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Elections and the Formation of Governments in Serbia 2000–2014

Abstract: In this paper provides analysis of the parliamentary elections in Serbia, their political context, and the formation of governments in the period between 2000 and 2014. This is followed by analyses of election results, the nature of party competition in the electoral system, the character of the party system, the composition of governments, and the dynamics of democratisation of Serbia. Voters react rather on the basis of impressions left by party leaders and the overall image of parties than on the basis of programme preferences in accordance with their interests. This leads to instability of electoral choice and therefore instability of the party system. The leader is frequently a bigger and more important “brand” than the party. After parliamentary elections in 2014, Serbia has a party system with a dominant party (SNS) and a very weak opposition, leading to a lack of democratic balance and counterweights, and these shortcomings could be damaging for further democratic consolidation. Party systems with clientelistic electoral competition instead of programmatic ones have weaker chances for the consolidation of democracy.

Key words: *elections, coalitions, electoral campaign, formation of governments, party system, dominant party*

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This paper deals with elections and formation of governments in the Republic of Serbia from 2000 to 2014. We shall analyse election results, nature of party competition in the electoral system, character of party system, composition of governments and dynamics of democratisation of Serbia.

The majority two-round system was applied in Serbia only at the first multiparty election. Since 1992, proportional electoral system has been used, with a 5% threshold and seats calculated according to the D'Hondt formula. Since 2000, Serbia has been a single constituency. Since 2003, the natural threshold has been applied to the political parties of national minorities instead of the five-percent one.

Upon coming to power in the period before the restoration of the multiparty system, at the Eight Session of the League of Communists of Serbia in 1986, Slobodan Milošević transformed the former communist party into the Socialist Party of Serbia. Inheriting its human resources, organizational infrastructure, property, Milošević and the SPS ruled Serbia from 1990 to 2000. Throughout this time they had the positions of head of the state, Prime Minister and the key governmental departments. During the 1990s, the SPS was the dominant party.

Governments are frequently formed far from the constituency, in dark rooms, in a hope that they will meet the voters' desires.¹ One of the key dilemmas in coalition theory is what is more important: office or policy. Formation of coalitions is also influenced by the "familiarity" of parties, when parties share the history of ruling together, and "inertia," when parties reaffirm a previous coalition.² Formation and stability of the ruling coalition are further influenced by personal relationships between party leaders, as well as by the international context and envi-

1 Michael Michael and Norman Schofield, *Multiparty Government: The politics of coalition in Europe* (Ann Arbor, 1998), 89.

2 Lieven De Winter, "Parties and Government Formation, Portfolio Allocation, and Policy Definition", in Kurt Richard Luther and Ferdinand Muller-Rommel (eds), *Political Parties in the New Europe* (Oxford, 2005), 176.

ronment. Key issues for the formation of government in Serbia are the following: the issue of partners, that of the person of the prime minister, the issue of party and government programmes, and the issue of resources.

Creation of the DOS and change of power in Serbia in the year 2000

After several more-or-less unsuccessful attempts, the opposition in Serbia united in early 2000 under the name of the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS).³ The biggest opposition party of the 1990s – the Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO) – was not among DOS members.

Slobodan Milošević, being assured by his associates that his support was strong, called on July 27th for an extraordinary election for the president of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), in addition to the regular election for MPs of the FRY Assembly, and local and provincial elections. On August 7th, DOS nominated Vojislav Koštunica as its candidate for FRY President. In mid-August, Vojislav Koštunica, Zoran Đinđić and Mlađan Dinkić presented the DOS programme and started their electoral campaign. DOS and its presidential candidate made a landslide victory at the presidential election for FRY President and at the parliamentary election for the Assembly of Yugoslavia. The Federal Electoral Commission did not proclaim the victory of DOS and its candidate. Wishing to prevent the attempt of the

3 The Democratic Opposition of Serbia (consisting of 18 parties and trade unions): The Democratic Party, Democratic Party of Serbia, Democratic Alternative, New Serbia, the Civil Alliance of Serbia, the Christian Democratic Party of Serbia, the League of Vojvodina Social-Democrats, the Social-Democratic Union, the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians, the Reform Democratic Party of Vojvodina, the Sandžak Democratic Party, Coalition Vojvodina, the Social Democracy, the Movement for a Democratic Serbia, the League for Šumadija, the New Democracy and Democratic Centre. DOS was in that time supported by G17+ and Otpor.

regime not to recognise the election results, on September 29th, DOS leaders called for civil disobedience until the recognition of the election results. The protests which started on September 29th culminated on October 5th when the protesters entered the buildings of the Federal Assembly of the FRY and the headquarters of Radio Television of Serbia. On October 6th Slobodan Milošević publicly congratulated Vojislav Koštunica, thereby admitting his own defeat, whereas the DOS took over the power at the federal level in a coalition with the Montenegrin Socialist People's Party (SNP).

The Transitory Government of 2000

After presidential and parliamentary elections at the level of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, local elections were held on 24 September 2000. The landslide victory of the DOS coalition challenged the legitimacy of the Republic Government. The result of the two-week negotiations was an agreement on the formation of a transitory government signed on October 16th by DOS, SPS and SPO. The Agreement was signed by Zoran Đinđić (for DOS), Zoran Anđelković (for SPS) and Vuk Drašković (for SPO). The President of the FRY, Vojislav Koštunica, and the President of the Republic of Serbia, Milan Milutinović, signed the agreement as its guarantors. The most important items of the agreement pertained to the establishment of the temporary government of Serbia and a call for extraordinary republic parliamentary election. The Prime Minister was from the SPS (Milomir Minić) whereas two Deputy Prime Ministers were from the SPO (Spasoje Krunic) and DOS (Nebojša Čović). The previous republic government, formed in March 1998 with Prime Minister Mirko Marjanović, resigned on October 21st, 2000, and the National Assembly of Serbia formed the transitory government on October 24th. This political agreement envisaged holding an extraordinary parliamentary election on December 23rd,

and the creation of a transitory government, as well as determining how it would function.⁴ Co-ministries were established in the fields of the interior, information, justice, and finance. The government made decisions by the consensus of the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Ministers, which meant the right of one party to block any decision. In the co-ministries, decisions also had to be signed by all ministers. This form of work hampered the functioning of the government. A crisis emerged when SPS refused to replace the Head of the State Security Service (DB) Rade Marković, as was requested by DOS and SPO. This yielded further negative effects in the coming period, both on relations within the coalition and on the pace of reforms and democratisation, i.e. the consolidation of democracy in Serbia. The main task of the newly formed government was to prepare and carry out the extraordinary republic election and provide for a “peaceful change of power.”⁵

