

Politico-administrative relations in times of great coalition

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Abstract: Politico-administrative relation in Romania, in the last thirty year were a peculiar and complicated issue. A first period characterized by "the village model" (Peters, 1995) lasted until 1996. The second and third tiers of communist party structures migrated either in public administration or in ranks of the newly created party: The National Salvation Front and its successors. Having the same background and values competition between politicians and bureaucrats was not an issue.

In 1996 a new right-wing coalition came to power and started a number of reforms, including at the level of public administration. It is difficult to estimate now the amplitude of those reforms (there are no studies available). But the main left-wing party (from that moment labeled SDP – Social Democrat Party) regained the power in 2000 and claimed that it has to reestablish the professionalism in public administration, removing the political appointees of the former coalition. Thus started a pattern of politico-administrative relations that is characteristic for Romania ever since: the party in opposition is claiming the necessity of de-politicization, but once in power is starting massive changes in the ranks of public administration pretending that is only replacing the political appointees of the former government party or coalition. After each change in political power an important turnover took place at the level of professional administration, mainly at middle management level.

Obviously, this practice created severe prejudices to Romanian public administration affecting professionalism and neutrality of public administration and also the continuity of administrative processes.

In December 2021 a new Government was installed with the support of a great coalition consisted of two major parties represented in the parliament (the Social Democratic Party and the National Liberal Party) and the Democratic Union of the Hungarian Minority Party. The new coalition has 66% support in the parliament. The Prime Minister is from the National Liberal Party, but according to a peculiar deal between the two major parties of the coalition, in 2023 a rotation will take place and the Social Democratic Party will provide the Prime Minister. Possible changes will take place regarding the political control over ministries. According to the leaders of the two parties, it is very likely that the same great coalition will govern Romania after the next elections.

The opposition is reduced at only 34%, but what is more important, the two parties that are composing the opposition are reluctant to cooperate. Also, the possibility that one or the other of the opposition party will be part of the government in the future is reduced.

Thus, Romania has the prospect of a certain degree of political stability for a period of seven years and as a consequence, less radical political changes than in previous years.

The aim of the paper is to investigate the impact of the prospective new political conditions on the politicization of the civil service. Will the changes in the ranks of bureaucracy, based on political influence, have the same amplitude in the new conditions created by the "great coalition"? Or, in other words, how political influence is and will be shared in this coalition?

The methodology will consist in press analysis and interviews with relevant stakeholders.