

Montenegro

Last update:	4 mei 2022
Population:	622,137 (World Bank 2019)
Prime minister:	Dritan Abazović
President:	Milo Đukanović
Governemental type:	Republic
Ruling coalition:	A minority coalition: United Reform Action (URA), Socialist's People's Party (SNP), Social Democratic Party (SDP), Bosniak Party & the Albanian Coalition
Last election:	2020 (parliamentary elections)
Next election:	Spring 2023 (general elections)
Sister parties:	Social Democratic Party (SD, SDP split-off)

After peacefully surviving the 1990s wars that led to the disintegration of Yugoslavia, Montenegro's politics and its society were determined by the relations with and independence from Serbia. In a 2006 referendum, a majority of 55.5 per cent declared to be in favour of independence, narrowly passing the official 55.5 per cent threshold. Anno 2021, Montenegro is in the process of EU accession - talks have been opened on all of the 33 negotiation chapters and provisionally closed three. On the one hand, the country has relatively good relations with other countries in South-East Europe. It is a frontrunner in the region when it comes to LGBTI Rights, has appointed an independent special prosecutor to tackle organised crime and high-level corruption, considerably improved the relations between civil society and the government, and aligned its foreign policy with the EU and became a NATO member in 2017.

On the other hand, business tycoons are dominating an economy that mostly runs on remittances and tourism, major incidents around election day are the rule rather than the exception, and the country has only recently experienced its first change of power at elections. While politically Montenegro is seeking closer ties with the West, its economy remains "looking East". The country is heavily dependent on Russian tourists and investments, while with its massive highway construction project the country is under threat of becoming "debt dependent" on China. As its economy relies on tourism, Montenegro was struck especially hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. The economy shrank by 15% in 2020. The combination with the enormous debt towards China has put the recently installed new government in a peculiar position.

After the August 2020 elections, Montenegro saw its first change of power since its independence in 2006. The country had been ruled by President Milo Đukanović's Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) up until then. It remained the largest party, but was blocked by coalition of five different political forces, of which the largest is also comprised of six parties. They managed to form a government, with a slim majority of only one seat. The coalition was spearheaded by Zdravko Krivokapic, of For the Future of Montenegro. He was installed as prime minister in December of 2020, but is facing an almost insurmountable challenge, regarding Montenegro's poor financial situation. This is exaggerated by the COVID-19 pandemic and its Chinese debt. As such, the Krivokapic-led government has been reaching out to the EU for help.

In January 2022, the Krivokapic government fell after a vote of no-confidence in parliament. Several issues alluded to a government collapse. Coalition partners disagreed over several issues, primarily the role of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC), the handling of ties with Serbia and Russia, and the stagnant EU accession procedure. Krivokapic's appeasement of the SOC in Cetinje in September 2021 enraged thousands and caused mass demonstrations. Divisions in the coalition also arose when Krivokapic intended to replace justice minister Leposavić after he denied the Srebrenica genocide.

On April 28, 2022, the leader of the Black and White bloc (URA), Dritan Abazović, was elected as the new Prime Minister of Montenegro, with a mandate for a year. His minority government consists of the URA bloc, the Socialist People's Party, the Social Democratic Party, the Bosniak Party and two ethnic Albanian coalitions. They will form the government until the spring of 2023, when new elections will take place.

Political Situation

Delicate position between the West and the East

Montenegro became a NATO member in June 2017. The country is also a candidate country for the EU, having opened all of the thirty three chapters in the EU negotiations, with three provisionally closed. The initial invitation to NATO led to protests by pro-Serbian parties and their supporters. Further protests were fueled by the opposition alliance Democratic Front (DF) who voiced accusations of corruption, undemocratic practices and election fraud against President Milo Đukanović (Democratic Party of Socialists, DPS). During the elections of 2016, several incidents occurred reflecting the seemingly mutually exclusive support for NATO and Europe, on the one hand, and Russia, on the other.

In the end, a 'pro-West' coalition was formed led by DPS, who got the majority of votes. Although divided, the opposition has become stronger due to the reforms that went along with the EU integration process. The Russian government has been critical of Montenegro's bid to join NATO, which culminated in a coup attempt on 16 October 2016. Russia still has a large economic presence in Montenegro, with almost 30 per cent of Foreign Direct Investment in 2016 going to Montenegro coming from Russia. This, on top of the fact that roughly one-third of foreign companies operating in the country are owned by Russians. Although Russia has 'lost' Montenegro to NATO, the country remains determined to exert influence in the region.

Montenegro after its independence from Serbia

After World War II Montenegro became one of the six equal republics of the Yugoslav federation. After the disintegration of Yugoslavia, Montenegro remained in a union with Serbia as the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro. On 21 May 2006 a referendum was held, where the majority of the Montenegrin population (55.5 per cent) declared to be in favour of independence. With that, the threshold of 55 per cent, as stippled by the EU, was narrowly passed. Montenegro's first parliamentary and presidential elections as an independent state as well as the parliamentary elections of October 2012 did not bring any big political changes.