The government of Zoran Đinđić (2001–2003)

After short negotiations, the DOS parties reached an agreement that Vojislav Koštunica (DSS) should be the head of the coalition's list, Zoran Đinđić (DS) the candidate for the Prime Minister, and that the candidate for the Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia should be determined by the DSS. The coalition agreement was signed on November 28th, 2000. The agreement was achieved on the division of seats between the DS and the DSS party according to the so-called fifty-fifty principle, i.e. 50% for DS and 50% for DSS.⁶ DOS won 64.4 %

4 Vladimir Goati, *Izbori u SRJ od 1990 do 1998 - Volja građana ili izborna manipulacija*, second supplemented edition with appendix “*Izbori 2000*” (Belgrade, 2001), 254.

5 Slaviša Orlović, *Političke partije i moć* (Belgrade, 2002), 308.

6 *Ibid.* 309.

of votes, which gave this coalition a superior (two-thirds) parliamentary majority, and 176 out of 250 MPs. According to the final results, the following parties also entered the parliament: SPS which won 13.5 % of votes or 37 seats, SRS with 8.5 % of votes, thus gaining 23 MPs, and SSJ with 5.3 % of the votes, or 14 MPs. The biggest losers at this election were SPS and SPO. In the period from September to December, SPS lost more than a million votes, whereas SPO failed to enter parliament.

The first democratic government in Serbia was formed on 25 January 2001 under Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić. This was the first government after the introduction of the multiparty system without SPS ministers. It was a coalition government, and by its composition was a combination of a political and expert one. The Prime Minister (DS) and seven Deputy Prime Ministers were the DOS parties' leaders (DSS, DA, ND, PDS, SD, SDU and SVM). The leaders of some coalition members were "only" ministers (Coalition Vojvodina, DHSS, GSS) whereas other members of the government were experts in charge of finance, energy, privatisation and foreign economic affairs. Vuk Obradović was subsequently dismissed from the position of the Deputy Prime Minister ("sex affair"), Miodrag Perišić resigned ("spy affair"), and Aleksandar Pravdić and Minister Obren Joksimović also resigned for other reasons.

Emphasising in his exposé that this government was "a government of great reforms and energetic actions," Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić said that "the least we can promise is that this will be the government of speed, efficiency and transparency."⁷ As the strategic goal of government, Đinđić stated that Serbia should "become a country of stable institutions and highly qualified labour force, a society with prevailing middle class, higher living standards and employment."⁸ As the government's

7 Exposé of Zoran Đinđić, <http://www.arhiva.srbija.gov.yu/cms/view.php?id=2054> (18 June 2007).

8 Ibid.

priorities he listed: general political stability in the region, regulation of relations between Serbia and Montenegro, suppression of terrorism in southern Serbia and finding the ways for coexistence in southern Serbian province, and fighting against crime and abuses of the past decade. As a particular goal, he stated that in ten years at the latest, Serbia should become a member of the European Union.⁹ After the period of sanctions and international isolation of Serbia during the 1990s, the new government had success in re-establishing Serbia's presence on the international stage very soon after it formed.¹⁰

The first period from 2001 to 2003 was marked by conflict between the Prime Minister of the Government of Serbia, Đinđić, and the President of FR Yugoslavi,a Koštunica. The maximum aggravation of DS-DSS relations came after the exclusion of the DSS representatives from the Assembly of Serbia by the rest of DOS. The leaders of the two parties had entirely different platforms for defining the democratic transformation of the country. Essentially, this was a conflict of two strategies: legality (Koštunica) and legitimacy (Đinđić). Đinđić advocated energetic changes, a categorical break with the old regime, not always taking care to ensure that all was in compliance with the then valid legal norms created by the former government.¹¹ Đinđić rather wanted decisions to be pragmatic and legitimate, supported by the democratic public in Serbia and the international

9 Ibid.

10 First, on 26 Oct. 2000, Serbia was accepted in the Pact for Stability of Southeastern Europe, on 1 Nov. in the United Nations, on 10 Nov. the membership in the OSCE was renewed, on 17 Nov. it resumed diplomatic relations with the USA, Germany, France and Great Britain, on 20 Dec. it became a member of the International Monetary Fund and in April 2003 a member of the Council of Europe.

11 "In solving crucial issues of Serbia in the post-October period, Đinđić inclined towards legitimist approach, i.e. profound changes of the '*ancien régime*' not always taking care about observation of 'unbearably unjust' legal norms imposed by that regime." Vladimir Goati, *Partijske borbe u Srbiji u postoktobarskom razdoblju* (Belgrade, 2006), 228.

community. An open conflict arose over cooperation with the Hague Tribunal and the extradition of the former FRY President Slobodan Milošević pursuant to the Decree of the Government of Serbia of June 28th, 2001, which had been adopted without the approval of the DSS. The Democratic Party of Serbia insisted that the manner of extradition of indicted persons should be regulated by federal law. Mutual accusations and insults of the leaders of the two parties resulted with the DSS decision to leave the government on August 17th, 2001. Soon they were joined by the New Serbia Party.

