


THE PROCEDURE FOR ELECTING THE PRESIDENT - A STARTING POINT FOR A NEW RECONFIGURATION OF THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY

General context

Political changes and repositioning of political forces that have taken place since 2009, when the government changed the format and color and some changes have occurred in domestic political picture, determined us to make an analysis of political developments in the short and medium term. It should be noted that for two years since the Republic of Moldova (RM) is governed by parties of the Alliance for European Integration (AEI) (except for the Alliance Our Moldova (AMN) which did not pass the electoral threshold in November 2010 and which was absorbed by the Liberal-Democratic Party, part of the AEI) one noted some stabilization of the country's political spectrum. As an argument serve the results of early parliamentary elections of 28 November 2010, local elections in June 2011, but also the results of recent opinion polls, which show clearly that the Party of Communists of Republic of Moldova (PCRM) cover massively the segment of the left, the Democratic Party of Moldova (DPM) - Centre-left, Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova (LDPM) - the center-right and massively the right segment, Liberal Party (LP) - extreme right.

In terms of political theory and practice would be to note one thing: the most stable electorate is at the extreme, an ex-



ample being the Christian Democratic People's Party (CDPP) to 2005 and now LP, and the most unstable and fluctuating is at the center, such as Social-Democratic Party (SDP), AMN and DPM until 2009 and even after. Thus, if the right segment largely stabilized things - LP with its stable and loyal electorate on extreme right and LDPM holding monopoly on the right and center-right, then on the left, things yet to be precipitated. Finally, triggering the election of

Visit of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and Entire Russia in the Republic of Moldova, on 8-10 October 2011, has revived discussions in local public space about canonical jurisdiction of the Russian Orthodox Church and Moldovan-Russian ecclesiastical relations. Although the Patriarch has impressed by the depth of Christian message and avoided (as far as possible) (geo) political topics in his public interventions, the fact that he was received with military honors, and during the entire visit was accompanied by Prime Minister and Acting President of the Republic of Moldova, represents sufficient evidence for a serious debate on the relationship between the Metropolitan of Moldova and the Russian Patriarchy, in a broader context of the relationship between Church and State in contemporary Moldovan society.

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President in Parliament, the first attempt being established on 18 November 2011, will be a turning point in the political situation in the country, which will determine on a medium term a significant change of the Moldovan political spectrum and a balance of power. This restructuring, which can be called natural and logical, will occur mainly on the left political spectrum, where we find a PCRM that still dominates massively the left segment, a Democratic Party that still controls the center-left segment, which is unstable and fluctuating, the Socialist Party of Moldova (SPRM) headed by former Communist deputy Igor Dodon, whose potential is yet to be seen and few small extra parliamentary parties: PSD, United Moldova and Centrist Union. The stability of right segment now can explode, in case of some radical and reckless movements of parties there, such as LDPM and LP.

Thus, it would be indicated to analyze various options on the election of the President of the country in Parliament and possible scenarios that may follow in the event of election or non-election of the President. Therefore, these scenarios will clearly show the probable course of the political spectrum in the country and the political restructuring that may occur.

Given the evolution of political situation in the country and start of the election procedure of the country President in the current Parliament, we deduct two scenarios: *the current presidential elections in Parliament and political stability for the next three years* and *the failure of electing the President, which will cause the dissolution of Parliament and trigger current early elections*.

State's President is elected in Parliament

There are several viable and real scenarios on success of electing the President within current Parliament and several potential post-election situations.

1. **AEI (LDPM-DPM-LP) + PCRM** – Basically unanimous vote in Parliament to elect the President, whereby we have the situation: Marian Lupu or neutral and politically non-affiliated candidate proposed by the AEI will be elected as President, as a result *AEI parties remain in government and the Communist Party in opposition*. In this case we can also analyze the possibility to elect Mrs. Grecianii as President of the country.

2. **AEI (LDPM-DPM-LP) + group of Mr. Dodon** – at least 61 votes in Parliament to elect the President, whereby we have the situation: either Marian Lupu, or Zinaida Greceanii, or other neutral and politically non-affiliated candidate proposed by the AEI will be elected as President, *AEI parties remain in government and the Communist Party in opposition*.

3. **By a formula or another PCRM returns to governing (PCRM – LDPM, PCRM- LDPM-DPM or PCRM-DPM + LP)** The President is elected in Parliament, which will lead to the *change of the government*, some parties from current AEI will pass in opposition. In this case one can include the version AEI (LDPM-DPM-LP) + PCRM - unanimous vote in Parliament to elect the President, whereby we have the situation: a Communist or a neutral and politically non-affiliated President is elected proposed by PCRM, as a result obtaining wide *governance*.