Since 1998 SDP and DPS ruled together. The coalition has become less stable over time. At the national level, DPS blocked the adoption of a new electoral law. Failure to adopt this electoral law could lead to a serious political crisis. After the blockade, the main opposition party, the Democratic Front Party, left the parliament. They accused the DPS of obstructing the Assembly and urged the DPS to take responsibility for the political crisis. On the local level, the rupture between the two parties became apparent in 2013. This, while on a national level, the parties only broke just before the parliamentary election in 2016.

The blockade of the DPS has deepened the distrust between the opposition and the government, which started on April 2013 with electoral fraud and the misuse of state resources with regards to the presidential elections, announced the Democratic Front. Next to the national level, friction at the local level was visible as well; during local elections in 2013, the SDP decided to work together with an opposition party, which had never happened since DPS and SDP started ruling together. This new alliance could cause friction within the national coalition. For the April 2014 local elections in the capital of Podgorica, SDP formed a pre-election coalition with the new opposition party: 'Positive'.

2016 coup attempt

The country has been immersed in a coup drama since the 16 October 2016 general elections, when authorities arrested 20 people accused of planning armed attacks against government institutions. This group consisted of mostly Serb nationals, but also included two Russian citizens, Eduard Sirokov and Vladimir Popov, and two Montenegrin opposition leaders. Prime Minister at that time Milo Đukanović (DPS), whose party came out first in the election but without a parliamentary majority, had presented the vote as a chance for Montenegro's 620,000 citizens to endorse his policy of joining NATO and the EU, instead of pursuing deeper ties with allies in Serbia and Russia.

Since then, tensions have built up, and the situation became even tenser after the nation's special prosecutor lifted the parliamentary immunity of two leaders who were suspected of having participated in a failed coup. In February 2017, riot police were stationed to restrain hundreds of protesters who gathered in front of the parliament in Podgorica to protest against the motion lifting the two leaders' immunity. It is assumed by the government that the coup to attack Montenegro's parliament and kill Đukanović was directed by Russian intelligence officers to sabotage the country's plan to join NATO. Nonetheless, Montenegro joined NATO in April 2017 as the parliament voted 46-0 for joining the alliance. The opposition boycotted the vote and protested outside the parliament building. Only SDP voted, from the opposition, for NATO membership. The relationship between Podgorica and Moscow has further deteriorated due to Montenegro's NATO membership.

Parliament, dominated by the Democratic Party of Socialists, lifted one of the opposition leaders Medojević's immunity as per

requested by the special prosecutor for organised crime, Milivoje Katnic. Katnic said police should take Medojevic in for questioning, after which a decision on his possible arrest would be made. Medojevic is known as one of the sharpest critics of the government and the ruling party run by veteran leader Milo Đukanović. But the question remains whether this was a genuine coup attempt. On the one hand, it is claimed that it was a sinister effort to overturn a democratically elected administration and take over the country by force. On the other, critical analysts argue that it was a carefully choreographed event, designed to win sympathy for a controversial and allegedly corrupt ruling party that has been in power since 1991 on the verge of decreasing public support.

These critics believe that the government sought to manipulate the situation to its advantage. Although the indictment says Velimirović told authorities about the plot several days before the election, there was no mention of it in the media until election day itself, when the arrests of several alleged conspirators were announced. Internet communication services such as WhatsApp and Viber were cut off for hours during the day. All of these elements contributed to the sense that the country was in danger — a sense that may have persuaded some voters to rally behind the ruling party for the sake of stability.

Allegations of corruption

After the presidential elections in April 2013, won narrowly by DPS candidate Filip Vujanović, allegations of misuse of public resources were even more prominent. Under pressure from the opposition, the SDP (junior partner in the governing coalition) and Brussels, the so-called process of 'restoring confidence in the electoral process' started. An inquiry team was founded in which all the parties were represented, in addition to the representatives from the NGO sector, while Brussels also provided technical assistance. The Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 states that pervasive corruption, marked by nepotism, political favouritism, and weak controls over conflicts of interest in all branches of the government is one of the biggest problems in Montenegro.

In the 2016 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) of Transparency International, Montenegro scored 45, which is one point more than in 2013. Since 2013 it has moved from the 67th position to the 64th position (together with Oman, Senegal, South Africa and Suriname). Freedom of media continues to be a problem in Montenegro and in December 2015 the European Parliament's Montenegro rapporteur condemned the attacks on activists and politicians by the media and urged in a resolution to continue OSCE-facilitated dialogue on improving ethical and professional standards in the media.

