

Online Discussion

Bulgaria's New Government – Pact with the Devil or Way out of the Impasse?

Monday, 19 June, 15:00-16:30 CEST

Online via Zoom

Panel:

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Moderation:

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Topic

The parliamentary elections in Bulgaria in April (the fifth elections within two years) once again produced no clear winners. Again, stalemate loomed with far-reaching consequences for the country and its parliamentary democracy.

The two blocs with the party "Citizens for a European Development of Bulgaria" GERB of former Prime Minister Boiko Borissov together with the "Union of Democratic Forces" SDS on the one hand and the party "We Continue the Change" PP (together with the Democratic Party DB) of the reform-oriented and pro-Western Kiril Petkov, who was toppled in June 2022 after only a few months, separated only a few votes.

Forming a government was difficult and led to a novelty: GERB-SDS and PP-DB have joined forces for 18 months; first Nikolai Denkov (for PP-DB) will lead the government for nine months, then former EU-Commissioner Mariya Gabriel (for GERB-SDS) will follow. The two parties, which are at bitter odds with each other, were brought together by their common Euro-Atlantic orientation and the desire to avoid a sixth ballot, which, according to the polls, would have produced similar results for GERB-SDS and PP-DB while possibly bringing additional votes for the Russophile far-right party "Vazrazhdane" (Rebirth) – which, with almost 14 percent, is the third-strongest political force in the National Assembly.

The new government has set its goals high: Key priorities are the budget, the judicial and constitutional reform, as well as the entry into the Euro zone and Schengen. Much political dirt has been stirred up during

the formation of this “governing coalition of purpose”. The independence of the judiciary and the removal of the prosecutor general Ivan Geshev were core demands of the protests in 2020 and of reform-oriented politicians. However, Geshev is still in office. Some politicians have been put on the sanctions list of the so-called Magnitsky Act by the U.S. due to their corrupt behavior – including Delyan Peevski, who is back on the political stage in Bulgaria.

There is a lot of potential explosive fallout within the cabinet. It is unclear what role Boiko Borissov plays behind the scenes and what influence Moscow has on domestic and foreign policy as well as the economy. But also the society is divided, and many PP-DB supporters feel betrayed that PP has made the “pact with the devil”, since the PP had ruled out any cooperation with GERB during the election campaign. President Rumen Radev, who was considered pro-Russian and who had been given executive power outside parliamentary control by the caretaker governments he had appointed, has tried to prevent a government under the leadership of PP-DB.

The war in Ukraine brings Bulgaria even more into focus. Due to its role as a NATO and EU member and as a littoral state of the Black Sea, geopolitics, security and energy play an increasing role. Bulgaria is an important playing field for Moscow's hybrid influence. Military aid to Ukraine and the role of the Bulgarian arms industry were key topics not only in the election campaign but also in NATO and the EU.

Against this backdrop, we would like to discuss with experts the political situation in Bulgaria and the prospects for the coming months. We will also focus on foreign and security issues in relation to Russia and Ukraine, but also regarding Bulgaria's bilateral relations with neighboring North Macedonia and Turkey.



Registration

The event will take place via Zoom. Please register under the following link to get the access data: [Registration form](#)

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