tomorrow it will probably be the same, but the constitutional powers of the Bulgarian president do not give him any mechanisms to change the status quo, except the weapon of speech."

Compared to the previous presidents, who demonstrated political behavior based on ideological confrontation, Rumen Radev turned out to be the favorite of both the left and the right: "Rumen Radev won emphatically, although he lost 500,000 voters from the vote five years ago. Remarkably, he appeared as the favorite of both the left and the right. 96% of the Socialists, 70% of "Yes, Bulgaria", 91% of the supporters of "Continuing the Change", over 80% of the people of ITN and even 72% of the supporters of "Revival" voted for Radev. And it was these formations, without "Revival", that became leading leaders for forming a regular government. The low turnout is not an assessment of rivals in the presidential vote - it is an assessment of the entire political class, which in the last decade has carved the horrific gap between itself and its voters. What is new in these elections is that, despite the desperate activity, they are beginning to change the political landscape. And Radev can take credit for this. At the same time, he should be aware that only a million and a half Bulgarians voted for him, the others found no reason to go to the polls. This fact does not matter for history, but Radev is extremely important for the establishment of politics. He was the first democratically elected president with the lowest support. And this fact cannot be overlooked.

Let us not forget that President Radev has become a stimulator of new social processes, such as the emergence of "Continuing the

Change". This project was initiated to a large extent by the President. In essence, Rumen Radev was the springboard that brings the unknown and inexperienced young people to the political scene. They draw the contours of a new political model different from the previous one. Objectivity requires saying that "Continuing the Change" is not a party in the classical sense of the word, it is a political project of people who follow their business interests and who will realize them through power. For them, as evidenced by their decisions, there is no left, no right. The repoliticization of politics that we see globally has arrived in our country. It is visible that the new generation of globalist politicians is rising, who are alien to traditional values such as kin, homeland, family, roots. In essence, there is a new model of policy-making that will be embedded in all sectors of life - education, culture, economy. The policy of corporations will determine the policy of parties, where power is taken to consume, without regard to ideologies. "Kiril Petkov and Assen Vassilev as images and behavior will be the matrix by which the future leaders in society will be imposed - positive, pushy, painters of a beautiful future. They are the embodiment of the GENERATION "COUP", which took place in our country this autumn. They will lead an entirely new generation of politicians who will be the deterrent to the attempts of the past to return." [2]

3. Causes of the institutional crisis in the period 2020-2022

We can unequivocally say that in recent years there has been a crisis of parliamentary democracy and a reluctance of political parties to take responsibility in risky situations. Why?! The institutional crises in Bulgarian political life reveal eloquently its behind-the-scenes, hypocrisy and duality. We can safely talk about a "political syndrome", the features of which are reduced to the following:

Politics in our country has always provided opportunities for almost unlimited privileges and also for advantages in business. In the absence of real political democracy in society, politics has always benefited those who deal with it. Unlike developed countries, where well-educated in the field of political and administrative spheres already rich people who have proven themselves in practice reach politics, in our country this is often done first precisely by the unproven. Therefore, if they prove themselves, they do not select funds. It is no coincidence that one of the most common versions of the failure of the transition between 10.11.1989 recognizes the politicians - "greedy types" who have ruined Bulgaria. Both before and now Bulgarians hate politicians and do not believe what they say. They seem synonymous with thieving characters guilty of the catastrophic nature of Bulgaria's transition to capitalism. Politics is seen as a system of power-grabbing. In other words, power is an instrument of personal gain. Why is that? Because in Bulgaria it is slow and difficult to make "big money" in an honest way. There is little opportunity in our national market. Huge (literally insurmountable) is foreign economic competition from outside. Our country is not rich in basic resources for the economy, which is why it must secure them from imports, and this makes them expensive and hindering businesses.

Lack of consensus thinking, tolerance and partnership. Revanchism is enduring black in our political mores. Almost half of the free time of the Bulgarian political leaders goes into discrediting their predecessors, without any idea of continuity. The philosophy of political life in our country is subordinated to the ambition that power should be held tooth and nail. For it is not eternal, and whosoever he appropriates, while in power, shall do it. As a rule, our politicians attack their opponents by ruining and ruining Bulgaria for personal enrichment. Their first job, however, by taking power in turn, is to do the same. In her memoirs, Sultana R. Petrova writes: "The drama of Bulgaria has always been that the partisanship and the interests of the parties were superior to the interests of our nation." In this particular case, we come across the classic division of professional politicians made by Max Weber: those who live "for" politics, and others who live "from" politics. "The former exercise politics more for prestige and a social stance -

for the sake of the fact that by serving a "deed" they give meaning to their lives. The latter practice it in order to ensure their socio-economic existence and to make it a lasting source of income." On this basis, Weber raises the question of the pros and cons of the political profession, as well as the need for sufficient remuneration of political and state officials in order to limit the possibility of corruption. For Max Weber, three are the qualities most crucial to politics: passion, a sense of responsibility, and a "true look." In his famous lecture "Politics as a Vocation", he subsequently excises in a separate book, Weber summarizes: "Politics means painful, ballroom digging into strong beams... Only he who is sure that he will not break if, from his point of view, the world turns out to be stupid or too vile for what he wants to offer him, the one who would nevertheless say, "and yet" – only he has the "vocation" of a politician."

