

# Fascist candidate wins first round of Romanian presidential election

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Fascist candidate George Simion won the first round of the Romanian presidential election, with more than 40 percent of the vote. In the May 18 runoff, he will face Bucharest major Nicusor Dan, who ran as an independent candidate.

The result was a massive rejection of the PSD-PNL-UDMR (Social Democrats, National Liberal and the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania) coalition government and the policies it has pursued since coming to power in 2021. Its candidate came in third place—despite the mobilization of the important electoral party machines of the three parties, who together control almost all the local authorities in the country.

The 38-year-old Simion leads the fascist AUR party, a continuator of the Iron Guard, a Nazi collaborationist organization in the Second World War. He is closely aligned to fascist Italian Prime Minister Georgia Meloni, as well as the far-right Polish PiS. A supporter of US President Donald Trump, Simion's campaign included a US tour designed to win sections of the Republican Party for his candidacy, and away from the other Trump-aligned candidate, former social democrat Victor Ponta. Ponta received 13 percent of the vote.

Simion's party sits at the centre of a network of neo-Nazi and paramilitary groups, whose parliamentarians do not shy away from Holocaust denial and glorifying Nazi mass murderers. It also maintains a relationship with Israel's Likud party.

The elections are unfolding amid an intense crisis of Romania's political establishment, driven by the Trump administration's global trade war as well as the growing inter-imperialist rivalry between the United States and the major European powers. In the course of the crisis, Romanian authorities have repeatedly trampled on basic democratic rights, including the right to vote.

The election is the result of the Constitutional Court's annulment of the December presidential election, after the first-round victory of Calin Georgescu, a far-right candidate who had expressed misgivings about NATO's war with Russia in Ukraine. The annulment of the December election

was one of a series of undemocratic actions by Romanian authorities, including barring Georgescu from running in the election re-run.

The pretext for the extraordinary measures taken against Georgescu was unsubstantiated allegations that a "Russian cyber-war" was supposedly waged in favor of his campaign. Not only has no evidence been presented to substantiate this, but Georgescu's campaign has since been found to have been partly bankrolled by the National Liberal party, a member of the ruling coalition.

Bitter conflicts are erupting within the Romanian ruling elite. These stem from its anxieties over the debacle in Ukraine, in which Romania has been heavily invested as a junior partner of the imperialist powers, and over whether the emerging geopolitical landscape will be favorable to the pursuit of its predatory regional interests.

Romania's ruling elite has exploited its geographical position to become an important supplier and transit hub for the NATO war against Russia. After the 2014 Maidan coup, former Romanian President Klaus Iohannis, who was forced to resign amid the current crisis, and Polish President Andrzej Duda developed a close collaboration directed against Russia, under the Bucharest 9 format and the Three Seas Initiative. Both countries embarked on massive rearmament campaigns.

Romania's Black Sea shoreline has become a key dock for NATO ships and spy planes. The Kogalniceanu airbase is set to be upgraded and become the largest US base in Europe.

Romanian "volunteers" are fighting on the Ukrainian front lines, with the so-called "battle group Getica" featured prominently in Romanian media and funding campaigns. The group joined other far-right brigades in incursions into Russian territory, including during Ukraine's partial occupation of Russia's Kursk region.

Romania has recently adopted legislation allowing for the shooting down of Russian aircraft entering its airspace, in an intensification of tensions over the Danube ports, a vital transit area for Ukrainian grain exports. The Romanian government has been instrumental in assuring the flow of

Ukrainian grains towards its Black Sea ports, also negotiating with Moldova and Transnistria (PMR).

In the wake of the geopolitical upheaval produced by the Trump administration, tensions inside the Romanian ruling elite have sharpened, and various factions of the ruling class—including within the ruling Government Coalition—have been engaged in open contacts with the imperialist powers.

While Interim President Bolojan has worked with French President Emmanuel Macron and has pledged Romania to the EU “Coalition of the willing” for continuing the war in Ukraine, PSD Prime Minister Ciolacu created a public scandal by appointing his own “emissaries” to Trump’s personal residence at Mar-a-Lago.

Chief among the concerns of the Romanian ruling class is its historical ambition to exert influence over the territories in its eastern vicinity, especially the Republic of Moldova. Frontrunner Simion’s career is tied to efforts by sections of the Romanian bourgeoisie to take over this former Soviet Republic.

As founder and coordinator of so-called “unionist” movements, Simion helped organize numerous provocations, protests and marches calling for the “union” of Moldova and Romania. This earned him several entry bans in Moldova, the last one still ongoing until 2028.

Simion’s activities in Moldova paralleled those of former president Basescu (in office 2004-2014) and his PMP party. During Basescu’s tenure, Romanian authorities used the country’s EU membership and the prospect of working within the EU, to offer Romanian citizenship to impoverished Moldovan workers. Basescu remains an influential political operative today, and has supported Nicusor Dan’s candidacy.

It is in fact his desire for a diminished role of the EU that is the most often cited criticism of the fascist Simion from part of the establishment parties and media. This is seen as potentially weakening Romania’s regional standing, which has benefited greatly from EU support.

Through the Moldovan Partnership Platform, European imperialist powers—particularly France and Germany—along with Romania have poured hundreds of millions of dollars into Moldova. These funds serve to increase Moldova’s energy and infrastructure dependance on Romania, and broader Romanian influence in the country. A glowing report from Radio Free Europe from October last year, for instance, promoted the construction and renovation of schools and kindergartens teaching in the Romanian language in the Russian-speaking region of Gagauzia.

Simion, copying the brutish style of Trump, has threatened to make such programs dependent on taking over “majority packages in Moldovan state companies.”

His attitude towards Ukraine, where he is also barred from entering, has also come under fire. The AUR and other fascistic organizations have criticized the war in Ukraine from the point of view of Romania’s territorial ambitions towards Ukraine, in northern Bukovina, the Danube Delta and Black Sea deposits.

Nicusor Dan, the current mayor of Bucharest, ran as an independent but was supported by key sections of the country’s establishment, including liberal opposition parties. Dan ran as a pro-EU candidate and his campaign seeks to frame the run-off as a “pro-Western” vs. a “pro-Russian” choice. As well as fanning the flames of Russophobia, this serves to obscure both the source of the fascist danger, which is everywhere raising its head due to the policies of the ruling class, and the agreement between the two factions on the fundamental questions.

Before the election, Dan declared in an interview on Moldova 1 that he “would like union with Moldova to happen today,” while also mentioning a 2018 declaration by the Romanian parliament that it is ready to “remake the 1918 union.” These territorial ambitions, expressed by the official pro-EU candidate, expose the lie that the “European road” of countries like Moldova is about defending “the rule of law” and that it is only Russia that seeks to “redraw the borders by force.”

Both Simion and Dan also agree on making the Romanian working class pay the cost of the rearming drive. Both have expressed the need for severe cuts in public spending and mass layoffs after the elections in order to balance the country’s budget.

The election testifies to the bankruptcy of the political and social system that has emerged 35 years since the Stalinist regime’s restoration of capitalism in Eastern Europe. Official Romanian life is dominated by political descendents of Hitler’s allies in the Iron Guard, the working class is impoverished and war is spreading across the region. The key task is rebuilding a socialist, that is to say Trotskyist culture in the Romanian and Eastern European working class, to mobilize it with their international class brothers and sisters in struggle against fascism, war and capitalism.



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