



Western Balkans Stability Monitor

September 2025

Table of contents

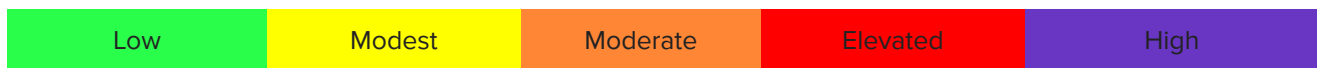
Albania	4
GOVERNMENT STABILITY	5
OPPOSITION ACTIVITIES	7
REGIONAL RELATIONS	8
SECURITY	9
LOOKING FORWARD	10
Bosnia-Herzegovina	11
GOVERNMENT STABILITY	12
OPPOSITION ACTIVITIES	17
REGIONAL RELATIONS	18
SECURITY	19
LOOKING FORWARD	20
Kosovo	21
GOVERNMENT STABILITY	22
OPPOSITION ACTIVITIES	25
REGIONAL RELATIONS	26
SECURITY	27
LOOKING FORWARD	28
Montenegro	29
GOVERNMENT STABILITY	30
OPPOSITION ACTIVITIES	33
REGIONAL RELATIONS	34
SECURITY	35
LOOKING FORWARD	36
North Macedonia	37
GOVERNMENT STABILITY	38
OPPOSITION ACTIVITIES	41
REGIONAL RELATIONS	42
SECURITY	43
LOOKING FORWARD	44
Serbia	45
GOVERNMENT STABILITY	46
OPPOSITION ACTIVITIES	51

REGIONAL RELATIONS	52
SECURITY	53
LOOKING FORWARD	54
About Risk Dimensions	55
War	55
Terrorism	55
Government Instability	55
Civil Unrest	55
Ethnic Unrest	55
About	56
Contact	56

Albania

Albania awaits the election of a new government in September, with Socialist Party (PS) leader Edi Rama headed for a record fourth consecutive term. Given that the May 11 Parliamentary elections delivered a landslide victory for Rama’s Socialists, the new government will be very stable, like its predecessor, at least when it comes to Parliamentary arithmetic. The summer months were relatively quiet, though there were some alarming signs that Rama and the Socialists were pushing various measures which critics argued amounted to an authoritarian push in the EU membership candidate.

Trajectories		Outlook		
		1 month	6 months	12 months
Risk Dimension	War	Low	Low	Low
	Terrorism	Modest	Modest	Modest
	Government Instability	Modest	Modest	Modest
	Civil Unrest	Moderate	Moderate	Modest
	Ethnic Unrest	Low	Low	Low



GOVERNMENT STABILITY

Albania's Parliamentary elections, held on May 11, delivered yet another landslide victory for the ruling PS. The Socialists increased their seat share from 74 to 83 seats in the 140 seat Parliament, bringing them within a whisker of the 84 seats needed to change the constitution. The main opposition Democratic Party (PD), running together with the Freedom Party of former President Ilir Meta, won 50 seats, down from the 63 seats which they won in the 2021 Parliamentary elections. The Social Democratic Party of Tom Doshi, a US-sanctioned businessman and politician, retained its three seats in Parliament. Finally, three political newcomers on the scene managed to make a breakthrough and secure 4 seats, no small feat in a political and electoral system stacked against small newcomers.

Given that the current Parliament's mandate expires at the beginning of September, the new Parliament will not meet before then. Only once it meets will a new government be elected, though there is no doubt that it will be made up of the Socialists and with Edi Rama at the helm as Prime Minister. Perhaps one of the biggest concerns in the coming period is how Rama might use the huge majority that he has at his disposal, in particular whether he will choose to make any constitutional changes which could undermine Albania's already fledgling democracy.

While the country awaits the inauguration of yet another government led by Rama and the Socialists, on July 25 the outgoing Minister of Justice Ulsi Manja presented a document billed as the country's draft new Penal Code, which, according to the government, was produced by a working group of independent experts. The document was immediately criticized as a major step backwards by prosecutors, lawyers, journalists and business organizations and was flagged as potentially troublesome by the European Union, which said it is following the developments closely.

Experts argued that, in several ways, the code breaches basic human rights and contravenes the Constitution and the European Convention of Human Rights. For his part, Rama claimed that his government was not the author of the draft penal code and any comments should be

directed to the working group which produced it. The working group, however, has stayed out of the public spotlight.

Apart from prescribing prison sentences for ridiculing or showing contempt for state symbols and institutions or the President of the Republic, or strengthening punishment for defamation against state officials, the proposed Penal Code would also reduce the room for manoeuvre of prosecutors in corruption and abuse of power related cases. If these changes are approved, prosecutors would have to prove that officials committing abuse of power or procurement violations have acted with criminal intent. The draft Penal Code also reduces the prescribed punishment for high level corruption from 12 to 8 years, a change that also has a knock on effect on the statute of limitations for offences.

In what appears a worrying attack on media freedom, on August 9 police surrounded the premises of the News 24 TV channel and other related media outlets, cut electricity and blocked journalists from entering the premises. The Rama Government claims the matter is an ownership dispute between a state-owned defence industry company and the company operating the News 24 TV, Focus Group. Rights groups noted that police lacked legal authority to intervene and many saw it as a media freedom issue, the violent closure of a media organization whose owner, Irfan Hysenbelliu, has fallen into conflict with the government.

A Court judged the intervention disproportionate and ordered the government to hand over seized equipment belonging to journalists. Yet the authorities simply ignored the court order. Protests from local and international rights organizations, as well as from several international intergovernmental organizations such as the OSCE, failed to soften the government's stance.

OPPOSITION ACTIVITIES

The main opposition Alliance for a Great Albania – made up of the Democratic Party (PD) and Freedom Party of former President Ilir Meta – is still licking its wounds following its defeat in the Parliamentary elections. Overall, both parties seem to be in terminal decline under the leadership of their current aging and discredited leaders. If anything, the elections appear to have strengthened the grip of the ageing Sali Berisha, a former President and Prime Minister, over the Democratic Party. Possible local elections in the capital Tirana and several smaller municipalities will give the opposition a focus in the coming period, though only in Tirana does the opposition stand any chance of causing an electoral upset.

REGIONAL RELATIONS

Albania's relations with its neighbours remained largely calm and uneventful over the reporting period.

SECURITY

The security situation remains calm. The Albania Government is pushing for renewed investments in the defence sector by purchasing expensive military equipment or paying for upgrades from the US. In addition, it is seeking to revive the country's military production capabilities.

