



THE ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN CONTEXT OF POLITICAL CHANGES

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For more than two decades, Center for Democracy and Human Rights (CEDEM) is conducting the political public opinion poll with a goal of identifying the Montenegrin citizens' opinions on certain key socio-political questions, whereas the specific goal is to continuously track the trends in a longer time frame through standardized research indicators. Longitudinal research represents the foundation for the analysis of political and social movements in context of political changes and shift from the multidecade government rule of Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS), with a special take on latest research which was conducted from 18th of June through 26th of June 2021.

Despite the long-awaited change in Montenegro's political life, after 30 years of rule of one dominant political party, crucial changes are still not taking place at desired speed or with desired results. Signing the coalition agreement, which states that the Government will fully and devotedly implement all necessary reforms for the full-fledged membership of Montenegro in the European Union, while totally depoliticizing key government institutions with a goal of securing an uncompromisingly fight against criminal and corruption, is above all, just declarative by its nature, with absence of necessary political will of the parliament majority. Additionally, poor functionality

and operativity of executive and legislative branches is more evident because of the nonconformity of the representatives of Democratic front with the Government and its members and the often obstructions with a goal of interference of regular processes in these two government branches. Judicial branch is still not characterized with high level of independency and responsibility. From the formation of the expert Government, with Zdravko Krivokapić as the prime minister, its members did not do enough so that the individual and collective succes in any area can be glorified, except that they are effectively supressing the pandemic, according to Montengrin citizens opinion (39.3%). With postponement of long-expected results after nine years since the beginning of negotiation process in one hand, and the absence of the appointment of key functions of the negotiation team, passivity of legislative branch and legitimacy crisis of the Government on the other hand, has brought up to an informal activation of the balance clause despite the constant support which the European officials are giving to the new government. Despite the expectancy that due to the government change there will be an increase of those who think that Montenegro is on the right track or to put it the other way, the number of those who think that Montenegro is going the wrong track is decreasing – that did not happen. Namely, a change happened, but in a domain of a statistical error, which is indicative if you take into consideration the current political crisis. Regressive trend of satisfaction with Government's performance is continued and since 2007, we are experiencing a historical minimum of satisfaction with the Government's



performance – or that every fourth citizen of Montenegro is mostly or very satisfied. Comparatively, one could say that almost double less of citizens is satisfied in 2021. (22,7%) than in 2011 (44,1%), when biggest rate of satisfaction was measured for the Government.

It would seem that change of the long-standing regime was *eo ipso* necessary for the representatives of new Government or to say, for the new Government majority to indicate how the changes have already happened, which showcases that within the new parliament majority, or at least the bigger part of it, there does not exist a higher level of awareness or political will on what should be changed, with which intensity and speed, but that they are more focused on internal political conflicts, showcasing individual political power or to be more concrete, the power of the their constituency. On the political scene where there is a high level of discordance of major political forces, with partisan oriented interests, in relation to basic social and political questions, every expectation of solving crucial citizens' questions is basically impossible. That is backed up by couple of facts, and them being:

- 1) Postponement of the adoption of the annual budget for 2021, which was, in the end, adopted in June 2021, with many political and personal blackmailing;
- 2) Occasional or permanent boycott of the Parliament from a part of the ruling coalition and opposition;
- 3) Continuation of politicization of public sector on key executive positions and "in depth";
- 4) Lack of continuous dialogue of ideologically different political parties;
- 5) Intensifying identity and national questions. In addition to

the previous mentioned, efficiency of social and political reforms of new government has a substantial problem – lack of previously determined strategies with clear goals, or to put it another way, one could comment on *ad hoc* decisions and reform processes, partially excluding the reforms in the judiciary. On the other hand, where the clear goal exists, as the consequence of weak political will and legitimacy, reform solutions are being postponed or even abandoned, such as the Law on citizenship and residency, Decisions on criteria for determining conditions for acquiring Montenegrin citizenship as well as the Law on amendments to the Law of registration of residence and temporary residence. Much often, the amendments to the existing laws are implemented without a thorough analysis, such as the Labor Law, but also without consultations with the European Commission and Council of Europe. Therefore, the crisis is expected in relation to the trust in institutions, especially in political institutions. If we take out the social institutions with which the citizens have direct and "emotional" relationship, such as the education system, Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC) and healthcare, with whom we also measure a decrease of trust, all other institutions are below the 40% benchmark of citizens trust with which the most evident decrease is the trust decrease in the judiciary. Trust in the political institutions, to be more precise, in the Government, the president, Parliament, police, military, political parties is on the lowest level since 2014, which clearly indicates on the necessity of implementing crucial structural and system changes while making citizens be in the primary focus. Often in public, the members of the Government have an appeal of being



