

The spectre of more early elections in Moldova

Witold Rodkiewicz

On 20 September, Moldova's Constitutional Court rejected the possibility of changing the constitution's procedures for electing the president of the country by law, and thus prevented the ruling Alliance for European Integration (AIE) from escaping the constitutional and political impasse without coming to an agreement with the opposition Communist Party (PCRM). The coalition's MPs had proposed to adopt a law reducing the statutorily required majority for parliament to elect the president from a qualified majority (three-fifths of all deputies) to an absolute majority (50% + 1 vote), thus avoiding another dissolution of parliament because of its inability to choose a president. The AIE coalition has 58 seats in parliament, while the election of the president requires 61 votes.

Commentary

- The chances for a compromise under which the AIE and PCRM could agree on a common candidate for president are small. The PCRM has even refused to hold talks with the AIE coalition, agreeing only to individual consultations with the parties which make up the AIE. They also put forward their own candidate for the job: the former Prime Minister Zinaida Greceanu, who although not formally a PCRM member is loyal to its party leader, the former President Vladimir Voronin. It seems that PCRM wants rapid early elections, as it hopes to obtain a better result than the parties of the AIE.
- It is also unlikely that the AIE will devise a common strategy which would allow the impasse to be broken, for example by changing how the President is elected by putting a new constitution to a referendum. This is because there are strong conflicts between the coalition partners, especially between the Prime Minister Vlad Filat (head of the Liberal Democratic Party, the strongest in the AIE), who himself has presidential ambitions; the chairman of the Democratic Party and the coalition's official candidate for president, Marian Lupu; and the DP's vice-chairman and deputy speaker Vladimir Plahotniuk. In addition to their rivalry for the presidency, their conflicting economic interests serve as a background to these conflicts.
- Despite these conflicts within the AIE, the scenario of an agreement between Filat (PLDM) and Voronin (PCRM) is also unlikely. A PLDM-PCRM coalition would have a sufficient number of votes not only to elect the president, but to change the constitution. However, such an agreement is blocked by both a lack of mutual trust between the two

politicians, and their concerns about how their voters will react.

- In this situation, it is expected that no compromise for choosing the president will be achieved, and more early parliamentary elections will likely be held next spring.