



Weekly Briefing

**Montenegro political briefing:
What do the initial negotiations on the formation
of the government show?
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Summary

The government has not yet been formed, and the negotiations so far do not promise that it will be so soon. Nevertheless, initial negotiations have begun. What can be concluded is that the process of forming the government is not based on principles that are in line with the national interests of Montenegro, but rather looks like bargaining on the market. Although the potential mandate holder for the composition of the new government presented the principles for the formation of the government, such a move can only be evaluated as a populist form. One can only expect that there will be no moral principles in the entire negotiation process.

Introduction

The final election results were announced on July 14 after it was finally established that the Social Democratic Party will not have representatives in the parliament after three decades.¹, After the official announcement of the results, the initial negotiations regarding the formation of the new government were formally started. Those negotiations were conducted between the Europe Now Movement (PES) and minority parties, but also with radical pro-Serbian parties. The only thing was that there was no dialogue with the Civic Movement URA, from which the current prime minister is, and the Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS).

Principles for the formation of the government - a real platform, or a cover for immoral actions?

The Presidency of PES adopted 10 principles for the formation of the government. The principles are apparently what should be normal in a country that aspires to be a member of the EU. Thus, among the principles are those related to respect for the independence and

¹ State Election Commission, FINAL RESULTS FOR THE ELECTION OF MEMBERS IN THE ASSEMBLY OF MONTENEGRO (available at: <https://dik.co.me/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/KONACNI-REZULTATI-2023.pdf>)

sovereignty of Montenegro, respect for democracy and equal political rights of all its citizens, the fight against organized crime and corruption, support for the independence of the functioning of state institutions such as the prosecution, the judiciary, etc. In particular, the principles related to full commitment to EU integration and accelerated process of accession of Montenegro to the EU, further development of good-neighborly cooperation, affirmation of social cohesion and multinational character of Montenegro, as well as eradication of national, religious and political divisions that burden Montenegrin society are emphasized. In addition, the principles included economic ones, such as taking into account the stability of public finances, conducting personnel policy in accordance with the principles of openness, meritocracy and equal opportunities, taking into account primarily the professional qualities and personal integrity of the candidates.² Also mentioned is the phrase repeated so many times by many parties that they advocate for the constitution of a new government that will be dedicated to "improving the quality of life of the citizens of Montenegro and speeding up European integration".³ As expected, most parties that attempt to participate in future government have accepted these principles without hesitation.

Therefore, the principles laid out in this way would seem like a perfect platform for the prosperity of a country that is suffering from various political, economic and social problems. However, the problem is not in the platform and principles, but in those who brought them and those who agreed with them. The fact is that it was they who trampled on each of these principles during the previous exercise of power, even though they were rhetorically advocating for them even then. For example, the sovereignty and independence of Montenegro was called into question several times by them when the interests of the Church of Serbia were put in front of the state interests by signing the harmful Basic Agreement⁴, or when secret information was disclosed⁵, or when the rights of Montenegrins were denied through the employment of those who declared themselves differently, or belonged exclusively to one religious community⁶. There are numerous examples. Also, it is evident that during the rule of the current candidates for positions in the government, Montenegro has drastically moved away from EU

² "These are Spajić's 10 principles for forming a new government" (<https://www.cdm.me/politika/ovo-je-10-principa-spajica-za-formiranje-nove-vlade/>)

³ Ibid.

⁴ "Reactions to the Basic Agreement: Capitulation and an act of treason".

(<https://balkans.aljazeera.net/news/balkan/2022/8/3/reakcije-na-temeljni-ugovor-kapitulacija-i-akt-izdaje>)

⁵ "Montenegro: A case was established due to the release of secret information of a foreign intelligence service" (<https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/31165440.html>)

⁶ "The Church influenced staffing in the Government" (<https://www.vijesti.me/vijesti/drustvo/592070/crkva-uticala-na-kadriiranje-u-vladi>)

integration, which is confirmed by numerous reports of the European Commission. For example, the latest “EC's non-paper on rule of law” in Montenegro points out that Montenegro has lost focus on key EU reforms, especially in the area of the rule of law.⁷ This confirms that the negotiations with the EU have not only stopped completely, but a serious setback is registered, which is also agreed by representatives of NGOs.⁸ PES is negotiating with those who continuously spread religious and national hatred, especially towards members of the Islamic religion, as well as towards certain national groups and who recently belittled Montenegrin state symbols⁹ and holidays, such as Independence Day¹⁰. Also, during the period when they were ministers, the self-proclaimed experts from PES threatened the stability of public finances, especially the state health fund, due to their populist measures that require additional debt.¹¹ After the local elections in the municipalities where it exercises power, PES approached party recruitment¹² so that their rhetoric about the need for competitions during employment process was reduced to voter fraud.