EU accession negotiations

In 2008, Montenegro applied for EU membership. In December 2011, the Council launched the accession process intending to open negotiations in June 2012, which started on the 29th of June. Since its accession process, each year, the European Commission has presented a (progress) report for Montenegro. In the 2016 report, it was said that Montenegro's priority should be reformed and concern the rule of law, which could be 'demonstrated by tangible results on fighting corruption and organised crime'. Prioritising rule of law was important because it would determine the pace of the negotiations. The EU also stressed the need to improve the economy due to increasing public debt and to strengthen the administrative capacity to ensure the application of the European acquis.

Currently, 33 out of 33 chapters are opened and 3 chapters have been provisionally closed. For the ruling Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) and their leader Milo Đukanović, the EU accession is less favourable. In the case of accession, there would be more supervision on his work, powers would be transferred to the parliament and the rule of law would be strengthened. This will put pressure on the power basis of Đukanović and could result in charges against him, something we have seen happen in Croatia with former Prime Minister Ivo Sander. Moreover, the accession process gives other parties less of a reason to work together with the DPS.

Anti-corruption protest erupt in 2019

In February 2019, protests against President Milo Đukanović and his government started, calling on his resignation following the accusation of corruption and electoral fraud. The protests kicked off after media revealed footage and documents that appear to show top officials accepting suspicious funds for the party of Đukanović, exposing the so-called "Atlas" and "Envelope" affairs. The DPS and Đukanović quickly denied any wrongdoing claiming that all donations were recorded in the party's financial records. Opposition parties supported the protests, which ended in summer 2019, but refrained from taking a leading role in the organisation behind the demonstrations or address the crowd. The organisation behind the protests is called Odupri Se! (Resist!) and consist of an informal group of intellectuals, academics, activists and journalists.

The official demand of the movement was that the government should fold for the formation of a technical government because the conditions for free and transparent elections are not in place. Moreover, they called for the resignation of President Đukanović and the chief prosecutor for organised crime, amongst other people. The movements were supported by people from the entire political

landscape, with left-wing, moderate and right-wing factions working together in an attempt to oust the current government. On 4 December the Anti-Corruption Agency, ASK, published a report and subsequent ruling about the affair after it was pressured by opposition parties to release it. The ruling concluded that the DPS had failed to report 47.500 euro in donations, and issued a fine of 20.000 in response.

The fragile Krivaković cabinet

After the 2020 elections, an awkward coalition formed between several parties to put Đukanović's DPS into opposition. It ended Đukanović's 30 year rule in Montenegro. The coalition was spearheaded by the independent new prime minister Zdravko Krivaković, and included a variety of parties, the pro-Serbian Democratic Montenegro (DCG) and liberal United Reform Action (URA) standing out. Krivaković was a major figure in the 2020 Montenegrin protests after Đukanović tried to curb the power of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) in the country. The relation with Serbia proved to be an important issue again for the new coalition. And quickly, relations between coalition parties soured due to geopolitical relations and a lack of economic progress.

In Cetinje, 2021, protests broke out in Cetinje after the SOC wanted to inaugurate a new metropolitan. Krivaković and DCG tried to appease the situation, while URA asked for the ceremony to be organized elsewhere. On the other hand, a justice minister was voted from office after he denied the 1995 Srebrenica genocide. Pro-Serbian elements in the coalition called the decision to let the minister off 'voter fraud', sparking anger in the coalition. Lastly, Krivaković's stance towards coronavirus vaccination caused unrest in the coalition, as he allegedly refused to be inoculated. He also refused to wear a mask on several occasions.

The EU accession process remains stalled. The Krivaković cabinet hoped to speed the process up with the removal of Đukanović, however this proved to be in vain as political bickering has only made a possible EU accession increasingly difficult. In January 2022, URA filed a vote of no-confidence against Krivaković and his cabinet. On February 5, 2022, the coalition fell.

April 2022 - A new minority coalition

The leader of the Black and White bloc (URA), Dritan Abazović, was elected on April 28, 2022 as the new Prime Minister of Montenegro, with a mandate for a year. His minority government consists of the URA bloc, the Socialist People's Party, the Social Democratic Party, the Bosniak Party and two ethnic Albanian coalitions. They will form the government until the spring of 2023, when new elections will take place.

His former coalition partners, the pro-Serbian 'For the Future of Montenegro' and "Peace is Our Nation", accuse Abazović of betrayal and boycotted the vote on Thursday, April 28. 45 members of the 81-seat Montenegrin Parliament voted in favour of the new minority coalition.

Abazović said he finally wanted to speed up EU integration. He is considered a pro-democratic, liberal and moderate in the Montenegrin political landscape. He said: "I will lead an active political dialogue to improve the atmosphere in society and reduce the country's polarization. I do not agree that Montenegro should be divided into two opposing sides, but develop as a civil state with respect for all differences."

The DPS of Đukanović sees a return to power in the new minority government, as it will deliver key political support from the opposition. An DPS MP reacted delighted: "Despite expectations, we didn't disappear from the political scene. At the moment, the DPS supports this government, but we will return to power at full capacity in a very short period of time."