Based on these scenarios one will discuss evolution of political picture in the country and possible array reconfigurations of existing political spectrum, depending on which version of those listed above will be achieved. In any case, it can be concluded that election of President in Parliament today is a Rubicon or a starting point for a new political situation in the country and will lead to a reconfiguration of the political picture on short and medium term. So, if we analyze the scenarios 1 and 2 we see that after electing the President in Parliament, parties of the Alliance will remain in power and one will establish a certain political stability in the country. Party leaders in government in one way or another will keep at least one high office position in the state and Communist Party remains in opposition for three years.

It is unlikely that Members of the Dodon group, who left the Communist Party and that, may help unlock the political crisis in the country, to participate directly in government as a distinct political unit; in this case we are speaking about the Socialist Party, and to radically reconfigure government alliance. This is true even if Zinaida Greceanii will be elected as President, because it is unlikely that she will join the Socialist Party. Thus, there is no political logic that SPRM would establish a common front with the AEI on short and medium term, if one considers the recent statements of Mr. Dodon across this alliance. Most likely they will officially be in opposition with the Communist Party and will attempt to gain political capital on the left segment.

Therefore, this will cause a political struggle on the political left chessboard. PCRM will continuously decrease, the popularity of the party and its leader Vladimir Voronin having a negative trend during this period. Meanwhile DPM will have the possi-

bility to strengthen on this segment, which will benefit from administrative resource, from the state supreme function and wider visibility as the only party of left segment in government garniture. It should be noted that currently the popularity of PCRM is still maintaining due to political instability in the country and the government dissensions, which have a negative impact on DPM in its fight against the Communist Party.

Three years of opposition for the Communist Party and a stable political situation is a huge disadvantage for this party, since it has grown and strengthened thanks to the power factor and supreme position held by its leader. In a word Communist Party can be considered a party of power and yet of a single leader. The opposition will continue to weaken their positions due to lack of state supreme position for Voronin, which diminishes its popularity. Here one may add the detachment of Igor Dodon, Zinaida Greceanii and Veronica Abramciuc from the communists, which is a blow to party's image and internal stability. It should be ascertained that today's PCRM unity was maintained by Vladimir Voronin's "iron hand" and the influence he has within the party. Lately we are already convinced that the decrease of his influence due to lack of power resource determines the division of party, withdrawals and significant political weakness. Under today's political conditions and after the events that have recently happened in the Communist Party, changing the party leader will affect the rating, which is already decreasing, and the party's image as today's Communist Party today is associated with the image of Vladimir Voronin and by inertia with the one of the President of the country. In addition, for the time being Communists have no candidate at the extent of Mr. Voronin, to prevent political decline and total break of the party.

So, based on the abovementioned facts, a Communist Party in opposition, with a politically weakened leader, will be hardly marginalized by a ruling Democratic Party, with a charismatic leader and supreme position in state¹. That is, we will witness a stabilization on the left political scene, which most likely will occur around the DPM. It is true that the activation of SPRM led by Igor Dodon will enhance the fight for supremacy on the left, but, while maintaining current AEI it is hard to believe that such a project will be able to impose itself, positioning between the ruling Democratic Party and yet rigid enough PCR. In addition, it is unlikely that potential position of Ms. Greceanii as country President will be able to electorally strengthen Mr. Dodon's party, from the following considerations: Mr. Dodon as leader and locomotive of SPRM will not have any high office position in the state and will remain in the shadows, image transfer from Mrs. Greceanii from potential position as country President to Mr. Dodon may not have intended effects², and skills, share, imposing and political ambitions of Mrs. Greceanii may not face competition on the left chessboard³. In addition, if Mrs. Greceanii would be elected as President, it is possible that along with stabilizing political situation in the country, one would adopt some constitutional amendments to reduce the powers of the President of the country.

- 1 Political experience in Moldova shows that a political party is associated with its leader. The success of a party depends on the image, influence and visibility of its leader, which represents its basic locomotive
- 2 In case Igor Dodon holds a high office position in the state with the help of President position of Mrs. Greceanii in the current government, then we cannot speak of AEI 2, which can lead to reformatting the ruling coalition
- 3 Mrs. Greceanii is recognized more as a technocrat and not as a good politician, who may participate or impose herself in certain political games and scenarios, even if we consider the President's powers she could exercise.

