Analyses OSW

CENTRE FOR EASTERN STUDIES 4.03.2020 www.osw.waw.pl

Slovenia: Janša elected Prime Minister for the third time

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On 3 March the Slovenian parliament appointed Janez Janša prime minister. Janša is the leader of the opposition centre-right Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS). The SDS will form a coalition government with another opposition party, the Christian Democratic New Slovenia (NSi) and two parties which co-created the minority centre-left government of Marjan Šarec in 2018: the Modern Centre Party (SMC) and the Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (DeSUS). This will be Janša's third term as prime minister, the previous terms being in 2004-2008 and 2012-2013. The change in power is due to the resignation of the Šarec government (on 27 January) following disputes about political and socio-economic reforms (mainly changes in the healthcare funding system) within the then coalition.

Commentary

- Janša has returned to the office of prime minister following seven years of isolation on the political scene and the rule of the coalition of left-wing and liberal parties. In the 2014 and 2018 parliamentary elections the SDS garnered the largest share of the vote but it was the Slovenian centre-left which formed the coalition governments. The shift in power has come as a consequence of Prime Minister Šarec's failed gamble as he chose for the government to resign in order to trigger a snap election and to win more support for his party. However, faced with unfavourable results of opinion polls, SMC and DeSUS politicians decided to establish a coalition with the party led by Janša.
- The main unifying force for the new coalition will be its desire to maintain power until the next parliamentary election scheduled for 2022. The coalition agreement indicates that the Janša government will focus on limited changes in the taxation system and healthcare funding; it will also seek to improve the functioning of the public administration and the judicial system. The proposal to reinstate the draft (the armed forces have been beset with personnel problems for several years) is the most controversial issue on the government's agenda; it may be met with social resistance which may be fuelled by the centre-left parties that have been pushed from power. The harsh anti-left rhetoric which Janša uses against a large section of the Slovenian elite (which are considered to be an emanation of the post-communist 'deep state') may be another source of tension.
- In foreign policy, course correction seems to be the most likely scenario. This is mainly due to the fact that Janša is one of the regional allies of Viktor Orban, the Hungarian prime minister. Both politicians share not only ideological similarities but also financial

ties – business people linked to Fidesz support the media base of the SDS. It should be expected that Slovenia, under the rule of Janša, will be Hungary's ally on the EU forum. Janša (whose party is part of the European People's Party) has spoken out unequivocally against the exclusion of Fidesz from the EPP. The new Slovenian government, unlike the previous one, will distance itself from the criticisms levelled against Budapest for infringing the rule of law. The new government will certainly opt for maximum limitations on migration and the more effective protection of EU borders. In these aspects, the Slovenian government may be inclined to strengthen co-operation with other Central European countries; Janša prefers this type of collaboration. In security policy, he is interested in Slovenia being more active within NATO and having closer ties with the US.