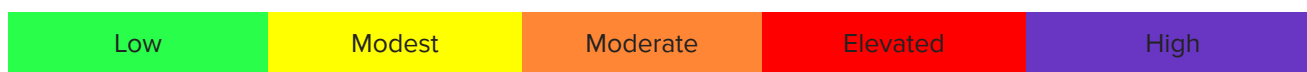
LOOKING FORWARD

- **Government formation:** Given the Socialists absolute majority, there is no doubt as to which party will form the next government. Rama will doubtless return as Prime Minister for a record fourth mandate. Nevertheless, it will be both interesting and important to watch out for who Rama will appoint as his ministers in the next government come September.
- **Selection of new SPAK head:** By December 2025, the mandate of the current Special Prosecution (SPAK) Chief Altin Dumani expires and a new head will have to be chosen. Dumani has been the driving force behind several high-profile investigations against corruption and organized crime over the last few years. The next SPAK head will be chosen by the current group of prosecutors and there is anxiety whether the change will affect the efficiency of SPAK

Bosnia-Herzegovina

Political temperatures in Bosnia were unusually high over the summer months, particularly during August. A conviction against RS President Milorad Dodik for defying the High Representative’s authority was upheld following an appeal, leading the Central Election Commission (CIK) to strip Dodik of his position as RS entity President. While CIK scheduled elections to elect a new entity President for late November, Dodik and his ruling party vowed that they would not accept the decisions of the Court of Bosnia-Herzegovina, or CIK. While Dodik continues with his rhetorical bluster, it remains to be seen whether he will eventually accept being removed from office and instruct his SNSD to take part in the upcoming presidential elections.

Trajectories		Outlook		
		1 month	6 months	12 months
Risk Dimension	War	Elevated	Elevated	Moderate
	Terrorism	Modest	Modest	Modest
	Government Instability	High	High	Elevated
	Civil Unrest	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
	Ethnic Unrest	Moderate	Modest	Modest



GOVERNMENT STABILITY

Bosnia-Herzegovina remains in the depths of what may well be the most serious political and institutional crisis the country has faced since the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreements. The country's central government still remains completely gridlocked amidst paralysed efforts to oust the coalition around the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) from the Council of Ministers, given the inability of ruling Bosniak and Bosnian Serb opposition parties to actually see this move through. Meanwhile, Milorad Dodik has been stripped of his position as Republika Srpska (RS) entity President, after an appeal against his conviction for defying the High Representative's authority was rejected, confirming a one year prison sentence and six year ban on holding office against the Bosnian Serb leader. Compounding Republika Srpska's institutional problems, RS Prime Minister Radovan Viskovic resigned on August 18, a move that triggered the election of a new government. Despite having legally been stripped of his mandate as RS President, Dodik continued to hold the office and exercise its powers, nominating Savo Minic to form the next Republika Srpska government.

The firing shot for the latest crisis in Bosnia was the ruling by the State Court of BiH in the trial of Milorad Dodik and Milos Lukic for refusing to implement the decisions of the Office of the High Representative (OHR). While Lukic was not found guilty, Dodik was found guilty and received a one year prison sentence and six-year ban on holding the office of Republika Srpska President. The ruling was a first instance verdict, with the option of appealing.

Rather than play for time by lodging an appeal, in a sign that Dodik planned a much more radical response, on the same day that the State Court of BiH handed down its ruling against him, the Government of Republika Srpska sent several laws to the entity's Parliament, including a law banning the operation of the State Court, State Prosecution, High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council (VSTV) and State Investigation and Protection Agency (SIPA) on the territory of RS. Another law on creating an RS High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council (VSTS) was also sent to the Assembly, along with a law on creating a register of foreign-funded NGOs. The laws were adopted on February 27, along with changes to the RS Criminal Code

stipulating prison sentences for those who failed to implement RS laws, all signed into force on March 5. The RS Parliament had little legal footing to pass such laws, given that it had not established these institutions in the first place. Following an appeal lodged by Denis Becirovic, the Bosniak member of the State Presidency, and several other officials from the Federation entity, on March 7 the State Supreme Court suspended the controversial RS laws banning the work of State-level judicial and investigative bodies in RS. The move widened an already existing legal duality which has emerged over the last year, where the decisions of the Constitutional Court are not recognized by the RS Government. In a further act of defiance, on March 12 the RS Parliament adopted a decision to embark on the adoption of a new RS constitution.

The crisis further deepened when, on March 12, the State Prosecution issued an order for the detention of Dodik, Republika Srpska Prime Minister Radovan Viskovic and RS Parliamentary Speaker Nenad Stevadic to be questioned on suspicion of undermining Bosnia's constitutional order. Yet more than anything, the order only exposed the weakness of the central Bosnian State, which proved unable to execute the detention of Dodik, Viskovic and Stevadic, with the Bosnian Serb leader even crossing Bosnia-Herzegovina's international borders.

A sort of de-escalation began on April 11, when Dodik's lawyers lodged an appeal against the ruling of the Court of Bosnia-Herzegovina which had served as the trigger for the entire crisis. A significant step towards de-escalating tensions within the country began on July 4, when Milorad Dodik came to the Prosecutor's Offices with his lawyer to be interviewed regarding the suspicions that he had acted to undermine the country's constitutional order. Immediately afterwards, the warrant for the detention of Dodik was withdrawn. Several days later, RS Prime Minister Radovan Viskovic and Parliament Speaker Nenad Stevadic also came to be interviewed by prosecutors, after which the warrants for their detention were also withdrawn.

Yet the country changed course once again on August 1, when the appeals panel of the Court of Bosnia-Herzegovina rejected Dodik's appeal, confirming the guilty verdict for defying the authority of the High Representative, which came with a one year prison sentence and a six

year ban on holding public office. Dodik immediately responded with a firm rejection of the Court's verdict, underlining that RS' institutions would also adopt their stance towards the ruling, which he would accept. Several days later, the RS Government adopted a decision rejecting the Court's ruling as 'legally void, unconstitutional and politically motivated', while also referring to it as a ruling aimed against the entire Serb population in Bosnia. Dodik's legal team submitted an appeal against the Court of Bosnia-Herzegovina's ruling to the State Constitutional Court, also requesting a temporary measure by which the legal sanctions arising from the verdict would be suspended.

On August 6, CIK voted unanimously to strip Dodik of his mandate as RS President, subject to appeal, in line with the conviction against him before the Court of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Dodik responded by announcing that a referendum would be held in RS on whether to accept or reject the CIK decision. Meanwhile, Dodik's legal team submitted an appeal against the CIK decision on August 12 to the Court of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Despite his rejection of the Court's guilty verdict against him, Dodik seemed to accept it at least in one sense, agreeing to trade his one year prison sentence for a fine of just over 18,000 euros, in line with Bosnian legislation. The Bosnian Serb leader thus avoids serving time in prison, while the six-year ban on holding office remains in place.

Dodik was finally stripped of his post as RS entity President on August 18, when the Appeals panel of the Court of Bosnia-Herzegovina rejected his appeal against CIK's decision to strip him of his presidential mandate. RS Prime Minister Radovan Viskovic resigned from his post on the same day, triggering the collapse of the RS Government, though it was not clear whether he was pushed to do so by Dodik or did so of his own will. Some observers speculated that Viskovic had simply felt out of his depth in the escalating crisis afflicting RS and Bosnia. While Viskovic's resignation was not a reflection of any crisis in the SNSD-led ruling coalition in RS, it did open a fresh institutional Pandora's box over who would nominate a new Prime Minister, given that Dodik had been legally removed from the office of RS President.