The government of Zoran Živković (2003–2004)

The assassination of the Prime Minister of the Government of Serbia Zoran Đinđić on the 12th of March 2003 was a huge loss for democratic Serbia and a step backwards in democratisation and reforms. Zoran Živković, who was the Deputy President of the Democratic Party, was elected Prime Minister by Parliament to replace Đinđić. Considering that the reconstruction of government occurred without new election national elections, there are grounds to treat this government as a new one; however, considering the cohesion and the circumstances of its formation (assassination of the Prime Minister), this was rather a continuity of the former government. Under this government under the presidency of Nataša Mičić, who as the Speaker of the Assembly of Serbia was the acting President of Serbia (because Milan Milutinović's term of office had expired), a state of emergency was introduced. During the course of the state of emergency (about eighty days), the action "Šablja" (Sabre) was carried out, with almost 12,000 people were detained, of whom 400 were prosecuted, while the rest were eventually released without charges. In an attempt to maintain continuity with the previous government, Živković set the priorities of his government as reaffirming the priorities of Đinđić's government. These

were: political stability, fight against organized crime, drafting a new, modern Constitution of Serbia, building and maintaining the state union of Serbia and Montenegro, regional stability, European and world integration, and economic reforms aimed at improvement the quality of life of ordinary citizens.¹²

The conflict of Prime Minister Živković with G17 Plus, which meanwhile had become a political party formed out of a group of experts, only accelerated the disintegration of the government. After the exit of SDP (with 10 seats) from the ruling coalition, the government remained without the necessary majority of 126 MPs, and so filed a proposal with the Acting President of Serbia to dismiss Parliament and call an election. The proposal was adopted and the election was scheduled for December 28th, 2003. After the assassination of Prime Minister Đinđić, it became clear that reforms were not unfolding at the pace or on the course citizens expected.

The first government of Vojislav Koštunica (2004–2007)

At the election for the Serbian Assembly held on the 28th of December 2003 (under proportional electoral system, single constituency, with a turnout of 57.72% or 3,748,623 out of 6,493,672 registered voters) the SRS won 82 seats, DSS–53, DS–37, G17 Plus–34, SPO-NS–22, and SPS–22. DSS attempted to distance itself from the previous government, and during the electoral campaign promised its voters that it would not enter a coalition either with DS or with SRS. One of the probable reasons why DSS was unwilling to enter a coalition with DS was their rivalry, which among manifested itself (among other things) in pretensions to the position of the President of the Republic of Serbia. The candidates for this position were Vojislav Koštunica and

12 Exposé of Zoran Živković <http://www.arhiva.srbija.sr.gov.yu/cms/view.php?id=2055> (18 June 2007).

Dragan Maršićanin from DSS, and Dragoljub Mićunović and Boris Tadić from the DS. Another reason was that a minority government supported by SPS was possible, and this coalition was cheaper, because of the smaller number of departments to be divided. The third reason is that it was easier to eject predecessors and appoint new people when the party which created the axis of the previous government was no longer in power. At that time, the Democratic Party was burdened with internal party conflicts struggling for the party's president.¹³

The second democratic government, formed on the 3rd of March 2014, was a minority government. It was composed of DSS, G17 Plus, and SPO-NS, with 109 MPs, with support of SPS with 22 MPs. Vojislav Koštunica, the DSS President, became Prime Minister, Miroljub Labus became Deputy Prime Minister, and there were seventeen ministers. Koštunica, who was appointed to form the government, defined the problem of Kosovo and Metohia as one of the priorities, emphasizing that Serbia had to solve its state status “which had been challenged because in a part of its territory, Kosovo and Metohia, there is no Serbian government, but the government of the international community.”¹⁴ He also stressed the goal of strengthening the state union with Montenegro, and making it functional. As to the problem of cooperation with the Hague Tribunal, Prime Minister Koštunica paid the least attention to this, noting that he would pursue only “two-sided cooperation.”¹⁵

Koštunica's government obtained a Feasibility Study for Association to the European Union; however, but due to the lack of cooperation with the Hague Tribunal, accession negotiations were interrupted (on the 3rd of May 2006), and economic assistance and foreign investments were significantly reduced. Undoubtedly the biggest failure of the politics of the DSS and Vo-

13 At the Assembly of the Democratic Party on 22 Feb. 2004, Boris Tadić defeated Zoran Živković at the election for party president.

14 Exposé of Vojislav Koštunica.

15 Coalition agreement on the Government, Article 3, Item 11, p. 2.

jislav Koštunica occurred with the dissolution of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, i.e. with the separation of Montenegro. In the ruling coalition there was no consensus about the issue of preservation of the state union. While G17 Plus and SPO advocated the independence of Serbia, DSS, with support of the NS and under significant international pressure, led an intensive campaign for preservation of the state union between Serbia and Montenegro. The campaign had no success, and on May 21st, 2006, a majority of citizens of Montenegro voted for independence, which was officially proclaimed on July 13th, 2006. After the disappearance of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, the Government of Serbia, the existing Law on Ministries notwithstanding, took over the Defence and International Affairs ministries and incorporated them as a sovereign state and the legal successor of the State Union. In the conditions of Montenegro's separation through referendum, when G 17 Plus left the government, but also because of Kosovo and a new election, somewhat unexpectedly, the parliamentary parties reached consensus about the adoption of a new constitution. The government credited itself with this success. The minority government managed to obtain a parliamentary majority until the election, although the ministers from G-17 Plus had resigned.

