



NATO Foundation
Defense College

Balkans November 2016

An external interference in 2016 Montenegrin Election?

In February 1991 Milo Đukanović became Prime Minister of Montenegro for the first time and since that moment, despite his many announces of retirement, he has ruled the country until these days. 2016 Montenegrin Parliamentary election were held on 16th October and were considered as a turning point for the history of the country. After the evolutions of the negotiations for joining NATO and the confirmation of the purpose of joining European Union, Prime Minister Đukanović himself presented the vote as a choice between the West or becoming a "Russian colony".

The elections confirmed the support of the citizens for Đukanović and his Democratic Party of Socialists of Montenegro, even though a coalition will be necessary to obtain the majority in the Parliament. But most importantly, on the election day a group of 20 Serbian and Montenegrin citizens were arrested and accused of preparing a Coup d'Etat against the legitimate government. The prosecutor accused the group of planning the entrance in Montenegro of about 500 people with the aim of causing violence in the country on the election night, and of preparing an assassination attempt on Đukanović. The democratic opposition parties immediately declared that the capture of the group of the presumed terrorists was a hoax staged by the government with the only purpose of influence the outcome of the elections.

With regards to the arrests, Prime Minister Đukanović stated that "We have the strong involvement of foreign factors when it comes to the process of Montenegro's parliamentary elections", referring to the possibility that a pro-Russian group, active in Serbia with the support of Moscow, plotted the coup. This theory seems confirmed by the fact that Serbian police had seized uniforms and 125.000 Euros while investigating on the fact as well as by the arrest among the members of the group of the former head of Serbian Gendarmery Bratislav Dikić.

Even though there is no clear evidence of any official Russian involvement in the attempted until now, it is clear that the international positioning of Montenegro is a fundamental issue for the future stability of western Balkans. The process of accession of Montenegro to NATO is one of the battleground where Russian and western influence towards Balkans will be measured.

Valerio Cartocci