Bearing all of this in mind, the proposed principles act as a mask for the introduction of radical parties in the government and as a cover for a more favourable redistribution of positions within the government. And that, not because of the interests of Montenegro. Probably, the whole process will be followed by corruption, to which Montenegrin politicians are prone, as has been shown in previous years. Hannah Arendt in her book "The Human Condition"¹³ explores the nature of power and its relationship with human activity. She discusses how the quest for power can lead individuals to disregard moral principles. Also, Erich Fromm, for example, in his book "The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness"¹⁴ delves into the darker aspects of human nature, including the pursuit of power for selfish and immoral reasons. Therefore, the current Montenegrin political scene would be good material for examining hypotheses about

⁷ “Who is to blame for the worst European report!?” (<http://crnogorskiportal.me/sadrzaj/11712>)

⁸ “Uljarević: Non-paper confirmation of regression in Montenegro's negotiations with the EU” (<https://www.cdm.me/politika/uljarevic-non-pejper-potvrda-regresije-u-pregovorima-crne-gore-sa-eu/>)

⁹ “Scandal: Marko Kovačević showed his middle finger during the singing of the Montenegrin national anthem” (<https://www.standard.co.me/politika/skandal-marko-kovacevic-tokom-intoniranja-crnogorske-himne-pokazao-srednji-prst/>)

¹⁰ “Vraneš: All municipal buildings should have the Serbian tricolor, I will stop the practice of turning Pljevlja into a circus show on May 21” (<https://www.cdm.me/politika/vranes-zahtjeva-od-direktora-lokalnih-preduzeca-i-ustanova-da-po-hitnom-postupku-istaknu-trobojke/>)

¹¹ “Ministry of Health: “Europe now” has seriously threatened the health system” (<https://gradski.me/mz-evropa-sad-ozbiljno-ugrozila-zdravstveni-sistem/>)

¹² “Disputed employment in the capital city was reported to ASK” (<https://www.standard.co.me/politika/sporna-zaposljenja-u-glavnom-gradu-prijavljena-ask-u/>)

¹³ Arendt, H. (2018). The human condition (2nd ed.). University of Chicago Press.

¹⁴ Fromm, E. (1973). The anatomy of human destructiveness. New York

the connection between the desire for political power on the one hand, and the growth of corruption and the appearance of moral hazard among politicians on the other.

The real face of "principled" politicians

Media speculations about the possible distribution of ministries will not mean that the government will be formed quickly. Those initial announcements do not include the coalition gathered around the DPS, while some media outlets are speculating about the potential participation of radical pro-Serbian parties in the government. What was clear from the beginning is that PES (whose member is likely to be a new Prime Minister) does not differ much from the extremely radical pro-Serbian parties, or those that formally present themselves as democrats, but in essence also implement policies aimed at the greatest possible political employment, corruption and which is contrary to Montenegrin national interests. This is confirmed by the negotiations of this political structure with relapses of the former Democratic Front (DF) whose parties and representatives are political branches of Serbian national interests in Montenegro and negators of the Montenegrin nation, the Montenegrin language and the Montenegrin Orthodox Church. Despite the fact that PES formally declares itself as a pro-European party, cooperation with nationalist parties whose leaders often express chauvinistic attitudes of intolerance towards other nations and confessions and spread hatred, can hardly be accepted as a representation of healthy European values that have their roots in the Enlightenment, Humanism and the Renaissance. In any case, it is difficult to expect that representatives of the Bosniak Party (BP) and pro-Serbian parties will be in the same government. PES is probably eagerly awaiting BP's refusal to participate in the government, in order to have an alibi for the introduction of extreme nationalist parties of the former DF. If this does not happen, it is possible that the pro-Serbian parties will gain power through holding positions in state enterprises and numerous other state institutions, which suits them very well.

The hypocrisy that has engulfed the political scene of Montenegro is only a reflection of the crisis of the entire society immersed in corruption at various levels. Greed for ministerial and other positions in the government exists, it seems, solely to satisfy the need for an easy life, informal and undeserved privileges that will be paid for by taxpayers.

The desire to get one's share in the government is obviously insatiable among Montenegrin politicians, and it is usually followed by insidious and behind-the-scenes actions that imply the rejection of ethical principles and the moral code. It seems that it is still too early to talk about the formation of a new government. Obviously, that government, even though it will be formed soon, will not differ much from the previous ones because it will be the result of fraud, blackmail, deception, primitivism and trade between various political parties whose common feature is an insatiable lust for power.