The government was “vertically divided.”¹⁶ Everybody had a firm control of his/her department and they did not interfere with one another's work. All ministers appointed people from their own parties to leading positions within their respective ministries. This made mutual control impossible. Essentially, this was a “feudalized government,” in which each governing party had its fiefdoms. While G-17 Plus was fiercely fighting to have under its competence the resources through which the money was controlled, allocated and spent (Finance, National Bank, Defence, Privatisation and the National Investment Plan) together with full control over the cooperation with the Euro-

16 Vladimir Goati, *Partijske borbe u Srbiji*, 236.

pean Union, NS aspired towards a unified Ministry of Capital Investments. For SPO, the most important goal was to get control of the federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The strongest party of the ruling coalition (DSS) controlled ten ministries with only 53 MPs (plus the Ministry of Defence, after the separation of Serbia and Montenegro). This party got control over the two most powerful institutions of power: internal affairs (Ministry of Interior and the Security Information Agency) and economic affairs (two ministries: one for national economy and another for international economic affairs). In this government, DSS also held the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Science, Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government, Ministry of Religions, and Ministry of Energy. The second reform government started to pursue a public spending reduction policy, and transformed the budget deficit into a surplus. This was contributed to by pressure from the IMF, the introduction of VAT (value added tax, e.g. sales tax), which increased the number of tax payers and therefore the budget revenue as well.

Herbert Kitschelt was the first to show that the alignment of voters in Eastern Europe would occur between those who wished to preserve the *status quo* and those who were in favour of change. The *status quo* was advocated by the *ancien régime* parties, whereas the opposition parties (reformists) were in favour of change. The conflict on the relations between the *ancien régime* and reformers was intense in the beginning, whereas during the course of time it lost importance, and today has almost disappeared.¹⁷ After the year 2000, the conflict between the *ancien régime* parties (SRS, SPS) and the parties of the new regime (the DOS parties) continued, however being significantly alleviated with the support of the SPS for the minority government headed by Prime Minister Vojislav Koštunica.

¹⁷ Klaus Von Beyme, *Transformacija političkih stranaka*, 85

The second government of Vojislav Koštunica (2007–2008)

After the adoption of the new Constitution of Serbia at the end of 2006, a parliamentary election was called, to be held on the 21st of January 2007. Parties won the following numbers of seats at this election: SRS–81, DS–64, DSS-NS–47, G17 Plus–19, SPS–16, LDP-GSS-SDU-LSDV–15, SVM–3, the List for Sandžak–2, Roma Union of Serbia–1, Coalition of Albanians of the Preševo Valley–1, and the Roma Party–1. The government was composed of DS, DSS-NS and G17 Plus. On March 3rd, 2007, the members of this coalition government harmonized five programme principles as the priorities of the new government. These were: the preservation of Kosovo and Metohia within Serbia; acceleration of European integration, meaning continuance of the stabilisation and association negotiations with the EU; prompt fulfilment of international obligations, i.e. taking all measures to cooperate with the Hague in the shortest possible period of time; in economic policy – an increase of employment, the suppression of poverty, a significant increase of direct infrastructure-related investments, the completion of privatisation, and an increase in the living standards of all citizens; and finally a continuation and expansion of the fight against all forms of crime and corruption.¹⁸

Seemingly a denouement, but in fact an even stronger dramatic twist occurred when, during a suddenly scheduled session of the National Assembly on May 7th, the MPs of the DSS-NS coalition supported the election of Tomislav Nikolić, Deputy President of the SRS, for the Speaker of the Assembly of Serbia.¹⁹ After more than fifteen hours of debate full of accusations, insults and threats, 142 MPs voted for Tomislav Nikolić. The DSS's justification for this move was that the agreement about

18 *Večernje Novosti*, 3 Mar. 2007, p. 3

19 Tomislav Nikolić was elected the President of the Republic of Serbia in 2012.

the government had not been fulfilled, and that after everything that had happened it was natural to elect the candidate whose party has the most MPs for Speaker of the Assembly. The justification also included the need to consolidate institutions, since the last deadline for formation of the government was May 15th. It turned out that the election of Tomislav Nikolić had the effect of a tactical manoeuvre by DSS and Koštunica in order to get as much as possible from DS and Tadić in the negotiations about the formation of the government. Fierce reactions from both the domestic and international public followed against the election of Nikolić, together with a suggestion that his election threatened Serbia's European orientation. Unofficial rumours said that Vojislav Koštunica was under the pressure of the German Councillor Angela Merkel, whose CDU was in the the European People's Party (EPP) group to which DSS also belonged then. Actual reasons notwithstanding, three days before the expiry of the constitutional deadline, Tadić, Koštunica, Ilić, and Dinkić came to agreement about the new government. On May 14th Tomislav Nikolić resigned from the post of Speaker of the Assembly, for he had been informed of the formation of the new parliamentary majority and the request for his dismissal from the post of the Speaker of the Assembly, which had been signed by 127 MPs. After the debate in which the quality of discussions in the Assembly of Serbia reached an all-time low, half an hour before midnight on May 15th, 2007, Serbia got a new government. The new-old Prime Minister Vojislav Koštunica and his team swore their oath fifteen minutes before the expiry of the constitutional deadline for the formation of government.

The government consisted of DSS-NS (the Prime Minister and six ministers, and NS – one minister), DS (Deputy Prime Minister and twelve ministers), and G17 Plus (three ministers). Tadić, Koštunica, and Dinkić reached agreed that the director and chair of the managing board could not be from the same party (i.e. cannot be nominated by the same party), and that members of these boards were to be selected according to the

3:2:1 formula, which would also determine distribution of enterprises. According to this formula, fifteen out of thirty enterprises were given to the DS, ten to the populist coalition (DSS-NS), and five to G17 Plus. Boris Tadić won the presidential election on June 27th, 2004 (the second round). An actual or faked conflict between DS and the DSS ensued over a cleavage on the government's orientation towards European integration or Kosovo. Prime Minister Koštunica was faced with new relations of power in which the DS had the President of the Republic of Serbia, the Speaker of the Assembly of Serbia and the majority of ministers in the government. The reaction of Prime Minister Koštunica to the new reality was the proposal for the dismissal of the government and calling for new election.

When asked why the government fell, the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister gave opposite answers. Koštunica: "The Government of Serbia does not anymore have a common policy about Kosovo and Metohia." Tadić: "The Government of Serbia does not have a common attitude about the European and economic perspective of Serbia and its citizens." As the *Vreme* journalist Milan Milošević put it: "Negotiated for one hundred and twenty days, it governed for nine months and 25 days and fell apart in 48 seconds, which was the duration of the government's session on Monday, 10 March 2008, at noon,"²⁰ when the Government of Serbia proposed to the President of Serbia to dismiss the Assembly and call for extraordinary parliamentary election to be held on May 11th.