burdened with their duties due to the incorporation of the various departments and non-adequate institutional memory. The frequency of change in personnel are even more burdening the achievement of goals, whereas the non-appointment of state secretaries or general directors, is a normal situation. Even though, that one of the priorities of the new Government is to create public trust and total transparency of state administration's work, during last eight months, we have measured the decrease of trust and increase on non-transparency related to the state administration's work, as the availability of information became a luxury especially concerning the transparency of Ministry of Finance and Social Welfare, which is basically *vis-à-vis* as during the DPS rule. Affairs which are following the minister of ecology, spatial planning and urbanism, the recent minister of justice, human and minority rights, and others, are suggesting that the priorities from the prime minister's *exposé* are being left aside, which brings us to the poor pool results of the ministries work, as the percentage of citizens which think that the ministries are doing good or mostly good goes from 24,8% (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) to 33,6% (Ministry of Health).

Montenegrin society is a *par excellence* political society and there is almost no way that any question is not being pulled through the prism of political separatism and often, narrow-partisan political interests. Instead of directing the attention on developing an autonomous civic public, strengthening critical thought, decreasing society's polarization, nationalism and cleric-nationalism, our society is being led by

political leaders of Government and opposition who are additionally worsening interpersonal relations, are incentivizing social divisions and are neglecting European standards and values which are in the interest of the total democratization of the society. The absence of social dynamics and constantly evading to solve the key political and economic problems, oligarchical tendencies with clientelism as a model of wanted political behavior, followed by nepotism, ideological criteria of personnel selection and corruption, are for a long time now, contributing to the current state of the society and Montenegrin state. Even though that none of the politicians are having a good average score, since coming to power, the President of the Parliament and Vice-President of the Government are having higher average scores, while the other politicians have lower average scores when compared to 2020. Nevertheless, the politician who is strongly dividing the general public is the president of Montenegro, who has the biggest part of the highest mark, but also the highest part of the lowest mark. Since coming into power, the Democrats (Demokrate) are implementing the "political balancing" even more transparently, which is stimulating support from an average voter, therefore this political party would have the support of 18.4% of Montenegrin voters, while URA would have almost the same result (6,4%) as on the last parliamentary elections, which showcases that, since coming into power, they did not gain any substantial support from the electorate. While the Democratic Front, even though a part of the parliament majority, is having a pre-election and anti-regime rhetoric, DPS is still partly continuing with



state-making politics and are insisting on questions of protection of Montenegrin identity, without any bigger changes within the party. Contrary to the DPS, which is continuing down the path of regressive trend of support from the electorate (31%), Democratic Front, riding on the victory waves, is having a continuous support of the general public (18,7%). The minority parties are on the same level of support as on the parliamentary elections, while civic parties such as SDCG and SDP are experiencing a slight trend of support decrease after the parliamentary elections and those being 3,4% and 3%. Obviously, the former institutional support for the parties of the previous government is disappearing fast, and the maneuvering space for the increase of coalition potential of DPS is shrinking. Adding to that, while being fully conscious of the previous fact, DPS, on their last party congress, emphasized the need of homogenization of society around the priority interests and political and intellectual leadership which will stimulate the overcoming of historical separations. In the same time, they are changing the visual identity and are sending the message to the citizens, that they want a society of knowledge, freedom of citizens, which channels the focus away from the national and identity questions. But even with the expectations that the congress will bring more considerable changes to the current strongest opposition party, personal changes of not-adequately affirmed people with unknown political experience cannot be accepted as substantial transformation and appliance of lessons-learned after the election failure and inability of forming a new

coalition of DPS with traditional and other partners.