Five issues will be key to the new government, according to Abazović: EU integration, battling corruption, sustainable investment and development, protection of the environment and better care for children and the youth. All eyes in Montenegro will now be on the EU integration process – especially now a window of opportunity looms due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. However, Russian, and especially Serbian influence remains of importance in the country.

Female representation and women's rights

Women remain significantly underrepresented in Montenegrin politics. In the presidential election of 2008, no female candidates competed. The 2012 parliamentary elections provided for an improvement in women election participation with a total of 264 women that stood as candidates, declared to be a significant increase from past elections. In 2018, Draginja Vuksanović was the first female leader of a political party in Montenegro up until the 2020 general elections. Despite such improvements, Montenegro lags behind on other Western-Balkan countries. As such, the Women's Political Network (WPN) Montenegro is one of the organisations that been pushing hard to increase the current 24% share of female politicians to at least 30%.

That there is gender equality in Montenegro is widely considered a myth. Women continue to be discriminated against in Montenegro's patriarchal society. Especially when it comes to work, there is a large gap to be bridged. Women continue to participate much more in unpaid work and household care. This has only worsened drastically during the COVID-19 pandemic. In November 2020, 40% of women were unemployed. Throughout the year, NGOs also reported an increase in domestic violence against women. This had everything to do with the country's COVID-19 restrictions.

LGBTI rights

When it comes to LGBTI rights legislation, Montenegro is frontrunner in the region, although much can still be improved. The country was ranked 11th out of all 48 European countries when it came to LGBTI rights legislation. Homosexuality has been legal in Montenegro since 1977 and its parliament took an important step in July of 2020, when it voted to recognize same-sex unions as of July 2021. In 2010, several laws were already adapted that prohibited discrimination based on someone's sexual orientation and gender identity. This was a requirement for EU membership. However, same-sex marriage was declared unconstitutional when the country's constitution was adopted in 2007 though. Nothing has changed in that regard.

The LGBTI community also continues to face challenges that non-LGBTI people do not have to face. The progressive legislation has yet to result in more general acceptance of the LGBTI community among Montenegro's population. Despite the important step that was taken in 2020, still 71% of Montenegrins declared that they considered homosexuality an illness. 50% also believed that it was a danger to society and needed to be oppressed by the state. As such, many cases of violence and discrimination against LGBTI people remain unreported. As the country is tiny, the gay scene is rather small as well. A notable NGO is Queer Montenegro, which organizes the annual Pride parades.

Parliamentary Elections

The parliamentary elections of 2020 ended a 30-year one-party rule. Until then, the Democratic Party of Socialist (DPS) had led the country. The DPS remains the largest, but since it could not obtain a majority coalition, it is the "For the Future of Montenegro", "Peace is Our Nation" and the "Black and White" alliances that form the parliament's ruling coalition. "For the Future of Montenegro" has seven political parties namely, Serbian Democracy, the Democratic People's Party, Movement for Changes, the Socialist People's Party, United Montenegro, the Workers Party and Real Montenegro. Together these parties obtained 27 seats.

The "Peace is Our Nation" alliance is composed of Democratic Montenegro and Demos, having 10 seats. The "Black and White" coalition has several parties, but only URA Civil Movement received seats, four in total. This means that the collaboration of these three alliances amounts to 41 seats, which is the threshold for a majority. The DPS is the largest opposition party with 30 seats. The Social Democrats and the Bosniak Party both obtained three seats each. The Social Democratic Party received two seats. The Albanian List and the Albanian Coalition got one seat each.

Election results

Party	Seats
Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS)	30
Democratic Front (FD) - For the Future of Montenegro Coalition	24
Popular Movement - For the Future of Montenegro Coalition	3
Democratic Montenegro (DCG) - Peace is Our Nation Coalition	9
Demos - Peace is Our Nation Coalition	1
Civic Movement United Reform Action (URA) - Black and White Coalition	4
Social Democrats of Montenegro (SD)	3
Bosniak Party (BS)	3
Social Democratic Party (SDP)	2
Albanian Coalition	1
Albanian List	1

Presidential Elections

On 15 April 2018 voters could cast their ballots for the presidential elections. Of the seven candidates, the major candidates were Milo Đukanović of the ruling DPS, independent Mladen Bojanić (who was nevertheless supported by most opposition parties) and Draginja Vuksanović of the SDP. Incumbent president Filip Vujanović is ineligible for re-election. Leading up to the elections, the opposition tried to unite against the long-ruling DPS. Six-time prime minister Đukanović was nominated in early March by the DPS to run. In reaction to this decision most political parties, except for the SDP, united behind Bojanić.