The domestic and foreign-political dilemma which burdened almost all governments in Serbia after 2000 was what should be given an advantage: the European integration process, or the legal preservation of Kosovo and Metohia within Serbia. This is a social cleavage between traditionalism-modernism, which is a permanent and fundamental cleavage of Eastern and Central European societies. This civil-national cleavage has ex-

20 *Vreme* no. 897, 13 Mar. 2008.

isted in Serbia since the introduction and/or restoration of the multiparty system, and remains in contemporary party divisions. Empirical findings show that the axis of the historical-ethnic cleavage “national-civil” and the axis of the cultural-value cleavage “traditionalism-modernism” do not intersect, but overlap to a large extent, and that “national” overlaps with “traditionalism” and “civil” with “modernism.”²¹ This brings us to the conclusion about the synergetic effects of these two axes of divisions to party groupings. DSS separated from DS in 1992 due to differing views on the national issue. It was this difference that again brought to their split-up and the fall of the government (i.e. agreement to a premature election) in 2008. One dimension of the splitting of SRS and creation of SNS goes along the lines of this cleavage.

The government of Mirko Cvetković (2008–2012)

As a result of the election of May 11th, 2007, SPS (or rather the SPS-PUPS-JS coalition) decided which of the following two blocks would form the government: the populist-radical coalition or the Democratic Party (at this election under the name of the Coalition for European Serbia). The government was composed of the Coalition for European Serbia (102 MPs) + Coalition SPS-PUPS-JS (20) + Hungarian Coalition – István Pásztor (4) + Bosniak List for European Sandžak – Dr Sulejman Ugljanin (2), for a total of 128 MPs (out of 250). Among the parties which formed the government, only the Hungarian Coalition had not participated in government before. An agreement was reached by this coalition about a certain number of seats in Subotica and in the provincial government in Vojvodina.

21 Zoran Đ. Slavujević, *Mogući pravci pregrupisavanja partijske scene Srbije, in Promene vrednosti i tranzicija u Srbiji: pogled u budućnost* (Belgrade, 2003), 98.

The government had 27 members, 24 ministries, and four Deputy Prime Ministers. The Democratic Party, which was to form the government, besides the Prime Minister (although formally he was not the DS member) also got one Deputy Prime Minister and the following ministries: science, foreign affairs, defence, justice, agriculture, forestry and water management, public administration and local self-government, trade and services, environment and spatial planning, Kosovo and Metohia, religions, and minority and human rights. The Socialist Party of Serbia appointed a Deputy Prime Minister who, simultaneously, was the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Interior. SPS also controlled the following ministries: mining and energy, infrastructure, and education. PUPS got a Deputy Prime Minister. G17 Plus got a Deputy Prime Minister who was also the Minister of Economy and Regional Development. G17 Plus also gained control of the following ministries: youth and sports, health, telecommunications and information society, culture, and the national investment plan. The Sandžak Democratic Party got to appoint the Minister of Employment and Social Policy, the SPO appointed the Minister of Diaspora, while the List for Sandžak had a Minister without a portfolio. The Secretary General of the government came from DS. The innovation in this government was the function of the First Deputy Prime Minister (Ivica Dačić), who replaced the Prime Minister during his absence or disability, with all the PM's powers except for those of proposing the appointment or dismissal of a member of government. A larger number of departments is the result of coalition agreements of a large number of actors, and comes about to satisfy the appetites and aspirations of all parties participating in government. Because the citizens of Serbia in a short period of time first cast their votes in favour of Boris Tadić at the presidential election, and later at the parliamentary elections again favoured the coalition led by him and his party, this enabled the government to pursue a programmatically clear policy towards European integration. The multi-member coalition

agreed on this issue. In a certain sense, this government could be characterized as left-centre (with the exception of G17 Plus). In his speech, the Prime Minister stated the following priorities: commitment to the European future for Serbia; non-acceptance of independence of AP Kosovo and Metohia; strengthening the economy; strengthening the social accountability of the government; strengthening the fight against crime and corruption; and respect for the international law.²² This government lasted for a full term of office, until the regular election in 2012.

Three challenges to democratic governments

Democratic governments formed after October 5th, 2000 made serious progress in opening the country and carrying out of economic and political reforms. However, they were faced with great challenges as well.²³ The first challenge to the new government was cooperation with the Hague Tribunal (ICTY – the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia). The entire sphere of international cooperation for all governments formed after October 5th, 2000, was and remained in the shadow of cooperation with the Tribunal. Another challenge was the unresolved status of Kosovo and Metohia's relationship to Serbia. The third challenge was posed by relations with Montenegro before the referendum of May 21st, 2006, when Montenegro chose independence and became an internationally recognized state.²⁴ In the context of these three challenges, it is important to stress several conclusions. First, all these challenges and temptations

22 <http://www.srbija.sr.gov.yu/pages/article.php?id=90297> accessed 15 July 2008.

23 On this, see: Slaviša Orlović, *Politički život Srbije (između partokratije i demokratije)* (Belgrade, 2008), 184–6.

24 On the referendum on May 21 on the state-legal status of Montenegro, the turnout was 419,240 of voters, i.e. 86.5 %: Out of that number, 230,661 citizens voted in favour of sovereign Montenegro, i.e. 55.5 %, whereas 185,002 citizens or 44.5 % voted against.

(i.e. problems) are very complex; second, it was not possible to address or solve any of these problems independently of external parties (representatives of Montenegro, representatives of Kosovo Albanians), and particularly not without the participation or mediation of the international community; third, each delay in resolving these issues led to a price increase, hampered finding solutions and looked like a purchase of time; fourth, these important issues required a high level of agreement within Serbia, where consensus about them did not exist.