Despite the CIK decision to end his mandate as RS President, Dodik continued to hold the office and exercise its powers, pushing the RS entity into dubious legal waters. On August 23, despite legally being stripped of his office, Dodik nominated Savo Minic, until then Minister of Agriculture in Viskovic's Cabinet, to be the next RS Prime Minister. The RS Parliament began the process of electing a new RS Government led by Minic on September 2, though some from the RS opposition parties warned that the entity was entering dangerous waters, as Dodik had no legal powers to nominate Minic.

Meanwhile, on August 22 the RS Parliament voted through a decision to hold a referendum in the entity, asking voters whether or not they accepted the rulings of the Court of Bosnia-Herzegovina, High Representative Christian Schmidt and CIK. The referendum question asks RS voters the following: 'Do you accept the decisions of the unelected foreigner Christian Schmidt and the rulings of the unconstitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina issued against the President of Republika Srpska, as well as the decision of the Central Election Commission to strip the President of Republika Srpska, Milorad Dodik, of his mandate?'. The referendum is planned to be held on October 25, yet its outcome will have no legally binding powers.

Meanwhile, in light of the fact that Dodik had been legally removed from the office of RS President – even if not physically – on August 28 CIK scheduled elections for a new RS President for November 23. The move inevitably created a dilemma for both the ruling coalition led by the SNSD and the opposition over whether to take part in the elections or not, given their apparently resolute rejection of the Court of Bosnia-Herzegovina's sentence against Dodik and CIK's decision to strip him of his mandate.

The most radical and escalatory move by the ruling coalition in the RS would be to not just boycott the elections, but also to take steps to prevent them from being held in RS, such as banning the use of public buildings as polling stations, as well as a whole host of other moves. This would take the entity into even more dangerous and uncharted waters. Boycotting the elections while allowing them to take place seems like an even less plausible option for the ruling coalition, as it would hand one of the most powerful offices in the entity to its opponents.

For all these reasons, many observers believe that, after much bluster, Dodik and the SNSD will in fact agree to put forward their own candidate to succeed Dodik as RS President. Indeed, there are already rumours of conflicts and power struggles within the SNSD over who this candidate might be. If, as seems likely, both the opposition and ruling parties field their own candidates in the race for the RS Presidency, this could yet prove an important test of where public support in RS lies after more than half a year of high political drama and crisis.

While the focus of political developments has been on RS, Bosnia's State-level Council of Ministers remains largely gridlocked, amidst failed efforts to dislodge the SNSD from the ruling coalition and replace it with the RS opposition. On August 19, the three-person State Presidency adopted a draft budget for 2025 – eight months into the year. However, on September 1 the State Parliament's House of Representatives returned the proposed budget to the Presidency for further work, citing numerous failings in the draft budget.

OPPOSITION ACTIVITIES

There was also no shortage of dramatic developments on the RS opposition scene over the summer. An important development on the opposition scene in RS came on July 13, when Milan Milicevic resigned as leader of the Serb Democratic Party (SDS). His resignation came on the back of an incident when RS police raided his home in early June and found some 200,000 euros in cash on the premises, leading to his arrest on accusations of bribery and trading in influence. Milicevic has maintained his innocence and claimed that he is the victim of a political witch hunt organized by Dodik and other (unidentified) political power centres. His resignation can be seen as the culmination of these events. Some political observers within the country see Milicevic's resignation as being less the doing of Dodik than Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic, who – they argue – is seeking to establish control over the SDS, part of a wider effort to increase his influence on the RS political scene. A new SDS party leader is due to be elected by December.

More broadly, RS opposition parties remain opposed to what they have often described as the dangerous 'adventurism' of Milorad Dodik, yet they are also opposed to the impositions of the High Representative and everything arising from them. In this context, the RS opposition is also keen to resist such impositions, but also careful of avoiding move that would undermine the Republika Srpska entity. In line with this, the opposition parties in the entity are walking a fine line between being seen to be opportunistically exploiting the calling of elections for a new RS President, but also trying not to be dragged into a boycott or obstruction of the elections that would further damage RS. For the time being, the general position of the RS opposition parties is that they will seek to have a joint candidate in the upcoming RS presidential elections.

REGIONAL RELATIONS

Bosnia's relations with neighbouring countries were relatively calm and uneventful over the past few months, with the exception of Serbia, whose President Aleksandar Vucic offered firm support to Milorad Dodik – at least rhetorically – in rejecting the rulings of the Court of BiH and CIK. Similar noises could be heard from Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban. Yet Vucic's pronouncements were seen as interference in Bosnia's domestic politics and denounced by officials from the Federation, among them the Bosniak member of the State Presidency, Denis Becirovic.

SECURITY

The latest political and institutional crisis which has engulfed Bosnia has also undermined the security situation in the country, increasing the risks of both controlled use of force and uncontrolled violence in relation to the ongoing crisis.

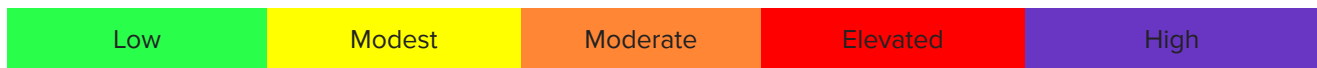
LOOKING FORWARD

- **RS referendum:** Bosniak representatives in RS institutions have sought to invoke the vital national interest mechanism in order to block the holding of the referendum in support of Dodik. It remains to be seen whether the holding of the referendum can be blocked institutionally and, should this happen, whether Dodik perseveres in organizing it. Either way, the referendum will serve as a distraction and focus for building political tensions.
- **RS presidential elections:** even more important for the stability of RS and the country as a whole will be the process of electing a new RS President. The current political and institutional crisis could become even more radicalised if Dodik and the ruling coalition in RS seek to block the holding of November's presidential elections. Failing that, the elections will be an important test of popular support for ruling and opposition parties in the entity.

Kosovo

Seven months since the February 9 Parliamentary elections, Kosovo remains in a political deadlock. While political parties may have finally elected a Parliamentary Speaker, thus overcoming a major stumbling block towards constituting the new Parliament, they have yet to complete the process of electing deputy speakers, without which Parliament is not constituted. At present, political parties have a deadline to complete the process of constituting Parliament by September 17. However, it seems another intervention by the Constitutional Court is on the cards. Meanwhile, local elections have been scheduled for October 12.

Trajectories		Outlook		
		1 month	6 months	12 months
Risk Dimension	War	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
	Terrorism	Modest	Modest	Modest
	Government Instability	Moderate	Moderate	Modest
	Civil Unrest	Moderate	Moderate	Modest
	Ethnic Unrest	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate



GOVERNMENT STABILITY

Almost seven months since the Parliamentary elections held on February 9, Kosovo's political parties have failed to complete the process of constituting the newly-elected Parliament, let alone broach the question of forming a new government. This is despite two interventions by the Constitutional Court aimed at resolving the stalemated political crisis. Kosovo continues to be run by the outgoing government of Albin Kurti and his Vetevendosje, now acting in a limited caretaker capacity. All in all, Kosovo seems far from recovering the political and government stability that it enjoyed prior to the February 9 Parliamentary elections.

