



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on October 4, 2023

Slovakia's Robert Fico Wins Elections, Says Party Will Not Back Further Military Aid for Ukraine

The Slovak Social Democracy (SMER-SD) party will not back more military aid for Ukraine, its leader, Robert Fico, told journalists on October 1 after his party won last weekend's parliamentary elections and is preparing to form a new government.

"Slovakia and the people of Slovakia have bigger problems than Ukraine," Fico said at a press conference after the declaration of the election results. The SMER-SD obtained around 23 percent of the vote, or 42 seats in the 150-seat national parliament, with its closest competitor, Progressive Slovakia (PS), receiving some 18 percent.



AP Images
Robert Fico

The election results imply that Fico has to form a coalition to gain a majority, with the most likely contenders being social democratic Hlas (27 seats) and the conservative-nationalist Slovak National Party (10 seats).

Peter Pellegrini, leader of Hlas — which departed from Fico's party three years ago — may join Fico in a coalition if the government does not pivot away significantly from Slovakia's EU and NATO commitments. Besides, Fico could also give Pellegrini a chance to run for the Slovak presidency next year with his party's support, according to what Slovak analyst Milan Nič [told](#) the *Financial Times* following current Slovak president Zuzana Čaputová's June 2023 announcement that she would not seek reelection.

Fico may have to give in to some of Pellegrini's demands, as Hlas could choose to ally with second-place Progressive Slovakia, a liberal, pro-LGBT rights and much more Western-aligned party, which received 132 seats in the parliament. This scenario would necessitate the involvement of two other parties for a working, but unstable majority: the Christian Democratic Movement (12 seats) and liberal-conservative Freedom and Solidarity (11 seats).

When questioned about his party's stance on aiding Kyiv, Fico replied that if his party successfully forms a government, it would still be ready to help, but solely in a humanitarian way. "We are prepared to help with the reconstruction of the state, but you know our opinion on arming Ukraine," he declared.

Fico also maintained that Slovakia's foreign-policy orientation would remain unchanged, but that it was necessary for Slovakia to have good ties with the Visegrád Group of Central European countries.

The SMER-SD staged an election campaign under the slogan "Not a single round," indicating that it would cease military aid to Ukraine. Fico's election platform decried EU and American interference in Slovakia's domestic affairs, their handling of the EU's worsening migration crisis, Western embargoes against Russia, and arms supplies to Ukraine. Many observers already noted that Fico's pledge of a more competent government compared to the last three-and-a-half years of economic mismanagement might have persuaded many voters to choose Fico and his party.



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A country with a population of around 5.5 million, Slovakia has already provided Ukrainian forces with armored personnel carriers, howitzers, and its complete fleet of Soviet-era MiG-29 fighter aircraft.

Previously, Fico pledged at one of his campaign rallies that his party would not “send a single round [of ammunition] to Ukraine” if it emerged victorious in the election. Fico, who is a former prime minister, portrayed the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian conflict as a great tragedy, adding that prolonging the fighting would only exacerbate things.

“We will do everything we can to start peace negotiations as quickly as possible,” he said. “Further killing does not benefit anyone,” Fico continued.

With no party set to win a majority, Slovakia will have to form a coalition government. The pro-European HLAS (Voice) party, which took third place with 14.7 percent, did not exclude a possible cooperation with SMER-SD.

A victory by Fico and his party has reportedly sparked concerns among war advocates in the US. Based on Russian foreign intelligence, Washington had tried to retain the power of the erstwhile Slovakian government.

On October 2, the current Slovak president Čaputová gave Fico a political mandate to start negotiations to form a new government. With Fico likely forming Slovakia’s new government, Slovakia would pivot more towards the social conservative politics of Hungary and Poland. Unsurprisingly, Fico’s victory has raised eyebrows among war advocates in Washington. Also, French liberal Member of the European Parliament Valérie Hayer [spoke](#) of a “dark day for Ukraine and Western unity”, and Dutch liberal MEP Sophie in ‘t Veld sarcastically [tweeted](#) that Russian President Putin “will have two seats” at the EU leaders’ table, alluding to Fico and Prime Minister of Hungary, Viktor Orbán.

Leader of the Czech Republic’s much more pro-EU government, Petr Fiala [gave](#) a more muted statement, saying he hopes to “continue to work closely together at government level for the benefit of both our countries.”

In contrast, Orbán was one of the first European leaders to congratulate Fico on his triumph, tweeting that it is “always good to work together with a patriot”.

Ukrainian Foreign Affairs Minister Dmytro Kuleba [declared](#) that Kyiv respects the wishes of Slovakian voters, and it would be premature to make conclusions according to election results alone. The English-language Ukrainian website The Kyiv Independent, nonetheless, condemned Fico for reinforcing Russian propaganda when he [told](#) a crowd of supporters in late August that the conflict in Ukraine began “when the Ukrainian Nazis and fascists started to murder Russian citizens in Donbas and Luhansk.”

Hungarian-language Slovakian news website Ma7 [cited](#) the Russian *Pravda* newspaper, which thought that Fico was “totally loyal to Moscow.” Furthermore, Russian analyst Vadim Trukhachev, opined that Fico’s win was good news for Moscow, as he believed that a majority of Slovakian parties were either Russophile, relatively loyal to Russia, or neutral.

Born into a working-class family on 15 September 1964, Fico — a lawyer by profession — started his political career with the Communist party right before the 1989 Velvet Revolution that caused the disintegration of former Czechoslovakia.

Fico was Slovakia’s representative to the European Court of Human Rights from 1994 to 2000 and established his Smer-SD party in 1999 after being rejected for a ministerial post by the Democratic Left,



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the Communists' political heirs.



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