The government of Ivica Dačić (2012–2014)

The election of 2014 saw an electoral earthquake. The leader of the leading Democratic Party Boris Tadić lost at the premature presidential election to Tomislav Nikolić, President of SNS.²⁵ DS lost parliamentary elections, and SPS was again able to decide who would form the government – DS or SNS. By making the decision to call for an early presidential election, Boris Tadić made a mistake (the same made by Slobodan Milošević in 2000), as he could have monitored and influenced the post-electoral denouement about the formation of the government as ruling President of Serbia. Although there was an apparently firm agreement between DS and SPS on the basis of the Declaration on Reconciliation from 2008 as well as on the basis of cooperation in the 2008–2012 coalition, this did not prevent SPS from changing its partner. Besides their cooperation in government, DS helped SPS through lobbying in the Socialist International and releasing it from the burden of its past from the 1990s. All this stood at one pole, and the offer made by the newly elected President of Serbia and in that moment also SNS President Tomislav Nikolić, for Dačić to become the Prime Minister was

25 Tomislav Nikolić took 1,552,063 (49.54%), while Boris Tadić, won 1,481,952 (47.31%) votes.

at the other, acceptable pole. In addition to the position of the Prime Minister, Dačić was allowed to remain Minister of Interior.

The electoral list of SNS was submitted under the name: Let's Move Serbia – Tomislav Nikolić and won 940,659 votes and 73 seats.²⁶ The DS list submitted under the name Choice for Better Life – Boris Tadić won 863,294 votes and 67 seats.²⁷ The electoral list Ivica Dačić – SPS, PUPS, JS, won 567,689 votes and 44 seats. Pursuant to the coalition agreement, SPS won 54 %, PUPS 30%, and JS 17 % of seats. The Turnover Coalition, composed of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO), won 255,546 votes and twenty seats. The United Regions of Serbia (URS) won 215,666 votes and sixteen seats. The key party within the URS undoubtedly was G17 Plus. The Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians led by István Pásztor, won 68,323 votes and five seats. The minority list “All Together” (Bosniak Democratic Community (BDZ), Hungarian Civic Alliance (GSM), Democratic Fellowship of Vojvodina Hungarians (DZVM) and the Slovak Party – Emir Elfić won 24,993 votes and one seat. Except within the coalition All Together, Bosniaks ran in the election with the list Party of Democratic Action of Sandžak – Sulejman Ugljanin, which won 27,708 votes and two seats. The Albanian Coalition from Preševo Valley (Party for Democratic Action of Riza Halimi, Party of Democratic

26 The electoral list – Let's Move Serbia – Tomislav Nikolić was made of: the Serbian Progressive Party, New Serbia, the Serbian Association of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises and Entrepreneurs, Coalition of Refugee Associations in the Republic of Serbia, the Strength of Serbia Movement – BK, the People's Peasant Party, the Bosniak People's Party, the Democratic Party of Macedonians, the Roma Party, the Vlach Unification Movement, the Movement of Socialists, Economic Renewal of Serbia. See: *Vreme*, 3 May 2012.

27 The electoral list Choice for a Better Life – Boris Tadić was made of: DS, SDPS, LSV, DHSS, the Greens of Serbia, DSH, former members of the SPO and trade-union representatives.

Progress of Jonuz Musliu, the Democratic Union of the Valley of Skender Destani and the Democratic Party of Albanians of Rahmi Zulfu) won 13,384 votes and one seat. None of the Available Answers (NOPO) won 22,905 votes and one seat.

This parliamentary election in Serbia was held under slightly changed electoral rules. Upon the initiative of the European and Venice Commissions, in spite of the resistance of political parties, the Law on the Election of MPs was amended in 2011 with two key innovations. The first was the obligation of the parties to create electoral lists that would be “closed” for voters and parties, where seats should be awarded according to the list order defined in advance. Another innovation was the obligation of submitters of the lists that each third person on the list should be a representative of the under-represented sex. This positive discrimination provides for a minimum of one third of women on electoral lists, in order to increase their percentage in parliament. By the new amendments, the Republic Electoral Commission shall “distribute all the mandates won by election list to the candidates according to their order on the electoral list, starting from the first candidate on that list.”²⁸

DSS supported Nikolić in the second round of presidential election. SNS and DSS publicly stated that they were natural partners.²⁹ According to the media, the American government made it clear to officials of the SNS that a coalition with those “who put embassies on fire” was unacceptable.³⁰

In the atmosphere of waiting for the one who will compose the government, the President of Serbia Tomislav Nikolić, at that moment still President of SNS, paid an official visit to Russia

28 Law on the Amendments and Supplements to the Law on the Election of MPs, “Official Gazette of the RS”, No. 36/11, adopted on 25 May 2011.

29 The Democratic Party of Serbia is a natural partner of progressivists for discussions about a post-electoral coalition, stated the presidential candidate of the Serbian Progressive Party Tomislav Nikolić, *Danas*, 29/02/2012 19:00, Belgrade.

30 *Blic*, 6 Mar. 2012.

to participate in the congress of the United Russia, with which the SNS was cooperating. After the inauguration, his first official visit as the President of the Republic was to Brussels, i.e. the EU. Thus Nikolić had two “first” visits: one to Moscow, which was a party visit, and another to Brussels, as national President. Besides Nikolić, during the formation of the government Ivica Dačić also visited Russia a few times. He met Sergey Shoygu, the then Governor of the Moscow Region, former Minister of Emergency Situations, with whom Dačić had cooperated as the Minister of Interior. Later Shoygu became Russia’s Minister of Defence. The media reported that at these meetings Dačić got a “blessing” to give up the strategic partnership with DS and start forming a coalition with SNS. To the speculations that his visits to Russia had to do with the formation of the government, Dačić said that nobody was bothered when “last time” he was invited by presidents of foreign states and ministers of foreign affairs to support Boris Tadić, but “now it is a problem when someone thinks that Russia supports me as the Prime Minister in the government with Nikolić”³¹ In this manner, Dačić not only did not deny but in fact confirmed the influence of international factors on formation of the government in 2008, and particularly the influence of Russia in 2012.

