

Moldovan Symbiosis. What Is Behind the Coalition of Socialists and Democrats?

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The seemingly unnatural alliance of ideological opponents, socialists and democrats, has very specific goals

Zoologists have long known about the phenomenon of symbiotic relationships in the animal world. For example, clownfish coexist well with sea anemones, which are poisonous to other fish. This mutually beneficial coexistence is called symbiosis. The reason for symbiosis is pretty simple: it usually increases the chances of cooperating organisms' surviving.

Such relations are common among people, including in the political sphere. One of the most striking examples of political symbiosis can be observed in Moldova as an unspoken union of the Party of Socialists and the Democratic Party. Despite that it seems illogical at first glance: this partnership has combined poles apart political forces. The socialists had previously actively advocated rapprochement with Russia, the rejection of Moldova's Association with the EU and NATO membership, the protection of the Russian language, etc. So the PSRM finally came to power on the wave of pro-Russian slogans and largely thanks to Russia's support. Democrats have consistently advocated pro-European reforms in Moldova, European integration and strengthening cooperation with the North Atlantic Alliance, even if they often do not match words with deeds.

But in fact, this union, despite the different political vectors of the parties, became logical and even, one might say, inevitable. The reason is simple – it is a great desire

to remain on the political Olympus.

After the ruling coalition of the Party of Socialists and the ACUM bloc was established in June 2019, Moldovan oligarch Vlad Plahotniuc, who ran the Democratic Party, hastily left the country. Moldova experienced redistribution of power and an active struggle with the Plahotniuc's legacy, and the influence and authority of the Democratic Party were badly damaged. The Democratic Party as a political force was at stake. But in November 2019, democrats got a chance for revenge, which they did not fail to take advantage of. The shaky coalition of socialists and the ACUM bloc, maintained by Russia and the West, still fell apart. Thus, the socialists turned to the PDM for help to form 'their' government. As a result, the support from their seemingly ideological opponent enabled the socialists to form the so-called 'technocratic' government of Moldova.

Undoubtedly, the democrats have secured their position. They not only remained in power, but also received certain levers of government, and, importantly, guarantees of their security. The socialists agreed to this union, wanting to get all the power. In the end they won the battle, but strategically run the risk of losing a 'war' for power. Now the PSRM and Dodon personally will bear full responsibility for the socio-economic situation in the country. At the same time, there are no real opportunities to improve the situation in the near future.

And the problems are just piling up. Presidential elections will be held in autumn 2020. To win the election and retain power, Dodon and the socialists will need to show convincing results. Promises to raise pensions and increase benefits for medical workers have already been made. But significant changes require impressive financing, which is not yet available. Therefore, the new Prime Minister Ion Chicu immediately went on a foreign tour, where he raises the issue of granting loans to Moldova for the implementation of

infrastructure projects.

Both Russia and the West are reserved about the Moldovan voyages. Moreover, the same European Union imposes clear conditions on the new government. The EU Ambassador to Moldova Peter Michalko said that financial assistance to Moldova is possible only if the democratic reforms initiated by the Sandu government continue. "Our assistance will continue only in case of positive results," said Michalko. In fact, the Moldovan government is on a short financial leash. This is well understood by both Chicu and Dodon. Therefore, at meetings with Western ambassadors and representatives of international organizations, they assure Chisinau's foreign partners that all reforms will be continued. Both the President and the Prime Minister say that relations with the European Union and the implementation of the Association Agreement with the EU remain top priorities. Dodon also speaks in favor of continuing cooperation with the International Monetary Fund, and his Ministers advocate for the preservation of the current cooperation with NATO. Dodon still prefers not to remember his former rhetoric.

The risks for the socialists will only increase over time. Even fulfilling the conditions of the EU, IMF and other Western organizations, the left-wingers are unlikely to be able to improve totally the situation in the country in the next year. As a result, they may not only fail to score points among pro-European citizens, but also lose the support of the pro-Russian voters.

What about the Democratic Party? It is likely to take a wait-and-see attitude, watching for when the socialists' popularity will inevitably go down. This is likely to be followed by the formation of a coalition with other, more promising political forces in Moldova. The socialists, who believe that they have handled professionally the resource of the democrats, in fact, can be used by their current 'partners'. For now, however, the cooperation between the PDM and the PSRM will continue – but

only as long both sides are interested. As they say, nothing personal, just business.