Zdravko Krivokapić, as a non-partisan individual, was the list leader of coalition ZBCG and in general opinion, came in the position of the prime minister of Government of Montenegro on the suggestion of SPC. From the beginning, there were comments on the major discrepancy between Krivokapić and coalition ZBCG, as well as contrariety which are showcased in the boycott of the Parliament from the DF MPs. In the same time DF is expressing a hard disapprobation on the current Government's state of affairs and the prime minister himself, which is why are they often obstructing their work and the hints for the Government reconstruction and the prime minister himself, have reached a peaking point after the removal from service of Vladimir Leposavić as the minister of justice, human and minority rights. In addition to that, even though that it was strictly advocated that the Government will be solely on an expert level, today we have more and more of political party representatives – mostly of all of them, but with least representatives of the DF coalition which makes the DF opposition to the current Government quite explainable. But even though the DF does not believe or does not acknowledge the support which the prime minister Krivokapić has, prime minister Krivokapić could, with formation of his own political party, secure seats in the parliament, as according to the research 4,9% of citizens would vote or most likely vote for his political party. Having in mind the boycott of the Parliament from the biggest opposition party and the DF, it is important to find a solution which will stabilize the political



situation in the country, such as the Government reconstruction with a wider specter of options for the reconstruction itself or early elections. Additionally, *status quo* in the area of judiciary is being continued even after the government change, while the way ahead is hard and doubtful without a two-thirds or three-fifths majority in the Parliament. The lack of dialogue and political will is evident even with this question which is why substantial changes are lacking even with the new Government, despite the expectations to move from point zero. Therefore, about 70% of supporters of the previous Government thinks that the snap elections should happen as soon as possible, whereas on the contrary, the current Government supporters think that the elections should happen in the standard manner.

The representatives of the previous and the current Government and media as well, are mostly focusing their attention towards establishing stable intranational relations and solving the Montenegrin-Serb national question in Montenegro. As opposed to that, only 4,9% of citizens in total thinks that those should be the Government representatives' priorities. The COVID-19 pandemic additionally demasked Montenegrin economy and has lay down another hard evidence for the need of diversification due to the high dependency of Montenegrin economy from tourism. Regarding that, 54,9% of citizens thinks that the Governments key priorities in domestic policy should be the fight for a better standard of living and creation of new jobs, but that it should be equally dedicated towards fight against criminal and corruption.

Relevant civic subjects, such as the media, instead of contributing towards the reform processes which would lead to the adoption of European standards and values, are more and more occupying the media space with pledges for certain political subjects' attitudes and opinions, as well as their representatives, while leaving objectivity and independency out of the media reporting. That is why one should not be wondered by the additional polarization of media scene and its surroundings which has an extremely high level of effect on formation of opinions and decisions of Montenegro's public opinion.

The fact is that Montenegrin citizens do not have any available media which could inform them objectively and impartially is adding to the polarization of Montenegrin society, while the media scene has standardized and normed a biased political connotation during reporting. That is especially unacceptable for the public service which is being financed from the state budget. Despite the fact that the election of new RTCG Council has followed the most transparent process since the formation of the body, no concrete changes could be expected in the area of unbiased decision-making, as there are serious doubts that RTCG Council is a result of an informal lobbying with the new parliament's majority political parties, which was also evident with the previous regime.

Despite the various factors, such as the influence of pro-Russian media, procrastination of the negotiation process, government change etc., it is very supportive that Montenegrin citizens, in the most part, when asked about Montenegro's foreign policy, are pro-West oriented – or to be more



direct, citizens are more in favor of Montenegro relying on its partners from the West in its foreign policy. The question of EU membership is the only question around which exists a general social consensus as it was presented *ad acta* during the DPS rule, and also now, from the signing of the coalition pact. Nevertheless, the nine-year checkpoint of the negotiation process is warning us that Montenegro does not have enough powerful institutional and administrative capacities so that this

process could have faster dynamics, but that there also is no political will, which is implicitly being mentioned for years now and explicitly with adoption of the new methodology. The lack of these capacities is especially evident within the new Government, as the dynamics of drafting the negotiating structure as a process is extremely slow, that it took over eight months for the working groups executives to be named. Additionally, it is very questionable how is the process going to unfold, as currently there are no possible way for naming the new minister of justice, human and minority rights, and it is known that the cornerstone for the negotiation process are chapters 23 and 24. On the other hand, the expectations of the new Government that in 2024 we are going to become EU member state does not seem realistic, because as with the previous Government, the political will for reform processes does not exist. For sure, the will of couple of individuals does not represent the will of the Government in total. This is recognized by the citizens themselves, as 21,4% of citizens think that the current Government will continue the negotiation

process with the same intensity, while 26,4% of citizens think that the negotiation process will be substantially slower. In general, the citizens still view the EU as the ideal, in terms of values and standard of living, regardless are they supporting the current or the previous government and that is why 70% of citizens supports Montenegro in becoming an EU member state. It is necessary to point out that the supporters of the new government usually linked the EU path with the DPS, but after securing the continuous support of the EU and its representatives for the new Government, the supporters of the new government provided backing to this process and in correlation with that, the percentage of citizens who support the Montenegrin membership in the EU has increased for about 16% since August 2020. Even though that, from the supporters and representatives of the Government, NATO alliance is being viewed as a force which did a military intervention, new political constellation and strengthening the cooperation with NATO alliance had effects on the modifications of attitudes, when Montenegrin membership in NATO is in question. In relation to that, there is an increase of citizens who support Montenegro's membership in this organization (44,7%) but there is also a decrease of those who are against it (34,5%).