In this atmosphere, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Philip Gordon arrived in Belgrade on an official visit. This visit was preceded by the visit of his Deputy Philip Reeker. Gordon met with Nikolić, Dačić and Tadić. Gordon’s official statement was that “he came to Belgrade with the message of support from the USA and not to suggest what the new government should look like.” It is indicative that this was followed by a fast denouement: in spite of animosities between Dačić and Vučić, Vučić made the decision to enter the government as the First Deputy Prime Minister of the government in charge of defence, security and the fight against corruption and crime. He was simultane-

31 *Politika*, 14 June 2012.

ously Minister of Defence. However, what is most important is that the amendments to the Law on the Bases Regulating Security Services stipulated that the President of the Republic was to appoint and dismiss the Secretary of the National Security Council. Before this amendment, this was the duty of the head of the office of the President of the Republic. In this manner, a division and mutual control of levers of power was made between Nikolića and Vučić. Nikolić appointed Vučić to the position of Secretary of the National Security Council, while to the position of the Head of BIA he appointed Nebojša Rodić, who immediately before had been appointed advisor to the President of the Republic Tomislav Nikolić. According to the daily *Blic*, Ivica Dačić left the leading of the Security Information Agency to the Serbian Progressive Party after the discussion he had with U.S. Deputy Assistant State Secretary Philip Reeker.³²

The government was formed on the 27th of July 2012, 82 days after the republic election, thirty days after the Socialists' leader Ivica Dačić got a mandate from the President of Serbia Tomislav Nikolić. On the floor of Parliament the government (by roll call) was backed by 142 MPs, 72 were against, whereas 26 MPs did not attend the session. The twelfth government since the restoration of the multiparty system in Serbia had seventeen ministries and nineteen members in total. Out of seventeen ministers, seven had already been ministers in the previous government (Dačić, Obradović, Mrkonjić, Dinkić, Kalanović, Ljajić, Ugljanin), while nine of them had occupied the ministerial posts in governments before (Ilić and Vučić in addition to the above). The government consisted of fourteen men and five women, mostly party officials and two non-party persons. Just as before, the biggest struggle over the distribution of the departments was about the departments of "force." Ivica Dačić remained Minister of Interior (as in the former government) and

32 *Blic*, 6 July 2012.

Vučić Minister of Defence. However, Vučić won in the distribution of levers of power as he was appointed the Secretary of the National Security Council and became the leader of an operative body within this Council (the National Security Bureau), therefore consolidating control over the BIA, VOA and VBA security services. In his campaign, Nikolić promised the citizens that if he won he would not be SNS President anymore. He fulfilled this promise in September 2012, when Aleksandar Vučić was elected SNS President. Vučić became one of the most powerful people in Serbia (Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Secretary of the National Security Council, Chair of the National Security Bureau, President of the SNS). This means that besides the formal Prime Minister – Dačić, the government had another informal one – Vučić. Mladen Dinkić unified the ministries of finance and economy, thus creating one large ministry. In addition to the division of departments in the government, another “division of spoils” was made among the parties of the ruling coalition. The Minister of Traffic Velimir Ilić became in charge of Corridor 10, and the Minister of Construction and Urbanism Milutin Mrkonjić became in charge of the Corridor 11.³³ After the amendment to the Law on the National Bank of Serbia, Jorgovanka Tabaković, SNS Deputy President, was appointed Bank Governor (her party position was put on hold). Aleksandar Vulin (SNS) was appointed Director of the government’s Office for Kosovo and Metohia, Milan Pajević (URS) the Director of the European Integration Office, Zoran Stanković (Minister of Health in the previous government) was made Chair of the government’s coordination body for the municipalities Preševo, Bujanovac and Medveđa. Although almost all parties “swore” in the electoral campaign that they would fight for “departisation” of public enterprises and a professionalisation of the public administration, after the election this was forgotten. The leader of

33 *Vreme*, 1125, 26 July 2012.

the United Serbia Dragan Marković – Palma said that “the story about departisation in Serbia has no sense at all as that is something which is talked about in the electoral campaign.”³⁴

The manner of distribution in the Government of Serbia in 2012 can be described in the following way: Dačić has the most competences, Vučić has the most power, and the President of the Republic Nikolić has the most authority. After the formation of this government, as before, there hardly remained any space not occupied by parties' human resources.

The government of Aleksandar Vučić (2014 –)

The coalition government (SNS, SPS-PUPS-JS, URS) formed after the parliamentary election of 2012 was reconstructed after twelve months through the replacement of nine out of nineteen members, i.e. in the departments of the government, and of one Deputy Prime Minister. Ivica Dačić used the reconstruction of the government to restructure the top of his party (Mrkonjić, Obradović were removed from government), while Vučić used the opportunity to consolidate his absolute power without election. Dinkić and the URS were expelled from government, and Dačić became even more powerless. Vučić became the factual Prime Minister whereas Dačić remained the formal one. Already, then, there were indications that this government would not endure the full term of office and that there was a high possibility of a premature election. That election was called on January 29th to be held on the 16th of March 2014.

There are various interpretations as to why the election was called. According to one, Aleksandar Vučić who, after the resignation of Tomislav Nikolić, was elected the President of SNS and was the First Deputy Prime Minister, had both power and rank

34 http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2012&mm=08&dd=04&nav_category=11&nav_id=632163 , accessed 4 Aug. 2012.

which he wanted confirmed by election. For other parties, this was an election for a coalition partner. Some interpretations said that this was “the election for strong opposition and control of absolute power” or that “the election is a fight for political survival and passing the threshold.” Those leaving government said that the election was called “for legitimacy.” Support for SNS, thanks to their President Vučić, reached its historic peak. The Democratic Party was in a recovery phase after its defeat at the 2012 election.