Candidate	Number of votes	Percentage
Milo Đukanović	180,274	53.90%
Mladen Bojanić	111,711	33.40%
Draginja Vuksanović	27,441	8.20%
Voter Turnout	340,462	63.92%

Campaign and election

The long rule of Đukanović's DPS was one of the central issues of the campaign. After serving once as president and six times as prime minister, most of the opposition parties wanted Mladen Bojanić to end his continuous rule. Bojanić accused the veteran leader of "capturing the state." Many of the current problems, like the recent [wave of violence](#) caused by criminal organizations, have existed in Montenegro since the start of the rule of Đukanović according to Bojanić. "I agree with Đukanović that the state is stronger than the mafia. But the problem is that I do not know which side he is on."

Although the vote was relatively free, monitoring groups like [CEMI and CT](#), reported voter irregularities at numerous polling stations. Members of the DPS were seen recording voters outside polling stations, possibly pressuring them. In the town of Berane, there were reports of possible vote-buying. Even very limited manipulation can have a major influence on the result: Montenegro is a small country and only 180.000 people voted for Đukanović which results in 53.9 per cent of the vote.

Social Democratic Parties

Social Democratic Party (SDP)

Party Leader: Raško Konjević

Number of seats: 3

<http://www.sdp.co.me/>

The SDP was founded in June 1993 after a merger of the Social Democratic Reform Party and the Socialist Party of Montenegro. The party is firmly anti-war oriented and strongly opposed to Milosević. Its main goal is the development of a "democratic internationally recognised and independent Montenegro that keeps abreast with Europe in order to provide better life, greater rights, freedoms and happiness for every person and for all people". Over the years SDP remained a relatively small party (around 5 percent of the votes), however, at the parliamentary elections in 2009 SDP succeeded in getting just over 11 percent of the votes, which meant 9 out of 81 seats in the parliament. The party managed to attract more young progressive voters and became the third biggest party in the country.

Despite being a relatively small party, SDP managed to play a notable role in the political scene over the years. Although regarded by critics as the small supportive brother of the ruling Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS), at the local elections in 2010 SDP ran separately from DPS for the first time in a decade and got its best election result: around 15 percent of the votes. During the 2012 parliamentary elections, the DPS was a part of the European Montenegro coalition, together with the Democratic party of Socialists and the Liberal Party, which managed to secure 45.6 percent of the votes and thus 39 seats out of the 81 in parliament.

In 2012 the SDP was part of the Coalition for a European Montenegro led by Đukanović. In 2016, after a split within their party, the

SDP left the ruling coalition and following the announcement of a vote of no confidence, voted against the government. The split provided an opportunity for SDP to reform and modernise into a citizens' party, transparent and open to outside influence and a focal point for civil society and human rights activists. Furthermore, the party could engage in new partnerships with the progressive opposition that will have more room to manoeuvre as the EU accession negotiations move on.

SDP is member of Socialist International and associate party of Party of European Socialists (PES). The party is best described as a centre-left party. During the 2018 presidential elections, the party put forward Montenegro's first female presidential candidate Draginja Vuksanović. She came in third during the elections. In 2019 Vuksanović also took charge of the party. However, after a disappointing elections result in 2020, with the party losing two of its four seats, she was ousted as party leader. Raško Konjević is the current party president.

Since April 2022, the SDP is a member of Abazović' minority coalition, in which they deliver key cabinet positions, such as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ranko Krivokapic, and Minister of Defense, Rasko Konjevic.

Social Democrats of Montenegro (DS)

Party Leader: Ivan Brajovic
Number of seats: 3
<http://sdcg.me/>

In 2015 the Social Democrats of Montenegro was created as a new political party by a split faction of the SDP. Almost half of the party officials left the SDP and joined the newly established Social Democrats (SD) that consist of prominent SDP members who are close to the DPS. After the elections of 2016, the SD joined the ruling coalition with DPS and several national minorities parties, having won two seats in the parliament. The party ran independently in the 2020 parliamentary elections, obtaining 3 seats. It is now part of the opposition. The SD is led by Ivan Brajovic, former vice-president of the SDP. The SD ideology is similar to the DPS, pursuing neoliberal economic policies and pro-Europeanism.

Other Parties

Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS)

Party Leader: Milo Đukanović
Number of seats: 30
<http://www.dps.me/>

The Democratic Party of Socialists, founded in 1991, is a successor to the former leading League of Communists. In 1992 the party supported the continued existence of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Until October 1997 the party was led by former President of Montenegro Bulatovic (from December 1990 – October 1997). In January 1998 Milovan Djukanović was sworn in as President of the Republic, after beating his former ally Bulatovic – who was removed from the party – in the presidential race. In the same year he was elected Chairman of DPS and has led the party ever since.

With Djukanović becoming president, DPS took more and more distance from Milosevic. The pro-Serbian, pro-Milosevic element then broke away in 1998 to form a new party, the Socialist People's Party. At the fourth party congress in 2011, the DPS reinvented its main goals, fighting for a democratic, internationally recognised and independent state of Montenegro. DPS holds such an independent Montenegro is the main condition for its development and Europeanization. Furthermore, other leading issues in its platform are tolerance and improvement of life standards for all citizens of Montenegro.