Vetevendosje (VV) emerged as the relative winner of the elections, securing 48 MPs in the 120 seat Parliament. Yet the deep political chasm created between VV and the opposition during its term in power helped to ensure that it could not find partners willing to help assemble a ruling majority. As the biggest party in the new Parliament, Vetevendosje also gained the right to nominate a candidate for the new Speaker of Parliament. True to form, Kurti and Vetevendosje took this to mean that their opponents would be obliged to vote for anyone that they chose to nominate for the Speaker's post, something that Kosovo's constitution in no way required of their opponents. With the opposition unwilling to vote for VV's Albulena Haxhiu to become the Speaker of Parliament and VV unwilling to nominate anyone else for the post, Kosovo's Parliament met more than 40 times in futile – and pointless – attempts to complete the process of constituting itself, which inevitably failed.

In an effort to break the impasse, on June 26 Kosovo's Constitutional Court intervened to impose a 30 day deadline to elect a new Speaker and complete the process of constituting Parliament. However, the Court did not spell out what would happen if the deadline was not met. Many observers expected the Court could dissolve Parliament and order new elections, but given that this threat was not spelled out, ruling and opposition MPs failed to break the deadlock by July 26.

At this point, the Constitutional Court once again intervened, suspending any further meetings of Parliament until a new ruling was handed down. Eventually, on August 8, the Court handed down another ruling, setting another 30 day deadline to elect a Speaker and complete the process of constituting Parliament. This time, the Court also spelled out that no candidate could be proposed more than three times – thus putting a stop to VV’s practice of repeatedly putting forward the same candidate – as well as that the vote had to be public – thus putting an end to VV’s stalling tactic of trying to engineer a secret vote.

After a brief recess, Parliament once again met on August 20. Vetevendosje once again proposed Albulena Haxhiu for Parliamentary Speaker, who once again won only 57 votes, four short of the 61 votes needed to be elected. VV then proposed acting Foreign Minister Donika Gervalla Schwarz, who fared the same. Two days later, on August 22, Parliament met again, this time to consider acting Finance Minister Hekuran Murati as VV’s latest candidate for Speaker. Predictably, amidst no effort to build bridges with the opposition and find a consensus candidate, the 56th session of Kosovo’s new Parliament also failed to complete the process of constituting itself.

Yet an unexpected breakthrough came on August 26, when Vetevendosje’s Dimal Basha was elected Speaker. True to its stance that it would not vote for anyone who had served in Kurti’s Government, but would vote for other VV candidates, the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) broke the deadlock by voting in support of Basha alongside his own party. Parliament then proceeded to elect three ethnic Albanian deputies – one from VV, one from the PDK and one from the LDK – as well as a deputy speaker from the non-Serb minority communities. Yet a new stumbling block emerged over the election of the Kosovo Serb deputy speaker.

As the biggest party representing Kosovo Serbs, Srpska Lista proposed Slavko Simic. However, after he failed to secure the necessary 61 votes after three rounds of voting, Speaker Dimal Basha, applying the Constitutional Court’s ruling that no candidate for Speaker can be put forward more than three times, requested that Srpska Lista put forward another candidate. However, Srpska Lista declined, leading Basha to put forward different Kosovo Serb candidates drawn by lot. Parliamentary rules envisage that the candidate should be put forward by the

biggest group within the block representing the Kosovo Serb community. Given that no candidate thus proposed secured the votes to be elected, no deputy speaker from the Kosovo Serb community was elected.

Basha then proceeded to declare the process exhausted and – with four out of five deputy speakers elected – argued that Kosovo’s Parliament could be considered to have constituted itself. However, most legal experts and much of the Parliamentary opposition disagreed with this interpretation. Srpska Lista has lodged an appeal with the Constitutional Court to provide clarity on electing the Kosovo Serb deputy speaker. Given that Kosovo’s constitution clearly requires all deputy speakers to be elected for Parliament to be considered to have constituted itself, it seems unlikely that the current stalemate will be resolved without another ruling of the Constitutional Court.

Amidst the procedural wrangling, some observers yet again argued that the inability to complete the process of constituting Parliament suggested a fundamental unwillingness – rather than inability – to complete this process. According to this line of thinking, the real goal of Vetevendosje in particular seems to be to eventually trigger new Parliamentary elections, in the hope of securing a stronger majority in a new Parliament.

While this stalemate plays itself out, Kosovo is preparing for local elections, which have been scheduled for October 12. Campaigning officially starts on September 13, but in reality political actors are already positioning themselves for what will be an important test of popular support for different political actors after a protracted political crisis. By the time voters go to cast their ballots in the local races, it will likely also be apparent whether early Parliamentary elections are also on the agenda in the near future.

OPPOSITION ACTIVITIES

Broadly speaking, all three main opposition parties – the PDK, LDK and AAK – can be pleased that they have – to date – successfully blocked VV in its attempts to elect its first choice for speaker, or to cobble together a ruling majority, without being seen as the ones responsible for the current political crisis.

The LDK has taken a tougher stance on the issue of electing a new Parliamentary Speaker, declaring that it will not vote for any candidate who is a member of Vetevendosje. Meanwhile, the PDK has said that it would be willing to support a VV candidate, as long as the person in question had not been a member of Kurti's outgoing government.

REGIONAL RELATIONS

Kosovo's relations with its neighbours have been calm over the last couple of months, barring traditionally tense relations with Serbia. Relations with Belgrade took a turn for the worse when Igor Popovic, an official with the Serbian state Office for Kosovo and Metohija, was detained by Kosovo police on July 18 and subsequently charged with inciting hatred on account of having referred to the former Kosovo Liberation Army as a terrorist organization. After entering into a plea bargain with the prosecution, he was sentenced and deported from Kosovo at the beginning of August.

SECURITY

The security situation in Kosovo has been largely calm, with attention focused on the post-election government formation process.

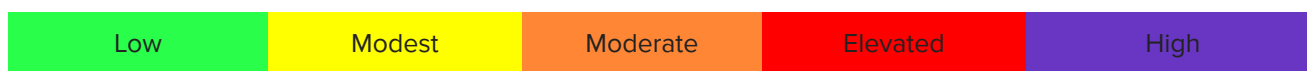
LOOKING FORWARD

- **Constitution of Parliament:** the most immediate development to watch is whether Kosovo's Parliament can elect a deputy speaker representing the Kosovo Serb community and complete the process of constituting itself by September 17th, the latest deadline set by the Constitutional Court. In all likelihood, a fresh intervention by the Constitutional Court will be needed to achieve this.
- **Government formation:** in the event that Parliament manages to complete the process of constituting itself, the relatively short deadlines for electing a new government will begin to count down. The bitter split between the ruling VV and the opposition PDK, LDK and AAK means that the odds of a stable, broad ruling coalition being formed are very slim indeed. An unstable government seems to be the most likely outcome, regardless of who forms it, with the prospect of an early Parliamentary election likely sooner or later.
- **Local elections:** local elections in Kosovo have been scheduled for October 12. While local in nature, the electoral races will be a good indicator of the standing of different political parties among voters, particularly if Kosovo ends up heading towards early Parliamentary elections.

