

Moldova: The struggles to build a post-electoral coalition

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The Constitutional Court validated the mandates of the 101 new MPs ([9 March, 2019](#)), and the attention turns toward the formation of a viable coalition. The Democratic Party was the first to rush into negotiations on a future governing coalition. Led by the controversial oligarch Vladimir Plahotniuc, the party seeks to build a common platform with the Bloc

ACUM which presents itself as the truly democratic party. But the latter rejects any kind of cooperation with the Democrats - their political enemy. Meanwhile the Socialists, with 35 MPs and highest number of seats, refrained from direct talks with the Democrats on a coalition agreement, but now instead invited ACUM to negotiations.

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At the core of the divergences between the Democrats, ACUM and the Socialists lie their respective strengths and weaknesses, and political calculus. Having monopolized the power since 2015, the Democrats feel uncomfortable with the idea of governing in a coalition of equal partners. They will also never support the real de-politicization of the law enforcement bodies, which can lead to the dismantling of their 'state capture' method of governing. As newcomer ACUM naturally benefits from more public credibility than other players. However, it finds itself in a dilemma, either to stand on its principles and retreat in the opposition, or to find a way to join into the act of governing. The Socialists for their part needs to gain power as soon as possible to counteract a further weakening of the presidency office ahead of the 2020 presidential elections.

Given the known electoral outcome², three scenarios could take shape:

1. A painful coalition between the Democrats and the Socialists. The political surviving instinct can push the Democrats to make concessions to the Socialists and create a two-headed coalition. The probability of such scenario is stronger than the idea that the Socialists could be coupled with ACUM, or that the latter could ally with the oligarch Vladimir Plahotniuc. The Democrats and the Socialists have similarities in governing style. They have also achieved important deals in the past, such as agreeing to introduce the mixed voting system. The Democrats showed signs of autocracy, while the Socialists praise Vladimir Putin's model of governing. If there were to be a coalition between the Democrats and the Socialist, then they will need to take into account the upcoming ordinary local elections, scheduled for this summer. The major preoccupations of Socialists will be to reassure both its voters and Moscow. The Democrats would inevitably have to agree a redistribution of key positions in the institutions, and marginalize the Shor Party, which is viewed by the Socialists as a dangerous intruder.

2. Prolongation of the government, taking more time to build a majority. While declaring openness to ally with either ACUM or the Socialists, the Democrats have asked the Constitutional Court³ to approve the prolongation of the incumbent government if no majority is formed in the newly elected legislative. Such a development would represent a backup plan for the Democrats to avoid early elections and gain some more time in searching for individual MPs in the camps of "ACUM" and the Socialists willing to help constitute a functional coalition. Needing to enhance its legitimacy at home and in the eyes of Western partners, the Democrats want to be seen creating a cleanest possible coalition.

² Moldovan Elections: still between State Capture vs. Russian Influence, <http://3dcftas.eu/publications/other/3-dcftas-op-ed-moldovan-elections-still-between-state-capture-vs-russian>

³ Appeal to the Constitutional Court Nr. 8 of 28 February 2019 by Sergiu Sîrbu, MP of the Democratic Party in the incumbent Parliament.

3. Early elections, with same or worse results. If the country moves toward a 'no-coalition scenario' then early elections become imminent. Both Democrats and the Socialists claim to be at ease with the idea of new elections, but not so the Bloc "ACUM". But calling people to vote again may provoke even more fatigue among the voters, and end up with and even lower than 49% turnout. Moreover, the outcome could favor the strongest – Democrats and Socialists, more than ACUM, and not change today's post-electoral balance of power.

Moldovan politics is so fragmented that a one-party government is impossible for now. Consequently, governing in coalition is something that the parties have to accept. Otherwise, the country will face another political crisis, harmful to everyone. The question is whether the Democratic Party and the Socialists can find a middle way to govern together or not, or if by surprise ACUM is going to shake hands with the pro-Putin Socialists?

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