The Bulgarian political elite has suffered, especially in the last twenty years, from a lack of credit of trust. A trend leading to the degradation of public relations. Trust (as one of Francis Fukuyama's books is called) is the currency of the 21st century, and when politicians abuse it, the threads of creation are broken. The political elite in Bulgaria never understood that the people are not their "property". Once in the corridors of power, the empowered indulge in their hysterical selfishness and greed. There they suddenly forget where they came from, by whom they were sent to Parliament and what is the point of their presence in the government of the country. This was foreseen by Hristo Smirnenski in "The Tale of the Ladder". The Bulgarian rulers now live a life infinitely far from the existence of the people. They have long since detached themselves from the fate of their compatriots – and can neither understand nor explain it. During the years of "change" the idea of the venal and mercantile character of a significant part of the government, defending countless personal causes, but not the interests of the people, has become more and more obsessive. This is one of the great dramas of the Bulgarian transition after November 10, 1989. The Bulgarian people somehow easily and characterlessly allowed to create a political class that seems to be immune from concepts such as patriotism and patriotic debt. These people still maintain a conscious anarchy, deliberately prolonging the already painful and endless change. This is so, "Because the Bulgarian oligarchy, which is the true ruler of the state, is not left or right, blue or red. It is repainted and readjusted periodically before and after each change of power executors (apropos placed in positions by the same oligarchic establishment). Its motto is more than emblematic: "Governments come and go, we stay." Plato spoke of three most used forms of government: tyranny, oligarchy, and democracy. According to the ancient philosopher, democracy is the most effective, but only when there are clear rules and when the laws are respected by all. If they apply only to the common people, democracy is the easiest to degenerate into anarchy, followed by undemocratic political systems. The institutional crises in Bulgarian society in recent years also reveal the syndromes of the Bulgarian intelligentsia, this time the technical one, which is ready to do anything to take the appropriate grants. It is no coincidence that freedom of speech in the Bulgarian media is practically ignored. Information other than the official information is produced and the voice of alternative theses is rarely heard. For their part, NGOs unleash Russophobia, a position that becomes a condition for a good future and prosperity.

Objectively, Bulgarian politicians do not work for ideas and causes. Most of them are people without regard to the fate of the people and the state; people who trade with national interest, Bulgarian culture, education, etc. Our rulers are a function, an interface of Western officials. That is why it is necessary to replace the systemic parties (BSP, GERB, DPS), which have ruled for 30 years and are responsible for the state of the country. Is it a coincidence that no decision can be taken in Bulgaria without DPS? Six of the president's advisers are from the DPS. There is also a counter-elite – the party "Renaissance". There is also a huge manipulation of elections, for example, machine voting. If anything depends on the elections, they would not be held. We must admit

that our country has never been in such a complicated situation. After 1919 Bulgaria was a rural stratum and recovered relatively quickly. The peasant is then the backbone of the state. Today we see alienation from the earth. It is no coincidence that the first thing in the Ran plan is the eradication of rural Storanism. Or the demagoguery of "green energy". The closure of Bulgarian thermal power plants will lead to complete energy dependence. There is the "energy starvation" factor, which corresponds to the desire to reduce the population of the planet. If there is no energy, there is no production, and hence a demographic crisis.

In the new 130-year history of Bulgaria there is little effectiveness of the political process. That is, the mistakes and failures of the Bulgarians are far more than the victories and defeats. Several facts visible at first glance: the Bulgarian soldier won in the twentieth century in all battles, and official policy did not win any of the fought wars, including the Cold War; In the global conflicts of the last century, the Bulgarian state enters, as a rule, with the coalitions of the losing countries; Every new Bulgarian generation starts practically from scratch, because what was created by previous generations is destroyed. Reference – the purge after 9 September 1944 and after 10 November 1989; And last but not least, why in the plundering of a national treasure amounting to about \$ 200 billion, there is not a single convicted criminal. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Bulgarians found themselves on the losing side: the Liberation did not bring unity to the Bulgarian nationality, the attempts for national unification did not give the expected result, and there was no internal national reconciliation. We see the same thing today. Revanchism has not stopped since November 10, 1989. "Spitting" and taking out dirt is on a rotational principle, and after every election follows the same paradigm: "those were bad, we are good."

Conclusion

In a poor society like the Bulgarian one, democracy cannot be stable. This is shown by practice since Aristotle. That is why, when crisis processes occur, serious public circles turn to the theory and practice of political parties that promise more state intervention and lasting budget commitments. "Bulgarians do not just need a democratic state. It needs an "effective democratic state" in which it necessarily bears more responsibilities (compared to the example of the state in some of the great powers) for the development of national production and the high standard of living associated with it. It is no coincidence that the mass Bulgarian feels helpless to start a successful private business and is not inclined to entrepreneurial risk. This is due not only to the idea that it is difficult to do a serious, successful business in an honest way, but also because it does not provide support from the state.

In summary, it can be said that the political syndrome also reveals peculiarities of the Bulgarian political elite, which for the most part turns out to be provincial and unripe to fulfill its responsible public mission. His profile is dominated by scheming and backstage dealing, and it is increasingly difficult to find real moral people. So we should not be surprised that Bulgarians very rarely trusted their politicians and, in the words of Anton Strashimirov, always harbored hidden hostility to any government.

This research work was conducted as part of the project KP-06-H35/14 - FNI, BG

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