The DPS has won every general election in Montenegro since the first multi-party elections of 1990. In June 2012, the DPS-led government celebrated the official start of membership talks with the EU. Additionally, the party strongly favours joining NATO, despite the lack of popular support for this idea. Nominally a social democratic party, opposition parties accuse it of pursuing neo-liberal economic policies and of disregarding welfare safeguards. It is said to be one of the best organized parties in the region, with approximately 100,000 members. Polls show that, despite the existence of ethnic minority parties in Montenegro, many members of

those minorities, such as Bosniaks and Albanians, prefer to vote for the DPS.

In the 2012 elections, the party ran as the leader of the European Montenegro coalition, which won 45.6 percent of the votes and thus 39 seats out of the 81 in parliament. Its leader, Djukanović is said to once again take the post of Prime Minister. In the August 2020 election, the DPS remained the largest faction with 30 seats. However, since it was not able to form a majority coalition, the party could not continue its 30-year rule. Djukanović has maintained its post as president of Montenegro though. DPS continues to be a member of Socialist International and associate party of Party of European Socialists (PES).

Since April 2022, the DPS gives crucial opposition support to a new minority coalition in the country. In the lead-up to 2023 elections, they eye a return into power.

New Serbian Democracy (NSD)

Party Leader: Andrija Mandić

Number of seats: 9

<http://www.nova.org.me>

New Serbian Democracy or NSD, is one of the newest political parties in Montenegro, formed on 24 January 2009 as a merger between the Serb People's Party and the People's Socialist Party of Montenegro. New Serb Democracy is led by Andrija Mandić, leader of the former Serb List. Mandić sought to transform the Serb List into a more civic-oriented party, in order to boost the party's coalition potential, and even the dropping of the Serb prefix from the newly formed party's name was considered. This idea was met with strong resistance during the merger talks.

The party won 8 seats in the 2009 parliamentary elections. In 2012 it participated in the Democratic Front coalition which won 23.8 percent and 20 mandates. For the 2020 elections, NSD was again part of the running coalition of Democratic Front, but this time together with the Democratic People's Party, the Socialist People's Party, the Movement for Changes and the Popular Movement Alliance under the name For the Future of Montenegro. All the parties combined obtained 27 seats, of which NSD owns 9.

Democratic Montenegro (DCG)

Party Leader: Aleksa Bečić

Number of seats: 9

<https://demokrate.me>

Democratic Montenegro (DCG) was founded in 2015 when it split from the Socialist People's Party. The centrist faction ran together with Demos in the Peace is Our Nations coalition in the 2020 parliamentary elections. DCG obtained 9 seats and Demos 1. Peace is Our Nation former a ruling coalition with For the Future of Montenegro and the Black and White alliance and therefore stopping the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) to continue its 30-year lead. This cabinet fell in February 2022, ousting DCG from power.

Democratic People's Party (DNP)

Party Leader: Milan Knežević

Number of seats: 5

<https://www.dnpcg.me>

The Democratic People's Party (DNP) is a fiscally centre-left but socially right-wing faction founded in 2015. During the 2020 elections, the DNP was part of the running coalition of Democratic Front, together with New Serbian Democracy, the Movement for Change, the Socialist People's Party and the Popular Movement Alliance under the name For the Future of Montenegro. All the parties combined obtained 27 seats, of which DNP owns 5. For the Future of Montenegro was able to form a ruling coalition with Peace is Our Nation and the Black and White Alliance and therefore stopping the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) to continue its 30-year lead.

Movement for Changes (PZP)

Party Leader: Nebojsa Medojević
Number of seats: 5
<http://www.promjene.org/>

The PZP was founded by top economists and academics in September 2002 as a group seeking to promote Montenegro's EU accession and acceleration of reforms. On 15 July 2006, Nebojsa Medojević, Chairman of the Movement for Change modified the statutes of his organisation in order to turn it into a political party under the name Movement for Change (PZP). The new party would like to have a government of experts responsible for the revision of privatisation and the adoption of a new constitution. The party is not only part of the opposition to the present government but it also rejects the present system based, in its opinion, on unstable and faulty foundations, corruption, theft and ignorance. However, the PZP is now far right, pro-Trump, anti immigrant, anti Islamic party and anti LGBT party.

During the 2012 parliamentary elections, the PZP ran in a coalition with the New Serb Democracy, forming the Democratic Front coalition. Democratic Front won 23.8 percent of the votes and 20 mandates. For the 2020 elections, the PZP was part of the running coalition of Democratic Front, together with Serbian Democracy, the Democratic People's Party, the Socialist People's Party and the Popular Movement Alliance under the name For the Future of Montenegro. All the parties combined obtained 27 seats, of which PZP owns 5.

