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Re: Brief – Romanian Politics

TRAIAN BASESCU PRECIPITATES A NEW CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS

The President has lately become the main political agent of the ARD, the political alliance that brings together his party and a large number of his political supporters. Given the electoral estimates that suggest a landslide victory for the USL and the relative difficulty of the ARD standard bearers, the PDL leader Vasile Blaga and Civic Force president and former PM, Mihai Răzvan Ungureanu, to push their messages, the President took a step forward and **became the main critic of the USL amidst an apparently silent and ineffective ARD campaign.**

His statements point out clearly that he does not intend to observe the results of the upcoming December elections and that **he will not nominate a Prime Minister from the political alliance that stands to decisively win the elections,** i.e. the USL. The President explicitly argued that he does not want to nominate for the position of Prime Minister a politician that was involved in his suspension and that a future cohabitation with Victor Ponta is not possible.

The statements were made even though the Romanian Constitution forbids the President to play any role in the nomination of the Prime Minister if a political alliance gains more than 50% of the parliamentary seats, and thereby has the right to independently form the new government. The President **has insisted in the past that the USL is not a political actor,** but an alliance of two parties and that, consequently, even if the USL is to gain more than 50% of the parliamentary seats, the stipulations of the Constitution do not apply after the December 9 general elections.

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Traian Basescu added that he cannot nominate Victor Ponta for the position of Prime Minister. According to the president's latest statements, Victor Ponta is morally unfit to remain Prime Minister. Victor Ponta, as far as Traian Basescu is concerned, no longer enjoys the confidence of the President and nominating him comes against Romania's national interests. It is important to notice that "Romania's national interest" is once again invoked in order to further the President's interests and to legitimize his claims.

Traian Basescu declared: *"I don't know if you realize what a president feels when he is asked to nominate once again for the position of Prime Minister a man who wholeheartedly took part in his suspension... Contempt. Contempt. A man who is (not) a machine without soul, without feelings, without anything, is asked to have the high aspirations of a statesman and nominate for the position of Prime Minister a man who has already suspended him once (...) I have grown old myself, I am no longer 54 years old, I am already 62 and I will manage to find a solution that will prevalently start from maintaining the country's present course. I don't want immature politicians to step in and destroy this construction; I would then consider my two terms, these 8 years of labor as uselessly spent. (...) **Whoever believes that a buffoon barking daily on national television can be nominated as simple as that... is simply wrong.**"*

In addition to making it clear that he will not be interested in the result of the elections when he will nominate the next PM, in spite of the foreseeable USL super-majority, the President went on to use inadequately harsh terms when referring to Victor Ponta, the prime minister's person being subjected to a steady flow of vitriolic comments. Libelous terms such as "pig", "compulsive liar", "stupid", "ill" or "pussy-cat" alongside other demeaning statements were made in direct connection to the Prime Minister.

THE USL DOMINATES THE ROMANIAN POLITICAL SCENE

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The latest CSCI public opinion poll, concluded on November 22 places the USL at the forefront of the electoral competition. The USL is the political force the Romanians trust the most (41% of the respondents have confidence in the USL), whereas only 16% of the respondents have confidence in the ARD. In line with all the other public opinion polls conducted insofar, **the USL is poised to win the elections**. 61% of the prospective voters declare they will vote for the USL candidates in the December 9 general elections, whereas only 19% of the respondents declared their intentions to vote for the ARD candidates. Moreover, Prime Minister Victor Ponta remains the politician with the highest trust-ratings, behind Bucharest Mayor Sorin Oprescu. Victor Ponta is held in a favorable view by 43% of the Romanians. By comparison, only 22% of the respondents have confidence in former PM Mihai Mihai Răzvan Ungureanu, only 18% of the Romanians have confidence in PDL president Vasile Blaga. Only 22% of the respondents trust President Traian Basescu.