Montenegro

Despite its political and ideological heterogeneity, the Government of Prime Minister Milojko Spajic appears stable thanks to an extensive Parliamentary majority. It continues to function with relative ease, despite periodic moderate turbulence. With the economically important tourism season at its high point over the summer months, political life has been extremely low-key. This was only briefly punctuated by the attempt to erect a monument to a controversial World War Two figure and a spat between the country's president and deputy Prime Minister.

Trajectories		Outlook		
		1 month	6 months	12 months
Risk Dimension	War	Low	Low	Low
	Terrorism	Low	Low	Low
	Government Instability	Modest	Modest	Modest
	Civil Unrest	Modest	Modest	Modest
	Ethnic Unrest	Modest	Modest	Modest



GOVERNMENT STABILITY

The governing coalition in Montenegro, led by Prime Minister Milojko Spajic, has a significant majority in the Montenegrin Parliament and shows few signs of instability, despite its heterogeneity. Indeed, the ruling coalition currently faces fewer challenges than it has over the last few months after an opposition blockade of Parliament's work was brought to an end, as has been a long burning feud with President Jakov Milatovic. A brewing political storm over plans by the government to hand a 12 kilometre stretch of beaches in the country's Albanian-populated south-east to an investor from the United Arab Emirates has dissipated, as the plans seem to have been abandoned.

A storm in relations between President Jakov Milatovic and Deputy Prime Minister Nik Gjeloshaj blew up at the very end of July, following a vote in Parliament to adopt amendments to the Law on the taxation of property. The legal amendments, proposed and pushed by ethnic Albanian parties such as Gjeloshaj's Albanian alternative, allowed local governments to determine the levels of taxation on agricultural land on their territories. In the background of this decision was a long running legal dispute between the ethnic Albanian dominated municipality of Tuzi and the state-owned winery "Plantaze 13. Juli" over the municipality's attempts to impose local land taxes on Plantaze 13. Juli, the bulk of whose vineyards and other agricultural land lie around Tuzi.

Following the adoption of the legal amendments, on August 1 Milatovic refused to sign them into force and returned them to Parliament for further consideration. Milatovic argued that the law would undermine the constitutionally guaranteed equality of citizens by treating agricultural producers in different parts of the country differently in terms of taxation. Angered by the move, Gjeloshaj sent Milatovic a number of text messages, some of which appeared threatening in tone, which Milatovic proceeded to publish on the platform X, while also reporting the threats to the police.

While Gjeloshaj appeared to be pushing the fiscal interests of the ethnic Albanian populated municipality of Tuzi, Milatovic seemed to be protecting the struggling state-owned winery, one of the biggest agricultural companies in the country. Following the incident, Milatovic called on

the government and Prime Minister Milojko Spajic to sack Deputy PM Gjeloshaj, a call which seemed to fall on deaf ears. Meanwhile, a range of ethnic Albanian politicians close to Gjeloshaj hurled abuse and insults at Milatovic, warning him that he was not welcome in the area around Tuzi. So far, the episode has not destabilised relations between the President and the government as a whole, which have often been tense in the past. It remains to be seen whether the Parliamentary majority will adopt the legal amendments for a second time, particularly after Milatovic made public that the Ministry of Finance had also given the amendments a negative opinion.

Low-level tensions are also visible between the ruling Europe Now movement (PES) and Milatovic's Movement for Podgorica (PZP) in the capital's City Assembly. The PZP appears to have been vying for a greater share in positions in the local government, something that the rest of the local ruling coalition had rebuffed. In response, the PZP seems to have withheld its support in the City Assembly, bringing into jeopardy the functioning of the local ruling coalition. On balance, this dispute seems likely to be resolved without undermining the local administration.

Yet perhaps the greatest controversy over the summer became the erection of a monument to a highly controversial World War Two figure, Chetnik commander Pavle Djuriscic, in a village near Berane in the north of the country. To his supporters, who erected the monument in Djuriscic's home village of Gornje Zaostro, he was the commander of Royalist, nationalist Chetnik forces in Montenegro during WW2, one of the leaders of the July 1941 uprising against the Italian occupiers and an anti-Communist. To a majority of people in Montenegro, he is remembered as a war-time collaborator with the Italian and then German occupiers, who oversaw massacres of political opponents as well as Bosniak civilians in the borderlands of Montenegro and Bosnia. Previous attempts to erect a monument to him in the same area had been prevented, but this time a monument was put up overnight, without seeking permission, and with the support of some senior clerics within the Serbian Orthodox Church.

The move was met with bitter condemnation, particularly among pro-Montenegrin politicians and public figures, the country's minorities, but also many within the pro-Serb camp in the country, with many asserting that it was unacceptable to erect a monument to a known

collaborator of the German and Italian occupiers, under whose command mass killings were conducted. Given that many on the pro-Serb, far-right of the political spectrum supported the erection of the monument, the stage seemed set for another flare-up of tensions around historical and identity-related issues. Local police arrested the owner of the land on which the monument was erected, as putting up such monuments without permission is a violation of the country's criminal code. In the end, a confrontation between local supporters of Djuricic and the police was prevented after the former agreed to move the monument inside the local church. Remarkably, throughout the entire episode, the ruling coalition avoided any confrontation or major tensions between its Serb and non-Serb wings.

OPPOSITION ACTIVITIES

Amidst the general summer holiday season, the once-mighty Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) has, for the most part, contented itself with periodic political stunts and moves chiefly intended to keep its visibility in the Montenegrin media alive during the summer period. The DPS and other small pro-Montenegrin parties attempted to make the most of the controversy around the erection of the memorial to Pavle Djurisić to mobilise their supporters, but generated little other activity.

REGIONAL RELATIONS

Relations with Montenegro's neighbours have been largely quiet and uneventful over the last couple of months, though small-scale disputes with Croatia are turning from sporadic to chronic affairs affecting their bilateral relations, with the potential of slowing down Montenegro's EU accession process.

SECURITY

The security situation in Montenegro remained calm and uneventful over the previous two months.

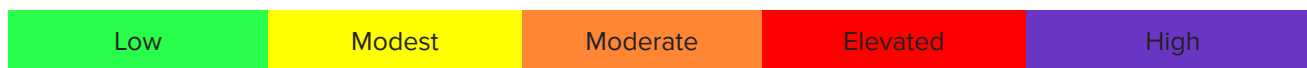
LOOKING FORWARD

- **UAE projects:** while the plans to hand the Velika Plaza stretch of beaches to UAE investors in the face of local opposition appears to have been dropped – and a political crisis thus avoided – it is widely thought that the Spajic Government will seek out other tourism projects to develop with UAE investors. The way in which any such projects are handled could spark similar local opposition as in the case of Ulcinj.
- **Local elections:** municipal elections are due in the towns of Cetinje, Mojkovac and Petnjica before the end of the year, though the precise date is yet to be set. Regardless, once the tourist season comes to an end, political actors will begin preparing for these contests. Perhaps most interesting to watch, as a bellwether of where popular support is heading, will be the race in Mojkovac.

