



# Weekly Briefing

**Montenegro political briefing:  
Policy aimed at maintaining the status quo**  
**Vojin Golubovic**

## China-CEE Institute

Kiadó: Kína-KKE Intézet Nonprofit Kft.  
Szerkesztésért felelős személy: Chen Xin  
Kiadásért felelős személy: Huang Ping

 1052 Budapest Petőfi Sándor utca 11.  
 +36 1 5858 690  
 [office@china-cee.eu](mailto:office@china-cee.eu)  
 [china-cee.eu](http://china-cee.eu)

## **Policy aimed at maintaining the status quo**

### **Summary**

*Politics based on mutual accusations in order to make political profit is still the dominant political reality in Montenegro. In addition to the already present accusations between the government and the opposition, mutual disagreements between the ruling political parties have intensified. Still, skirmishes have become so commonplace, and accusations have become daily, that it seems to be a way to avoid responsibility and impose guilt on only one side for any failure. It is obviously a formula to keep the electorate awake and the privileges gained. Because, despite frequent threats of new parliamentary elections, the scenario with new elections does not seem to suit anyone in power. In such a situation of maintaining prolonged political instability, citizens suffer the most.*

### **Introduction**

The pompous announcements of the Democratic Front (DF) that the Prime Minister (PM) of Montenegro must resign and that it is necessary to elect a new Prime Minister with a new government continued. However, on the other hand, the current PM, who has just been elected by the DF, said, at least for the media, that he feels comfortable in the position he intends to hold for his entire four-year term. It is obvious that the PM has the support of Democratic Montenegro (the so-called "Democrats"), to whom the current situation suits, because they have the position of the President of Parliament along with the obedient PM. Therefore, in the previous days, there has been an increasing intolerance between these ruling parties.

### **Triangular relationships and accusations**

In the exchange of various accusations, the three main actors can be identified - DF, the Democrats (both part of the ruling structure) and the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) as the largest political party in Montenegro, which is now in opposition. In this triangle, accusations go from everyone to everyone. The DF, among other things, accuses the Democrats of secret cooperation with the DPS and preserving the current PM with the support of the DPS, as well as trying to take a dominant role on the Montenegrin political scene despite the fact that the election results did not show that. However, the various DF representatives in these accusations appear to be inconsistent, and this lack of synchronization results in the feeling that the DF does not really know what to do in a situation where Democrats are threatening to tear

off a significant part of DF's electorate. Fear of new elections is evident among DF leaders because their solutions to the current political crisis (which they have dominantly created themselves) have varied in just a few days from new elections, government reshuffles (with and without an existing prime minister), new divisions of functions etc.

Democrats, on the other hand, are much more organized in attacking political rivals. In addition to the fact that they have at their disposal a part of the Montenegrin media space that supports them, a part of the NGO sector, which is formally non-governmental and essentially strongly supports certain political parties from the ruling structure, also participates in shaping and creating the image of the party's civic identity. With such organized public support, Democrats have the opportunity to attack both, the pro-Serbian DF and the independence opposition DPS. That way the Democrats are playing on two fields. On the one hand, they hope for a part of the votes of Serbs who vote for the radical and ultra-right DF (because the Democrats often do not act as a democratic but a national party of Serbs in Montenegro and maintain excellent relations with the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro, denying the rights of the Montenegrin Orthodox Church). On the other hand, through the creation of demagogic political slogans, the Democrats try to present themselves as a supranational, civic and European party that promotes multinational harmony and allows multi-confessional coexistence (denying and blocking the rights of the Montenegrin Orthodox Church significantly reveals their true face). However, through such attempts to present a party as civic, they are trying to impose themselves on a section of Montenegrin independence voters who support the DPS. It is therefore not surprising that the Democrats are increasingly accusing the DPS and DF of trying to overthrow the government and bring about political instability in order to get the DPS back on track. However, it seems that behind these attacks there is a clear need to create the best possible position until the next elections, in which, after the elections, the Democrats would eventually have to cooperate with the DPS, and not with the DF. Because the messages coming from official European addresses and NATO are clear - the DF obviously does not see itself as a constituent of the government due to its negation of Montenegrin nation, and pro-Russian attitudes. Given that the Democrats will hardly be able to form a government on their own, or with the Civic Movement URA (URA), the DPS is seen as the only possibility for cooperation. Therefore, political competitors need to be further weakened now, so that the division of interests after the next elections is in favor of the Democrats.

Finally, the DPS also accuses the DF and the Democrats of numerous crises that are shaking Montenegrin society, attributing to them the creation of the so-called "Serbian world" in Montenegro, but also all inefficiencies in health, education and other systems. The DPS's

policy is clear - they are trying to maintain the electorate using the Montenegrin independence as the basis. However, they did not seem to care so much about national interests when they were main part of the government. However, the DPS has on several occasions, in addition to accusing the Democrats, tried to announce possible cooperation between these political entities in the future. Whether this will happen depends on several factors. In any case, the shaky strength of this party, along with the numerous social problems in the country, calls into question how ready the DPS is for new elections. Rather, it appears that there are plans to redefine the agenda of political appearances, while a status quo in which they can blame the government for all the problems is clearly desirable.

What is clear is that the URA will also try to take its share and get into this triangle. What they are doing for now does not seem too convincing that they are a true party that nurtures the values it claims. Because, despite their rhetoric, the indisputable fact is that URA unequivocally supports the problematic radical nationalists in the government. Such practices continue to make them prisoners of major parties and puppets on the political scene with apparent power. Certainly, one should not ignore the fact that the biggest media concern supports URA, as well as a large part of the NGO sector. Nevertheless, previous parliamentary and later local elections have shown that the party lacks the political power to significantly determine government. Therefore, new elections might show a slight growth of this party, but it would be questionable whether they would have the position of vice president they now have. Therefore, the status quo is the best option for them as well.

### **Private and party interests are above social ones**

Maintaining the status quo is desirable for the simple reason that the ruling parties have largely pursued party interests over the past six months, despite promises that institutions in Montenegro will be run by experts rather than members of political parties. Recent data indicate that the DF has been given a significant number of functions in public enterprises, which also applies to Democrats and URA. Namely, the DF won thousands of positions of presidents and executive directors in state and public companies. In total, parties seeking the resignation of the PM (gathered around the DF) have been given over 430 positions in public companies. That's about two-thirds of all functions, while about one-third went to Democrats and URA.

These data indicate that, despite dissatisfaction with certain aspects of government, new elections will be difficult to hold, as they could mean the loss of positions in companies in which the electorate can be influenced. In addition, changes in the education system, despite the proven commitment of individual school principals, further indicate a desire to secure

political employment, which was predominantly criticized and attributed to the previous government. And these criticisms are, rightly, directed at the previous government not only by the NGO sector, the political opposition, but also from official European addresses. It is strange that now these critics have largely fallen silent.

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It could be expected the continuation of status quo. Therefore, as it looks now, this government will survive for some time. Because, when it was formed, all parties in power announced the change and the temporary character of government if the results are not in line with the expectations of the citizens. Yet, some hidden interests clearly outweighed general social interests. The citizens have been forgotten, the temporary government is still there. Temporary solutions seem to last the longest.