Finally, in case of accomLPishment of scenarios 1 and 2, one show that on the left political configuration will produce a certain restructuring of political forces in a medium term, DPM LPays a central role in this case; on the right segment situation remains unchanged - LDPM Power Center on the right segment, LP - maintaining the extreme right. Restructuring on the left is reduced to the consolidation of the Democratic party structures and widening of electoral basin toward its left segment due to government resource and to powerfully marginalize or even "swallow" PCR by massively attracting today's communist electorate. A parallel increase of SPRM and DPM is almost excluded, since both parties are positioned on the same left electoral segment. In addition, I do not imagine SPRM to govern along with DPM, LDPM and LP in the current political conditions and political structure of Parliament. Thus, DPM through its power resource, its local positions in local elections in the summer of 2011, but also political experience it has, most likely will get SPRM out of the game. Thus, most likely the big fight on the left segment will be between PCR and DPM. And, arising from the above mentioned facts, PCR absorption by DPM, or part of PCR, or a merger between DPM and PCR is very probable in the medium term, which will lead to the existence and consolidation of a strong and stable left party, as is the case of LDPM on the right side.

Analyzing Scenario 3, where by a formula or another, Communist Party returns to power, a very important thing should be noted: the return of PCR to power along with DPM automatically assumes a fierce battle for the establishment of political monopoly on segment of left and center-left. When two political forces that are on the same political segment and basically share the same elec-

torate and are in governing positions, it is logical that there will be a battle for supremacy or coagulation of a single force. Finally, we will see in the medium term either to a merger of the Communist Party and Democratic Party or to a total marginalization or swallowing of one of these parties by the other, game results being based on the strategy of each party, function and visibility of their leader and overall party influence. The existence of a third left force in the given situation is questionable, hence it is diluting in the fight between government forces.

A bracket in context: on the left segment marginalization can be produced only in the direction of left extreme, or radical, which can provide a stable and small electorate. From theoretical and practical point of view marginalization to center, in our case to the center-left, is impossible because the center-left electorate is unstable and fluctuating. The right spectrum of RM serves as an example: LDPM - the right nucleus, which has a center-right electorate and right, LP, as once has been PPCD, being pushed to the extreme right, with a relatively stable and narrow electorate. Thus, the battle between PCRМ and DPM will summarize to:

- either by fusion of these two parties, leading to domination of the center-left and left electorate,
- or by swallowing DPM by PCRМ, which will lead to domination of the Communist Party next to the left and center-left segment, as was the period 2001 – 2009,
- either PCRМ shall be pushed by DPM to the left extreme, Democratic Party influencing center-left and left segments, and the PCRМ would be limited to a radical left-wing and very narrow electorate, i.e. something like LP's case on the right segment.

If the PCRМ is in government and the

Democratic Party in opposition, it is clear that in such a formula the latter are automatically disadvantaged. Same goes for the SPRМ of Mr. Dodon. This is explained by the fact that PCRМ is a still strong party at the moment, and the number of seats in Parliament, local elections results in the summer of 2011, political experience and spirit within the party demonstrates that. Strengthening positions of PCRМ on the left will occur regardless of whether Mr. Voronin will occupy one of the supreme functions in state, since governmental resource will allow the Communists to largely absorb the Democratic electorate, which is currently fragile and unstable.

But it would be good to make a parenthesis in this context: if PCRМ comes back to governing, is more than likely that active political participation of Vladimir Voronin will continue and his political ambitions will increase and will reappear. It is naive to believe that Mr. Voronin would leave politics in case Communists will be able to return to governing, the more that PCRМ does not have any descendant of Mr. Voronin's caliber and there are some interior frictions.

Therefore, it should be noted that the fate of DPM, but also of SPRМ is basically determined on left segment, because the opposition parties will not have the opportunity and potential to reverse the PCRМ from the government. Currently DPM fails to maintain and to counterbalance the Communist Party on the left segment due to its access to governmental resource and SPRМ's growth can be ensured only through participation in governing. Loss of this resource will give Democratic electorate a viable and attractive alternative. Therefore, the left scene will be dominated by PCRМ, swallowing DPM and SPRМ being only a matter of time.

An alliance between the Communist

Party and LDPM may cause some restructuring on the right segment by compromising Liberal Democrats in regards to its voters. As arguments may serve the following: this party has appeared and acceded to power on a background of an anti-communist fight, LDPM ideology and politics is opposed to the one of PCRM, high incompatibility between the leaders of both parties make it impossible to create an effective and long lasting team. Thus, if LDPM will decide to take such a step, which is unlikely, then there is a possibility that LP would increase its electoral basin on the right segment, but also the emergence of new political force, which will lead to restructuring right-wing political segment.

