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Kosovo: coalition talks in deadlock

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On 21 August, the Constitutional Court of Kosovo annulled the election of Isa Mustafa, the leader of the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), to the post of parliamentary speaker. He was elected on 17 July; most of the votes were cast by the so-called "LAN coalition" (LDK – AAK – NISMA). The motion to the court was brought by the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) led by the present prime minister, Hashim Thaci. PDK won the parliamentary election in June and has 37 out of the 120 seats in parliament, but it has not been able to gain sufficient support for its candidate for this position. In PDK's opinion, pursuant to the constitution of Kosovo, only a coalition formed before an election which gained the greatest support in the election can designate a candidate for parliamentary speaker. The Constitutional Court granted PDK's motion.

Commentary

- The court's decision will not resolve the deadlock in the process of forming a new government in Kosovo, which has been ongoing for three months already. All parliamentary groupings, except those representing the national minorities, have ruled out the possibility of backing PDK's candidate for speaker of parliament. In turn, PDK is not ready to make concessions and hopes that taking over single MPs will allow it to push through its candidates for parliamentary speaker and prime minister. However, PDK's confrontational moves have had the opposite effect to that desired and have resulted in consolidation among its political opponents.
- The deadlock in coalition talks has above all been brought about by personal conflicts and by Prime Minister Thaci's desire to remain in power at any price. With the exception of Vetevendosje (Self-determination) party, all groupings support the Euro-Atlantic integration of Kosovo and market reforms. However, both AKR and NISMA were formed by former PDK members who are in conflict with Thaci. Even if a government coalition is formed under international pressure it will be unstable. A snap election, which is becoming an increasingly likely scenario, will not bring a solution, either, since the distribution of the seats will not change significantly.
- The lack of a new government is having a detrimental effect on the process of consolidating the young statehood in Kosovo. The parliamentary election caused a suspension of the process of normalising relations with Serbia and the integration of the Serb minority, and also saw a number of controversial decisions being put off. Serbia and Kosovo struck a deal in spring 2013 setting conditions for the four Serb communes in the

north of the country which had boycotted the government in Pristina to be incorporated into the Kosovar institutional system. However, it cannot be concluded that the process of integrating the Serb minority has been completed. Furthermore, the continuing suspension of Kosovo-Serbia talks may cause the successes achieved thus far in this area to be wasted. The formation of the army of Kosovo has been opposed by Serbia and the Serb minority and it will be accompanied by controversies, as will the establishment of a special international court to judge the crimes committed in Kosovo since the end of the conflict in June 1999. Although it is essential for the process of reconciliation in the region that those who committed the crimes be held accountable (for example militants from the Kosovo Liberation Army), this may involve the prosecution of senior officials and it is giving rise to numerous controversies among the public.