Socialist People's Party (SNP)

Party Leader: Vladimir Jokovic
Number of seats: 5
<http://www.snp.co.me/>

Former federal Prime Minister Momir Bulatović, considered as a puppet of Milosevic, was party leader until February 2001. He was replaced by Predrag Bulatović. The SNP formed a pre-election coalition with the NS and DSS and within this coalition (11 seats) holds 8 seats in the parliament. After the 10 September 2006 elections, which turned out a big disappointment for the SNP, Predrag Bulatovic announced his resignation. Srdjan Milic was elected new party leader on 26 November 2006. After the 2006 referendum their behavior has been quite moderate comparing to the politics of the far right Democratic Front. Vladimir Jokovic is the current party leader.

In the 2012 elections it won the support of 10.6 percent of the voters and thus secured nine seats in parliament. For the 2020 elections, the SNP was part of the running coalition of Democratic Front, together with Serbian Democracy, the Democratic People's Party, the Movement for changes and the Popular Movement Alliance under the name For the Future of Montenegro. All the parties combined obtained 27 seats, of which SNP owns 5. The SNP joined URA in a minority coalition in April 2022. They deliver the Minister of Justice and Minister of Agriculture in the new cabinet.

Civic Movement United Reform Action (URA)

Party Leader: Dritan Abazović
Number of seats: 4
<https://www.ura.org.me>

The Civic Movement United Reform Action (URA) was founded in 2015 by Žarko Rakčević and currently led by Dritan Abazović. It is a centre-left and green faction which is part of the 2020 parliamentary coalition Black and White. Having obtained 4 seats, it is the only party of this alliance that got into parliament. Since April 2022, Abazović leads a minority government in which he is PM.

The Bosniak Party (BS)

Party Leader: Rafet Husović
Number of seats: 3
<http://www.bscg.me/>

Founded in 2006 to protect the interests of the Bosniak [Muslim] minority, which makes up 7.7 percent of the population according to the 2003 census, the Bosniak Party was formed out of a merger of four small parties: the International Democratic Union, the Party For Democratic Action, the Democratic Alliance of Bosniaks and the Party of National Equality. The party lent the DPS-led

government significant support in the independence referendum of 2006. Since the Bosniak minority is concentrated in certain areas of the country, the party favours devolving powers to regions.

The BS has decided to run in the 2012 general election independently, winning 4.17 percent and three seats in parliament. It is said to provide majority support to the European Montenegro coalition. For the 2020 elections, the BS ran independently again, obtaining 3 seats. Since 2022, the faction is part of the new Abazovic minority coalition.

United Montenegro (UCG)

Party Leader: Goran Danilović

Number of seats: 1

<https://www.dps.me>

United Montenegro (UCG) is one of the youngest factions in the country. Founded in 2017, by Goran Danilović, it won 1 seat in the 2020 parliamentary elections. The UCG is a conservative faction and part of the Popular Movement coalition with the Workers' Party and True Montenegro. Together with the Democratic Front coalition, it formed an alliance under the name For the Future of Montenegro. All the parties combined obtained 27 seats. For the Future of Montenegro formed a ruling coalition with Peace is Our Nation and the Black and White alliance and therefore stopping the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) to continue its 30-year lead - however this cabinet fell in February 2022.

Workers' Party (RP)

Party Leader: Maksim Vučinić

Number of seats: 1

The Workers' Party is a left-wing, but socially conservative faction founded in 2015 by its current leader's father Janko Vučinić. RP is part of the 2020 Popular Movement coalition with True Montenegro and United Montenegro. Together with the Democratic Front coalition, it formed an alliance under the name For the Future of Montenegro. All the parties combined obtained 27 seats, of which RP owns 1. For the Future of Montenegro was able to form a ruling coalition with Peace is Our Nation and the Black and White alliance and therefore stopping the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) to continue its 30-year lead.

True Montenegro (PCG)

Party Leader: Marko Milačić

Number of seats: 1

Founded in 2018 by Marko Milačić, True Montenegro (PCG) is one of the country's youngest parties. It is a right-wing faction that represents part of the Serbian minority in Montenegro. PCG is part of the 2020 Popular Movement coalition with the Workers' Party and United Montenegro. Together with the Democratic Front coalition, it formed an alliance under the name For the Future of Montenegro. All the parties combined obtained 27 seats, of which PCG owns 1. For the Future of Montenegro was able to form a ruling coalition with Peace is Our Nation and the Black and White alliance and therefore stopping the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) to continue its 30-year lead.

Albanian List: New Democratic force - Albanian Alternative (Forsca - AA)

Party Leader: Nik Gjelošhaj

Number of seats: 1

The Albanian List is an alliance for the 2020 parliamentary elections between the New Democratic Force (Forsca) and the Albanian Alternative (AA). Nik Gjelošhaj is the leader of the AA as well as the coalition.

