

Serbia's President Vučić resigns: a one-man show

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On 27 September, Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić resigned from office eight months before the conclusion of his second and constitutionally final term. Until a successor is elected, his responsibilities as head of state will be undertaken by parliamentary speaker Ana Brnabić, a long-standing close associate. Brnabić is also responsible for setting the date of the presidential election, which must be held within 90 days of the formal submission of Vučić's resignation to parliament, and thus no later than 27 December, the final Sunday of the year.

Vučić's resignation is aimed at enabling his return to position of prime minister following the snap parliamentary election scheduled for 25 October. By stepping down as head of state, he also seeks to avoid accusations of leveraging his office for party campaigning, despite having actively campaigned for several months. Additionally, scheduling the presidential election separately, given its tendency to generate high voter turnout, is intended to diminish opposition mobilisation in the parliamentary contest, particularly among the student movement.

Commentary

- **Vučić's resignation is designed to enhance his prospects of retaining political power.** He expects to head the government after the snap parliamentary election on 25 October. This election was prompted by sustained mass student protests, which began in November 2024 following the construction disaster in Novi Sad. After several months of delay, Vučić finally called the election on 9 September. The ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), which he founded and informally leads, subsequently nominated him as its candidate for prime minister. In an effort to avoid allegations of abusing presidential authority, Vučić resigned, having previously announced his intention to participate in the campaign 'as an ordinary citizen'. In practice, however, he had already been campaigning under the SNS banner alongside party activists for months. According to [a report by the CRTA organisation](#), between 7 May and 31 August, he attended 173 events nationwide, including 118 in August alone. He also campaigned for the SNS ahead of the previous parliamentary elections in 2020, 2022, and 2023, despite already holding the presidency.
- **The SNS's primary focus is not the presidential election but the parliamentary contest, which represents the most significant challenge to the party since it assumed power in 2012.** The ruling party's main competitor will be the Student List (SL), comprising 250 independent parliamentary candidates selected by the student protest leaders from among academics, activists, artists and athletes. However, estimating support for the

new political force is challenging due to the scarcity of reliable opinion polls. A [July CRTA poll](#) indicates that the SL could secure 45% of the vote, compared to 36% for the SNS-led coalition. Meanwhile, according to the [spring Eurobarometer survey](#), 59% of Serbians do not trust the current government, while 39% do. Vučić's camp therefore faces a substantial risk of losing power, which is likely to result in intensified efforts to mobilise its electorate through clientelist networks and an increase in [electoral irregularities observed in recent years](#).

- **Scheduling the presidential election separately is intended to undermine opposition strength in the parliamentary vote.** Combining the two elections would likely increase voter turnout and foster opposition unity, thereby elevating the risk of the SNS losing power. Vučić anticipates that, aided by various irregularities, facilitated in part by an outdated electoral register, he can secure a parliamentary victory and return to the premiership after nine years. In that scenario, even if the SNS candidate were to lose the presidential election, Vučić would control the most important centre of power as defined by the constitution and could marginalise the new president – potentially a candidate nominated by the student movement and backed by opposition parties in the second round.
- **The ruling camp lacks a prominent candidate capable of securing victory in the presidential election.** This reflects the model developed over the years, involving centralisation of power in Vučić's hands. He successively served as deputy prime minister (2012–2014), prime minister (2014–2017) and, from 2017, president. Although the Serbian president primarily serves a representative function, Vučić has effectively directed both state and party policy. He formally stepped down as party leader only in 2023. He has also dominated the coverage of media outlets affiliated with the government: according to CRTA, he made 411 public appearances in 2025 and as many as 371 in the first eight months of this year. Consequently, many government members and SNS officials remain relatively unknown to the party's voters, complicating efforts to establish a viable presidential candidate, especially given the limited time before the election. This may prompt the party to nominate the well-known, albeit controversial, Brnabić, who also served as prime minister from 2017 to 2024. Other potential candidates mentioned in the media include the current, formally non-partisan prime minister Djuro Macut and Constitutional Court President Vladan Petrov.