



Weekly Briefing

**Poland political briefing:
The ruling coalition has lost its stable majority
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The ruling coalition has lost its stable majority

Summary

The ruling coalition in Poland (the United Right) has lost its parliamentary majority after the dismissal from the government of Jaroslaw Gowin - the leader of the Porozumienie party, deputy prime minister and minister of development, labor and technology. The reason for the resignation was the opposition of Jaroslaw Gowin and the majority of his party to the tax changes proposed in the laws covering the "The Polish Deal" program and the law limiting the share of foreign capital in Polish media (called Lex TVN). Currently, the government has an insecure parliamentary majority, which includes single opposition MPs, independents, and those critical of Jaroslaw Gowin in his party.

Since the beginning of August, a group of several dozen migrants from Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan have been camping on the Belarusian side of the border with Poland in Usnarz Górny. They are prevented from crossing into Poland by border guards, police and military. Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia accuse Belarus of organizing the smuggling of migrants into their territory as part of the so-called hybrid war. As a result of this situation, Polish authorities have imposed a state of emergency in a strip of land near the border with Belarus.

Introduction

In mid-August, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Development, Labor and Technology Jaroslaw Gowin was dismissed from his post by the Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, marking the formal end of the United Right coalition, which had been in place for six years, in its current formula, comprising the dominant Law and Justice party and the smaller parties, Porozumienie and Solidarna Polska. Following the Prime Minister's decision, the Alliance party (Porozumienie) withdrew from the coalition. Currently, the government coalition's majority is uncertain and relies on the support of several independent MPs, MPs of the small Kukiz 15' party and some former MPs of Jaroslaw Gowin's Porozumienie party, who support the coalition.

Resignation for criticizing the "Polish Order" and the law limiting foreign capital in the media

- Despite the fact that Deputy Prime Minister Jaroslaw Gowin signed the "The Polish Deal", his recent actions undermine actions within the United Right - justified the decision on Gowin's resignation by government spokesman Piotr Mueller. At the same time, he accused the deputy prime minister of "unreliable" commenting on the tax reform proposed under the "The Polish Deal" and the slow pace of work on new legislation under the "Polish Deal". According to former Deputy Prime Minister Jaroslaw Gowin, the proposed tax reform will involve an increased burden on "several million hard-working Poles".

Another important reason for the minister's dismissal was his opposition to a law passed in August restricting foreign capital in Polish media, called Lex TVN. Jaroslaw Gowin, along with part of his party, Porozumienie, voted against the bill indicating that its adoption would result in limiting the pluralism of the Polish media and worsening Polish-American relations.

According to many commentators, the act is directed against TVN, one of the largest television stations in Poland, owned by the American company Discovery. TVN is one of the largest U.S. investments in Poland, which is why the bill has caused huge controversy, not only in Poland where it has been accused of attempting to limit freedom of the media, but has also been heavily criticized by U.S. authorities. Currently, the bill is awaiting consideration by the Senate - the upper chamber of the Polish parliament (where the opposition has a majority) and the signature of the Polish president, who, however, has signalled that he may veto it. The future of the bill is also uncertain due to the lack of a stable majority in the Sejm to override a possible Senate objection.

Conclusion

The collapse of the United Right coalition, in its current form, will be a major problem for the government in implementing economic and social laws related to the implementation of the "Polish Deal" program, which was supposed to be the flagship project to rebuild the country's economy after the pandemic. The government will not be sure of its parliamentary majority and will have to seek support in individual votes from independent MPs and smaller opposition groups, which may weaken its efficiency and accelerate the "burnout" and erosion of the current ruling camp. Support for the ruling Law and Justice party in society, however,

remains steady at around 1/3 of voters. The passage of Lex TVN has also strained Poland's relationship with its strategic ally, the United States.

State of emergency on the border with Belarus in connection with the migration crisis

Since the beginning of August, a group of several dozen migrants from Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan have been camping on the Belarusian side of the border with Poland in Usnarz Górny, trying to get to Poland. Polish border guards, police and army prevent them from crossing. The migrants are also unable to withdraw, as troops have been deployed on the Belarusian side. Polish President Andrzej Duda, in view of the situation on the border, at the request of the government, decided on September 2 to impose a state of emergency for 30 days in areas along the border with Belarus. It's the first state of emergency in Poland since transformation in 1989.

The belt where the state of emergency will be in force will cover 183 towns and will be up to 3 km wide. The decree prohibits public gatherings and mass events there, as well as - albeit with certain exceptions - access to the zone for people who do not live or work there, which has sparked protests from NGOs, parts of the media and the opposition, accusing the government of restricting journalists' access there. A special barbed wire fence is being erected along the Polish-Belarusian border.

In connection with the decision on the state of emergency, Polish Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration Mariusz Kaminski also indicated that military maneuvers organized by the Russian army in cooperation with Belarus - the Zapad-2021 exercises - will begin near the Polish border on September 10.

Belarusian 'hybrid war'

In recent months, the number of illegal migrants from Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and other countries has increased sharply on the borders of Belarus with the European Union. Poland and all the Baltic states - Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia - accuse Belarus of organizing the smuggling of migrants into their territories as part of a so-called "hybrid war" to put pressure on the European Union because of its sanctions on the Belarusian regime. Most were sent to Lithuania, but after that country passed legislation allowing border authorities to send migrants back to Belarus, their groups redirected to the borders with Latvia and Poland.

In a joint statement, the prime ministers of Poland and the Baltic states assessed that the crisis on the borders with Belarus was planned and systematically organized by Alexander Lukashenko's regime. They also called on the Belarusian authorities to stop actions leading to an escalation of tensions. The European Commission, in turn, indicated that the situation on the Polish-Belarusian border is not a matter of migration, but of aggression against Poland. The Commission has already started preparing another package of sanctions against Belarus in connection with this deliberate provocation of the migration crisis.

In turn, according to the European Court of Human Rights, Poland should provide food, clothing, medical care and, if possible, temporary shelter to migrants camped at the border. According to the Polish opposition, the "migration crisis" is being used by those in power to play on the anti-immigrant sentiments of Polish society, while the immigrants should be helped and the crisis resolved diplomatically. According to NGOs, some migrants have health problems. Belarus, however, refused Poland permission to allow a convoy with humanitarian aid for migrants to enter its territory.

Immigrants from Belarus invade Poland

Since the beginning of August, nearly 900 illegal immigrants crossing the Polish-Belarusian border have been detained in Poland and taken to guarded centers, the Polish Border Guard announced in mid-August. Over the course of nearly a month, approximately three thousand such attempts to enter Poland were thwarted. Anna Michalska, spokeswoman for the Polish Border Guard, also said that the detained foreigners report that they entered Belarus legally, with documents, tourist visas, but most of those who reach Poland no longer have these documents. - They say that someone destroyed these documents. Everything points to the fact that they stay on the territory of Belarus and get in legally by air - Michalska said.

Conclusion

Poland, together with the Baltic countries - Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia have reacted strongly to attempts to destabilize the situation in their countries caused by the actions of the Belarusian authorities sending illegal immigrants to them. The Polish authorities are responding to the sentiments of the majority of Poles, who are reluctant to admit illegal immigrants to Poland, as shown by public opinion polls indicating an increase in support for the ruling Law and Justice party. The government's actions have been criticized by the majority of the

opposition and many NGOs, pointing to the government's failure to address the crisis, exaggerating the danger and using the public's aversion to illegal immigration to bolster its support.