In conclusion, for scenario 3 it might be noted that in the event of Communists return to power it is clearly shown that on the left only one force will dominate and will strengthen itself, whether this will occur through merger or absorption, hence on the right segment situation would be changing only in case of a coalition between Liberal Democrats and Communists.

Finally it would be indicated to point out one important thing, which is tangent to the scenarios described above. It is about neutral or politically non-affiliated candidate for President of RM. Under current political conditions a politically non-affiliated and neutral candidate for the Presidency or the exercise of President powers in a neutral and unbiased manner is practically unreal and impossible. Political circumstances in the country, the political realities here, custom, rules and political culture will not allow it. That is why even if a politically non-affiliated and neutral declared President shall be elected, that person still will make someone's political game, which will resume to one of the scenarios previously described.

Triggering early elections after failing to elect the President

Failure to elect a president in the current Parliament will determine interim president to dissolve the legislative body and trigger early elections. Given the political situation in the country, polls and political trends of today, we see that post early elections scenarios are limited to those described above. That is:

1. LDPM, DPM and LP together obtain at least 61 seats in Parliament, republish the Alliance for European Integration and leave the Communist Party in opposition. Thus we get scenarios 1 or 2, whereby the political left will consolidate around DPM, and LP and LDPM would largely maintain positions on the right segment.

2. In the Parliament accede the same four parties - PCRM, LDPM, DPM and LP - but none of the parties, i.e. AEI on the one hand and PCRM on the other hand, do not get enough votes to elect the President. Under such conditions we obtain Scenario 3, even though PCRM obtains a simple majority in Parliament, insufficient to elect the President.

3. Parliament is entered by more parties than at there are for the moment. By making some calculations, it can be admitted that the Parliament will be entered by a left segment party (SPRM led by Igor Dodon) and one of right segment (Democratic Action Party led by Mihai Godea). In any case, if one of the two parties will get into Parliament, or even both of them, this will disperse either political right or political left, or both segments. However this will be short-term dispersal. On medium and long term political left and right will stabilize and will be dominated by one of

the parliamentary political forces, based on the governmental formula to be created and the situation will reduce to one of the three scenarios above. A precedent to this effect was observed both on the left and right segments:

1. on the right LDPM, AMN and LP: AMN being absorbed by LDPM and LP pushed to the right extreme by the same LDPM. Thus the rough core of the right segment is now represented by LDPM, LP playing a secondary role.

2. on the left PCRM, DPM and SDP: SDP being absorbed by DPM and PCRM pushed a little to the left extreme by DPM. At the moment, there is a fierce battle between the Communist Party and Democratic Party for primacy on the left segment.

Thus, in case an additional actor occurs on the right or left, this will lead either to its absorption (case of Movement of European Action, National-Liberal Party or United Moldova), either it will replace the another existing political force (Case of LP vs. CDDP or LDPM vs. AMN).

Instead of conclusions

From the analysis above, we see that in case of electing the President of RM in Parliament or failure to elect him/her and triggering early elections, it does not change the problem and the situation is further reduced to the same scenarios. That is, a reconfiguration of the political spectrum is imminent; especially this will be produced on the left segment, which is dispersed and unstable at the moment. Therefore, early elections will be only about a process, whereby the balance of power can be changed and we may witness a new reconfiguration of power. However, early elections will not hinder the restructuring of Moldovan political spectrum, especially the left segment, where there is a natural and

logical battle between the PCRM and DPM and newly SPRM for domination.

With regard to the need for early elections for the country versus collaboration relation between the RM and the EU, it should be noted that this procedure is undesirable, which may simply extend and bring political instability and political disservice to the credibility of our state towards external partners. European officials statements serve as an argument in this context, which prevents that eventual early elections will delay the adoption and implementation of reforms, an action composing commitments undertaken by Moldova. In addition, the mood of the Moldovan society in regards to the onset of new elections should alarm and warn the political class.

Finally it should be pointed out that evolution of Moldova-EU bilateral relations will depend on the seriousness and responsibility of the political class in the country, and on the formula of an eventually reconfigured government. It's hard to imagine the same willingness and openness from Brussels to Chisinau in case PCRM returns to governing in its current form and with the current political attitude on the integration course of Moldova. Since as mentioned in the above scenarios, there is a high probability that the unreformed and outdated Communist Party returned to power by one formula or another, to succeed to aggressively impose itself on political left and to dictate the country's political course. This will automatically have negative effects on RM-EU relationship. In this context, a very important subject should be noted: the EU faces major internal problems, which determines leaders in Brussels to focus more on how to address them. In addition, there are some challenges in the Mediterranean vicinity, which could redirect the look of Brussels from East to South.



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