North Macedonia

One year into its mandate, the VMRO-DPMNE led Government of Prime Minister Hristijan Mickoski remains extremely stable, thanks to a strong majority and an opposition largely in disarray. Despite having promised – and predictably failed to deliver – quick improvements in living standards in the country, there are no signs that the ruling party is losing any support. Local elections have been scheduled for October 19 and will be an important test of where different political actors stand in terms of popular support. Arguably, the most close-fought battle will be for dominance among ethnic Albanian voters.

Trajectories		Outlook		
		1 month	6 months	12 months
Risk Dimension	War	Low	Low	Low
	Terrorism	Low	Low	Low
	Government Instability	Modest	Modest	Modest
	Civil Unrest	Moderate	Moderate	Modest
	Ethnic Unrest	Moderate	Moderate	Modest



GOVERNMENT STABILITY

The current VMRO-DPMNE led government of Prime Minister Hristijan Mickoski began its second year in office at the beginning of July, retaining a high degree of stability and coherence. When they came to power in June 2024, Mickoski and the ruling VMRO-DPMNE promised a ‘furious start’ with no time to be wasted in pursuing economic and social measures that would improve the standard of living of North Macedonia’s citizens. Corruption and judicial reform was also on the priority list. One year on, the Mickoski government has, predictably, not achieved very much on any of these fronts. Despite this, it has at least sought to leave the impression that it is doing all it can to boost economic growth and incomes even if, as Mickoski put it in a post on social media ‘miracles are not possible overnight’. As part of its efforts to create the impression that it is doing something on this front, the Mickoski Government is touting a claimed rise in FDI and increases in salaries, as well as deals with Hungary and the UK for credit lines that will be channelled into supposedly transformative projects in the country. How much traction such claims will have with voters remains to be seen. The Mickoski Government is, of course, aware that its predecessor haemorrhaged popular support precisely because of a failure to deliver on improved living standards. Having initially hyped expectations when it came to power, it is now doing a seemingly good job of managing them – in the absence of a genuine ability to deliver improvements quickly, the next best thing the VMRO-DPMNE can try to ensure that it is at least trying as hard as it can, harder than its predecessor.

In Parliament, the Mickoski government’s majority remains stable – aside from the VMRO-DPMNE, it includes ZNAM, a newcomer to the country’s politics, and VLEN, a coalition of four smaller ethnic Albanian parties. Upon being sworn in, the Mickoski Government enjoyed the support of a strong majority of 77 MPs in the 120 seat Macedonian Parliament. Following an internal feud within VLEN in April, the Alliance for Albanians (AA) left VLEN and the ruling coalition, reducing the Mickoski government’s majority to a still very comfortable 72 MPs.

While the governing majority may be stable, it is vulnerable to accusations that it does not legitimately represent anything close to a majority of ethnic Albanians. With the AA going into

opposition, of the 32 ethnic Albanian MPs in the country's Parliament only 9 will be part of the governing majority. In reality, this will undermine the ability of the remaining VLEN MPs to claim that they are legitimate representatives of a majority of ethnic Albanians in the country. For its part, the remaining members of VLEN have mooted plans to turn their coalition into a single party.

The extent to which this could become a problem for the Mickoski Government in part hinges on the results of the country-wide local elections, which have been scheduled for October 19. While the local elections will be an important test of popular support for all political actors, perhaps the most interesting dimension of the contest to watch will be the battle between ethnic Albanian parties. The long-ruling but now opposition DUI will be squaring off with VLEN for dominance among ethnic Albanian voters, while the AA will likely be squeezed into a distant third place. If VLEN performs well or, perhaps, even overtakes DUI in terms of votes in the local elections, it will be in a position to claim that it legitimately represents a majority of ethnic Albanians in the Macedonian government. Yet if DUI outperforms VLEN significantly, this will open the doors for DUI to challenge VLEN's legitimacy as a representative of ethnic Albanians in the country's government.

Much about VLEN's future will ultimately hinge on its performance in the upcoming October local elections. If the party does well, its position in Government – and legitimacy to claim it is speaking for a significant share of the country's ethnic Albanians – will be shored up. If VLEN performs poorly, Mickoski will be under pressure to replace it with the opposition DUI. Indeed, some observers believe that, were the VMRO-DPMNE to do well in the autumn local elections, it might then be tempted to call early Parliamentary elections early in the spring, renew its mandate and replace VLEN with DUI in the ruling coalition. However, for now early Parliamentary elections are still a far-off (speculative) prospect.

When it comes to local elections, contests will be held in 80 municipalities and the capital Skopje. Voters will elect local assemblies and mayors – where no mayoral candidate wins more than 50% of the votes, a second round of voting will take place. Most interesting to watch will likely be the race for the capital Skopje, while among ethnic Albanian parties the race will be

most heated in Skopje's Cair municipality and the towns of Tetovo and Gostivar.

OPPOSITION ACTIVITIES

For the formerly ruling SDSM there is still little good news. After a year in opposition, it is still at a political rock-bottom following its loss of power. While it has a new leader in the form of Venko Filipce, a former Minister of Health, it lacks new ideas and fresh energy to rebuild itself. The recent Kocani tragedy has also placed it on the backfoot, given that much of the blame for the failures that allowed the fire to take place can be linked to its period in power.

Unfortunately for the SDSM, the upcoming local elections are likely to bring even more setbacks for main opposition party, which will struggle to retain power at the local level anywhere. Following recent internal feuding, which saw the incumbent SDSM mayor of Strumica deselected, the party may also find itself struggling to keep even this traditional stronghold.

With general disillusionment with the political elite at an all-time high in the aftermath of the Kocani tragedy, the populist-leftist Levica could be in a strong position to win additional votes in the October local elections. Equally, the local elections could also turn into an opportunity for independent candidates across the country to make small breakthroughs.

REGIONAL RELATIONS

Relations with North Macedonia's neighbours remained largely calm and uneventful over the last couple of months, with the exception of Bulgaria, where tensions continued, albeit without any significant escalations. Efforts to remove the Bulgarian veto on North Macedonia's EU accession negotiations are stuck, with efforts to adopt the constitutional amendments required for this in North Macedonia more or less dead in the water.

SECURITY

The security situation in North Macedonia has been broadly calm and uneventful over the previous two months.