On the contrary to the important progress so far, in area of state's secularity, the formation of the new Government and parliamentary majority had negative effects, as it contributed to a stronger influence of Serbian Orthodox Church and an even deeper split in an already divided society. The announcements that Montenegro would not be a divided country anymore, that there



would not exist a strong political division on two options – one showcased through the ex-Government which is ideologically represented in state-building politics and a modern secular state, and the other one, which is showcased through refutation of DPS's results and politics, a significant influence of the church and a non-pro-western foreign policy orientation, did not happen, but that we are having a Montenegrin society, which for many years now has in focus the questions of – negation of genocide in Srebrenica, independency, influence of church and Serbia on Montenegro's domestic policy, as well as maintaining the civic concept and respect for minority rights. For years now, the influence of SPC has been present on various levels. Unequivocally, it is very visible after the adoption of the Law on religious freedom, from December 2019. SPC protests, through litany and mass prayers, have attracted a large number of citizens, which on the very beginning had features of a religious protest, because of the adopted law, whereas afterwards, in a way, it became a political protest with symbols which are not part of Montenegrin identity and Montenegrin state, which turned out to be expected in the upcoming elections and appointment of the current prime minister as the list carrier, whose main priority was the alteration of the Law on religious freedom, and since then, the effects of SPC are being more and more evident, without even any need of hiding. Citizens' dominant opinion is that the SPC's influence on the Government much stronger than it was on the previous Government and for that exists a series of factors which create additional space for the visibility of SPC's influence on the Government and its decision, such as: 1)

Appointment of Government representatives which are closely tied to the SPC; 2) Government's non-transparency when it comes to the Fundamental treaty with the SPC; 3) Violation of pandemic measures during the pandemics full swing, without any repercussions for the clergy; 4) Amendments to the Law on religious freedom as a response for the support during the parliamentary elections in 2020.

Consequently, with the influence of SPC, the influence of Serbian state was inevitable, which is mainly reflected on two levels and that is why the majority of citizens (56,6%) thinks that the influence of Serbia is much higher than that it was before the Government change. The first level would be the influence on the new parliament majority representatives, more precisely, on the DF MPs, on domestic policies and Montenegrin decisions such as Srebrenica Resolution, Montenegrin military involvement through NATO in Kosovo etc.. The other level is showcased through the effects on recent local elections in Nikšić and Herceg Novi and Serbian authorities' tendencies to affect the election process and results through various mechanisms.

Census represents one of the key questions for the representatives of the new parliament majority, in their constant intention for the increasement of number of Serbs in Montenegro. Still, more than 90% of citizens will declare themselves the same as they did on the 2011 census and every second citizen thinks that the census should be implemented this year, which means that no drastic changes could be expected when it comes to Montenegrin's national structure.



The majority of the leading collation has a ‘Greater-Serbia’ orientation, while the everyday rhetoric is quite indicative on topic of Montenegro’s independency. Therefore, that kind of rhetoric should be brought to an end, as 70,6% of citizens think that Montenegro is an independent state and that that question should not be brought out to public anymore.

While analyzing the movement trends on key socio-political questions and having in mind the polarized society and the effects of various political structures, it could be unequivocally pointed on the maturity of Montenegrin society, given the pro-western orientation and the tendency for solving basic life issues, even without having the political or religious affiliation in mind, plus constantly setting new goals and expectations which will lead towards Montenegro’s democratization, adoption of European values and strengthening the state as a civic, secular and antifascist creation. On the other hand, the current social moment (the period, the time etc.) after the three-decade rule of DPS, requires structural qualitative changes, as that is why the expectations of the public are focused on depoliticization of the institutions, true reforms and sustainable solutions. They have to result in efficient political and social system, which values the citizens’ interests, in contrast to bending the knee to partisan and personal interests which brought to the encaged and non-functional system with weak or non-existing responsibility system.

CEDEM’s Analytical team