Albanian Coalition: Democratic Party - Democratic League in Montenegro - Democratic Union of Albanians (DP - DSCG - DUA)

Party Leader: Fatmir Gjeka

Number of seats: 1

The Albanian Coalition was made up out of three parties for the 2020 parliamentary elections. These parties are the Democratic Party (DP), Democratic League in Montenegro (DSCG) and the Democratic Union of Albanians (DUA). Fatmir Gjeka is leader of the DP as well as the whole coalition. The factions together obtained 1 seat. The Albanian Coalition is part of the new minority government which commenced in April 2022.

DEMOS

Party Leader: Miodrag Lekić

Number of seats: 1

<https://www.demos.org.me>

Demos is a centre-right party that was founded in 2015 when it split from the Democratic Front. The faction ran together with Democratic Montenegro (DCG) in the Peace is Our Nations coalition in the 2020 parliamentary elections. DCG obtained 9 seats and Demos 1. Peace is Our Nation was able to form a ruling coalition with For the Future of Montenegro and the Black and White alliance and therefore stopping the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) to continue its 30-year lead.

Biographies

Milo Đukanović

President

Milo Đukanović was born on 15 February 1962 in Nikšić. He graduated from the Faculty of Economics at the University of Montenegro, Podgorica. In 1979, while still in high school, Đukanović joined the Yugoslav Communist League. By 1986 he was a presidency member of the Socialist Youth Alliance's (SSO) Montenegrin branch as well as the presidency member of its federal-level parent organisation. As a member of the party's various youth bodies he earned the nickname Britva ('Straight razor') for his direct, fiery and forceful rhetoric. Progressing steadily up the party ladder, by mid-1989 Đukanović became a member of the League's highest decision making body, the Central Committee. He became the Secretary of the Presidency of the League of Communists of Montenegro, a post he held until the parties' transformation into Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS).

In 1991 he was elected prime minister, becoming the youngest PM in Europe. On 15 January 1998 he was sworn in as President of the Republic, after winning the presidential elections. In the same year he was elected Chairman of DPS. Having led the Democratic Coalition for a European Montenegro to victory in the parliamentary election in October 2002, he was nominated PM Designate of Montenegro. On 8 January he was elected PM for his fourth term. In May 2006 he led the Block for Independent Montenegro at a referendum in which 55.5 percent voted in favour of Montenegrin independence. In the 2006 elections his Coalition for a European Montenegro (DPS and Social Democratic Party, SDP) won an absolute majority.

Although he chose to step down in late 2006, he remained president of DPS. He returned to office as PM after his coalition won the 2009 early elections with an absolute majority, securing him a sixth term in office.

In July 2003, the public prosecutor's office in Naples linked Đukanović with an organised crime network, mainly related to tobacco smuggling during the UN embargo on Yugoslavia. Đukanović denied the allegations as a "loathsome political trick", aimed at criminalising him and his country. The Italian authorities dropped all charges against him in April 2009.

In December 2010 Đukanović for the second time resigned his post as PM, saying he would still play an important role in the ruling DPS. Announcing his resignation he said "the conditions have been created for him to step down". However, he continued to lead the DPS during the 2012 parliamentary elections, securing a win for his party, and returned as a prime minister with the new cabinet

in 2012.

In 2018 he became president of Montenegro.

Zdravko Krivokapić

Former PM

Zdravko Krivokapić (2 September 1958) has been Montenegro's President since his instalment on 4 December 2020. He is a mechanical engineering professor and writer, who has close links to Montenegro's Orthodox Church. After graduation at the University of Belgrade, Krivokapić became a professor at the University of Montenegro. Throughout the years he has released many books, papers and articles on a variety of scientific topics.

He decided to enter politics during the 2019 anti-corruption protests. As the leader of the For the Future of Montenegro pre-election coalition he officially remained an independent during the 2020 elections, which his coalition won. It did not manage to gain a majority, but together with other parties they managed to form a government. He can be considered pro-European, economically liberal, culturally conservative and Christian democratic in his political views.

Draginja Vuksanovic

Former president of the Social Democratic Party

Draginja Vuksanovic is Montenegrin jurist, politician and professor of law, she currently is the president of the Social Democratic Party. She was elected as president of the Social Democratic party on 29 June 2019. In 2018 she was the first female presidential candidate in the history of the country, she came in third receiving 8,2% of the votes.

Dritan Abazović

Prime Minister

Dritan Abazović is a major figure in the currently fallen cabinet of Zdravko Krivokapić. Abazović is a long-time partner to various NGO's in civil society and human rights. His party United Reform Action, of which he is the president, considers itself a strong civic movement in Montenegrin Parliament.

He opposes the DPS, is anti-corruption and pro-EU accession. His party is currently member of the European Green Party. In January 2022, Abazović filed a vote of no-confidence to Krivokapić and his cabinet. It was supported by a majority of parliament, causing the awkward coalition that ruled out DPS to fall in February 2022.

Abazović has taken the lead in forming a minority government, which was approved by Parliament in April 2022. His URA party is joined by the SDP, SNP, BS and Albanian Coalition. The minority coalition will lead the country until early elections in spring 2023.

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