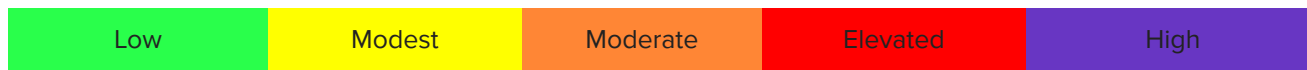
LOOKING FORWARD

- **Local elections:** with local elections now formally scheduled for October 19, political actors will become increasingly focused over the coming months on laying the groundwork for these elections. The VMRO-DPMNE will doubtless do well, while the scale of the SDSM's defeat remains to be seen. Perhaps the most uncertain battle will take place within the ethnic Albanian electorate, where the opposition DUI will square off with the ruling VLEN coalition for dominance.
- **Local election impact on ruling coalition:** what impact, if any, the local elections will have on the stability of the ruling coalition is still highly speculative, yet important to keep in mind over the coming months. If the VMRO-DPMNE performs particularly strongly, it could begin to contemplate organizing early Parliamentary elections in Spring 2026. Equally, a particularly poor performance by VLEN could tempt the VMRO-DPMNE to replace it with DUI in government, before or after any elections.

Serbia

The new Serbian Government led by Prime Minister Djuro Macut, formally a non-SNS figure and one of the faces of Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic's Movement for the People and State (PND) remains broadly stable, even if Macut is largely invisible. Despite expectations that the protest movement could fade away during the summer heat and holiday season, this has not happened. Repeated regime mistakes and police brutality have, if anything, breathed new energy into the protests. As the protests approach their tenth month, Vucic and the ruling SNS appear to have no formula to make them go away, yet the protests also do not seem capable of compelling Vucic to call early elections or hand over power.

Trajectories		Outlook		
		1 month	6 months	12 months
Risk Dimension	War	Low	Low	Low
	Terrorism	Low	Low	Low
	Government Instability	Moderate	Moderate	Low
	Civil Unrest	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
	Ethnic Unrest	Low	Low	Low



GOVERNMENT STABILITY

A new government led by Djuro Macut, a medical doctor and endocrinologist, backed by the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) and some minority MPs was elected in April this year. Macut's new Cabinet received the support of 153 MPs in the 250 seat Serbian Parliament. Given the strong majority it enjoys, the new government remains stable, at least in the sense there is little risk of it losing its support in Parliament. However, the political and societal crisis which ensued following the November 1 tragedy when the Novi Sad Railway Station canopy collapsed, killing 16 people, continues. As the recent months have shown, Parliamentary arithmetic is far from being the only determining factor when it comes to government stability, or lack thereof.

Macut first came to public attention at the SNS (counter) rally organized in the central Serbian town of Jagodina on January 24. Vucic presented Macut, along with a number of other doctors, as supporters of his (many times announced) 'Movement for the People and State' (PND). Some two months later, Macut again appeared alongside Vucic and ten others at what the Serbian leader presented as an 'initiating meeting' for the formation of the PND. It is clear that in choosing him, Vucic is seeking to promote his future Movement for the People and State, which is still in an inception phase. Yet despite the fact that Vucic has been announcing and then delaying the formation of the Movement for the People and State for some two years, the movement is yet to get off the ground or take shape. Plans to launch the movement on 28 June – Vidovdan, the historically significant anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 – seem to have been derailed by a large, student led protest, which ended with police brutality that triggered several week of further protests and road blocks across the country.

At the beginning of the summer, many observers wondered whether the political crisis and protests which engulfed the country after November 1 would slowly but surely melt away in the heat and coming holiday season. While the ruling party may have quietly hoped for this – and those opposed to it may have feared the end of protests – the precise opposite has happened. On June 28, the symbolically charged Vidovdan anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, the student

movement scheduled another protest rally in Belgrade. Ahead of the rally, there were concerns over how well attended it would be. Overall, while the crowd was far smaller than at the biggest opposition rally on March 15, an estimated 140,000 people turned up, in line with the bigger rallies of the autumn and winter. The demand for early Parliamentary elections was once again spelled out.

Following the end of the student-led rally, while most demonstrators dispersed, some lingered late into the evening, when police moved to remove them from the streets and clear Belgrade city centre. Police deployed often brutal tactics and scuffles ensued with demonstrators. With more than 70 demonstrators arrested during the night, many detained and beaten, anger boiled over in the coming days, with street blockades ensuing in Belgrade and in cities across Serbia. As demonstrators blocked roads and junctions day after day, a game of cat and mouse began, with police moving to clear blockades, only for the protesters to set up new blockades elsewhere.

The heavy handed police tactics may have been an attempt by Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic and the ruling SNS to put an end to the protests. If this was the goal, it seems to have backfired spectacularly. The heavy-handed police tactics sparked anger and breathed fresh energy into the ongoing student-led protests, with the first couple of weeks of July marked by protests, street blockades and brief blocking of roads across the country. That the ruling SNS was taking a more confrontational attitude towards its opponents was also signalled when on July 3rd President Vucic used his powers to pardon four SNS supporters who in January badly beat several students in Novi Sad. The attack caused mass outrage in Serbia and triggered the resignation of the SNS-led government of former Prime Minister Milos Vucevic. Vucic's move to pardon the attackers may have been intended as a show of strength before his own party activists, but it was yet another move which served to fire up protesters.

Protests eventually began to wear themselves out by mid-July, once more entering a more low-intensity phase, though far from disappearing. A degree of normality seemed to return, as universities managed to organize entrance exams to allow a new generation of students to be enrolled. Online lectures were begun as part of an effort to complete the current academic year

and allow students wishing to resume studies and make up for lost ground to try to do so over the summer.

At the end of July, private security staff accompanied by the Rector of the State University of Novi Pazar entered University premises and evicted students from the building. The move once again sparked protests and a stand-off with the police in Novi Pazar, with solidarity protests spreading to other towns and cities. The move seemed poorly timed from the point of view of the authorities, feeding into protests around the nine month anniversary of the Novi Sad tragedy.

On August 1, eleven individuals, among them former minister Tomislav Momirovic, were arrested on the orders of the Prosecution for Organized Crime (TOK) on suspicion of involvement in corruption in relation to the reconstruction of the Novi Sad Railway Station. The move seemed to anger Vucic and many senior figures within the SNS, who referred to the actions of TOK as criminal and amounting to an 'attempted coup'. Observers were at somewhat of a loss to understand what was going on, as TOK's actions clearly angered the ruling elite, yet many found it hard to imagine that public prosecutors had suddenly begun acting decisively and independently, given the ruling party's strong domination over them.

While the ruling SNS growled against TOK's prosecutors and talked of 'responsibility' for all those who had tried to destabilise the country over the last nine months, speculation that Vucic and the ruling party were contemplating early Parliamentary elections before the end of the year began to circulate and gain intensity. Vucic himself made vague comments that the next elections would be held before the final legal deadline and once those responsible for calling them decided to do so. The wording seemed intended to confuse more than to provide clarity. Later populist economic measures announced by the government also helped to fuel speculation that an unannounced campaign was beginning.

Tensions began to rise once again from August 10th, eventually culminating in some of the worst violence and police brutality seen since November 1st. In several towns in the north of Serbia, the SNS began to deploy significant numbers of what appeared to be thuggish supporters to counter ongoing demonstrations against its rule. On August 12, things turned violent in the town of Vrbas, when SNS thugs began shooting fireworks and other projectiles into crowds of

demonstrators from who they were being separated by police in riot gear. Despite the fact that the missiles were also hitting the police, the riot police present did nothing to counter them. Similar violence took place in the town of Backa Palanka.

The next day, anger over the scenes in Vrbas and Backa Palanka sparked protests across the country, including Belgrade and Novi Sad. Once again, groups of SNS supporters and thugs squared off with anti-SNS demonstrators, often resulting in violent exchanges, usually triggered by the former. In Novi Sad, angry demonstrators appeared to set fire to SNS party offices after being attacked by loyalists from the ruling party. Riot police sought to disperse protesters in other towns and cities with fresh brutality.

While demonstrations continued over the coming days, police brutality escalated, reaching levels of viciousness rarely seen in Serbia since the overthrow of the regime of Slobodan Milosevic in 2000. Demonstrators were beaten brutally in Belgrade and Novi Sad. Particularly shocking were scenes from Valjevo, where police in full riot gear were caught on camera beating demonstrators lying on the ground, some of them under age. In Belgrade, student Nikolina Sindjelic accused the infamous commander of a police unit of threatening her with rape while under arrest.

While many observers began to speculate that this was the beginning of a more widespread and intense strategy of using repression to suppress the protest movement entering its tenth month, there was also speculation that the authorities might be planning to impose a state of emergency in an attempt to bring the situation under control and end protests. On August 17, President Aleksandar Vucic said that a state of emergency was not being considered, but made ominous sounding threats that the state would 'withdraw' for a few days before taking decisive and until then unseen action to bring the situation under control.

While tensions remained elevated, protests subsided somewhat and a tense calm of sorts settled on the country. Vucic's threats seemed to amount to little. On August 25, the Serbian leader laid out a raft of populist economic measures, mostly aimed at reducing supermarket prices through caps of retailers' margins. Political commentators saw this as yet another sign that Vucic was working to shore up the SNS' popularity and – perhaps – preparing the ground for early Parliamentary elections. The measures also coincided with several days of SNS

organized ‘counter-demonstrations’ calling for peace, normalcy and an end to blockades. While organized in tens of towns across the country, attendance by SNS supporters was distinctly underwhelming.

After a violent and tense summer, Serbia’s political crisis remains fundamentally stalemated, just like it did at the beginning of the summer. The regime’s attempt to suffocate the protests with a mix of deploying its own thugs and police brutality has failed and – in all likelihood – backfired. Demonstrators have not given up, while police brutality only seems to have succeeded in attracting negative attention from international media, something that will hurt Vucic. At the same time, Vucic and the SNS seem unable to fathom any kind of compromises with their opponents that would truly serve to de-escalate the current crisis.

Parliamentary elections seem like one possible way out of the current crisis. Despite speculation that Vucic and the SNS might be interested in going down this path, it seems hard to imagine that Vucic would concede Parliamentary elections in a situation where his odds of achieving victory seem highly uncertain for the first time since coming to power in 2012. **Given the lack of a clear exit to the current crisis, the increased use of police brutality and the approaching one-year anniversary of the Novi Sad Railway Station tragedy, we have opted to downgrade the civil unrest trajectory in the one- and six- month outlook from moderate to elevated.**

OPPOSITION ACTIVITIES

Ever since Serbia's protesting students laid down their demand for early Parliamentary elections at the end of May, there were small signs that the student movement might be trying to build cautious bridges with opposition parties, with different forms of cooperation being explored. The local elections in the towns of Kosjeric and Zajecar to some extent brought the opposition parties back in from the cold. However, this process seemed to falter over the summer and opposition parties and leaders once again seemed to be confined to the margins of political life amidst the violent turn in August.

REGIONAL RELATIONS

Serbia's relations with its neighbours remained broadly calm and cordial, relations with Kosovo being the usual exception.

SECURITY

The security situation in Serbia has remained broadly calm, yet the ongoing political crisis has raised tensions within society and increased the risk of violence and conflict between supporters of the ruling party and their opponents, as well as police and protesters. At the height of the violence in August, some observers and politicians began to refer to the country being on the brink of civil war, though the risk of a genuine civil war appears low.

LOOKING FORWARD

- **Protest movement:** Protests begun after the collapse of the concrete canopy at the Novi Sad Railway station, which killed 16 people, are about to enter their tenth month. Contrary to many expectations, the demonstrations continued throughout the summer, in many respects fuelled by the mistakes of Vucic and the ruling SNS. After police deployed brutality against demonstrators in the second half of August, it remains to be seen how, if at all, the tactics of demonstrators will change. September could yet provide fresh energy for the protest movement as the summer holiday season comes to a close and a fresh generation of university students enrolls and arrives in the country's main university centres.
- **Early Parliamentary elections:** the call for early Parliamentary elections has become a core demand of the student-led protests. The summer months have seen rising speculation that Vucic and the SNS might be planning to fulfil this demand. Populist economic measures further fuel such suspicions. Despite this, it is hard to see Vucic agreeing to early elections unless he is sure of achieving victory, something that seems to be far from certain at present.

About Risk Dimensions

War

We understand 'war' as the state use of armed force beyond regular policing. This category includes the risk of the state use of force in the context of inter-state war, civil war, border disputes, but also in response to terrorism or civil disorder.

Terrorism

Terrorism refers to activities, or the risk thereof, of organised groups (large or small) who are causing, or pose a credible risk of causing, death, injury, property damage, kidnapping or other forms of terror using violence (which may include shootings, assassinations, bombings, arson, beatings, etc). At risk may be individuals or assets. Motives may be wide ranging – religious, political, ideological, nationalist, ethnic, etc.

Government Instability

This category covers the risk of government collapse, protracted government instability and/or paralysis and/or deadlock and/or inability to take decisions, the risk of early elections, or even a protracted institutional or constitutional crises.

Civil Unrest

The category refers to unrest and/or disorder which is primarily political, socio-economic, labour, land/property issues, corruption or rights-based in terms of motives, or directed against a specific actor or issue. It can include mass protests, riots or strikes, whether peaceful or violent and national-level, regional or local.

Ethnic Unrest

This category refers to unrest and/or disorder which is primarily motivated by ethnic, religious or nationalist factors and/or grievances (real or imagined). It can include mass protests, riots, communal attacks or frequent physical attacks against members of a group. It can be violent or non-violent and national-level, regional or local in nature.

About

The Western Balkans Stability Monitor is produced by BIRN Consultancy, part of BIRN Ltd. BIRN Consultancy is an independent analysis, advisory and corporate investigation consultancy with a regional focus on the Balkans. Our mission is to help our clients better understand both the opportunities and challenges facing them in the south-east Europe. Often, our clients already have a degree of familiarity with the region. They turn to us for more detailed analysis of developments and trends or to investigate a particular problem, because our unique mix of knowledge and expertise gives us a competitive edge over others.

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