The ruling party (SNS) ran with the following list: Aleksandar Vučić – Future We Believe In – SNS, SDPS, NS, SPO, Movement of Socialists. The turnout was 53.09% and the SNS won 48.35% of votes (1,736,920) and the absolute majority in the National Assembly, with 158 seats.³⁵ At this election, SNS got the best result since the restoration of the multiparty system in Serbia. In contrast to SPS, which in 1990 won 46.1% of votes and 77.6% of seats (158 out of 250) under the majority electoral system, the SNS now won 48.34% of votes and 63.2% of seats (158 out of 250) under the proportional system, which was incomparably harder. In addition to its high rating, the landslide victory of SNS was contributed to by the low turnout, as well as by the fragmentation and weakness of the opposition. The second best results were taken by the list Ivica Dačić – SPS-PUPS-JS, and that was 13.49% of votes (484,607), i.e. 44 seats. SPS gave its partners 45% of seats (thirty PUPS and fifteen JS), meaning that the strongest party after the winning one had just twenty seats. The Democratic Party ran the election with the list “With the Democratic Party for a Democratic Serbia.” This list won 6.03% of votes (216,634) and nineteen seats, out of which two seats went to the New Party (Zoran Živković). The exit of Boris Tadić, long-time President of DS (and President of Serbia in two terms of office) from the party and the formation of new NDS

35 http://www.rik.parlament.gov.rs/cirilica/Rezultati/Izbori%202014%20Tabela1_konacna.pdf, accessed 6 May 2014.

party, forty days before the election, halved DS and make SNS success even greater.

After the exit from the Demoratic Party, the honorary and long-term President of DS, Boris Tadić, led the electoral list entitled Boris Tadić – NDS (New Democratic Party) – Greens, LSV (League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina), ZZS (Together for Serbia), VMDK (Democratic Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians), Together for Vojvodina, DLR (Democratic Left of Roma). This list won 204,767 votes (5.70 %) and eighteen seats. The NDS got nine seats, LSV got six, ZZS two and the Greens of Serbia took one seat. The list Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians – István Pásztor won 2.11%, i.e. 75,294 votes and six seats. A Bosniak party also ran in the election. “SDA of Sandžak – Dr Sulejman Ugljanin”, won 0.95%, i.e. 35,157 votes and three seats. Additionally, the Party for Democratic Action – Riza Halimi entered the election and won 0.68%, i.e. 24,301 votes and two seats.³⁶

The extraordinary parliamentary election in Serbia was a veritable party purgatory. An electoral tsunami swept the DSS, SRS, LDP and URS, which did not passed the 5% electoral threshold, out of the political scene. Only three minority and four lists of relevant parties entered the parliament. At this election, Aleksandar Vučić consolidated almost absolute power and established control over all important levers of power, such as the media, army, police and money flow. His power can be compared with Milošević (1990–2000) and Tadić (2007–2012) when they were at their strongest. Serbia got a dominant party – SNS. Serbia had a similar party system for a decade with SPS (from 1990 to 2000). The dominant party in the multiparty system has two features: it is incomparably stronger than its competition for a longer period of time and it is identified with the entire population.³⁷ A theoretically important question which remains for this model is how long the SNS will dominate Serbian politics?

36 http://www.rik.parlament.gov.rs/cirilica/propisi_frames.htm accessed 6 May 2014.

37 Giovanni Sartori, *Stranke i stranački sustavi (Analitički okvir)* (Zagreb, 2002), 182.

During the last electoral campaign there was less competition between the government and opposition, and more among the opposition parties. There were more mutual accusations among the opposition parties than between the government and the opposition. The opposition parties rather showed readiness for cooperation with SNS than offering themselves as an alternative. Openly or tacitly, almost all actors, except the Democratic Party headed by Dragan Đilas and the parties of the right, offered themselves to the progressivists. Readiness for dialogue and a normalization of relations with Kosovo was welcomed by the European Union, and evoked a benevolent attitude toward internal reforms.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia was formed on April 27th, 2014, and it was composed of eighteen departments. The key positions belonged to SNS and SPS. The major party in the government is SNS. SPS and the Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians also entered the government. Signals about the readiness to enter government were also coming from NDS, which set the condition that it would not enter government with SPS. Out of the present 228 MPs, 198 voted in favour of the Government of Serbia and the Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić, 23 MPs were against, six MPs abstained, and one did not appear to vote. The composition of the government incorporated a number of experts, some old-new ministers, while some ministers merely exchanged positions (Aleksandar Antić and Zorana Mihajlović).

The consequence of this election is an extremely weak opposition, which led to the loss of democratic balance and counterbalance. This is a potentially weak point for the future of the process of democratic consolidation. The news which accompanied this election and which has positive effects for the democratic political culture is the resignation of party leaders who remained below census (Vojislav Koštunica – DSS and Mlađan Dinkić – URS). More than twenty parties are represented in Parliament; they mostly gained seats on the lists of larger parties. Twelve caucuses have been formed. Although it is difficult to

say to what extent this was influenced by the circumstances in which the election was held and what influence was exercised by the political engineering of the strongest party, an obvious consequence of the electoral campaign and the election was that the NDS halved the DS. "It's Enough," of the former minister Saša Radulović damaged the LDP, and Dveri and the Third Serbia weakened DSS. The right and extreme-right parties won 10.4 % of the vote, while other parties below the threshold together took 9.03 %, and 3.17% of votes were invalid. Therefore, the total percentage of the votes cast is 22.6 %. Anti-European, Euro-sceptic and right parties remained below the threshold. Instead of reaching Parliament, the extreme right is relegated to the street. Serbia remains with difficult questions of alignment and declarations on its relationships with NATO and Russia. The party whose main foreign policy idea was neutrality failed to enter Parliament. The following challenges stand before the government, formed after the extraordinary parliamentary election in 2014: It is expected to observe electoral promises, to deal more with social and economic topics, to reduce the tabloidization of Serbia, to deal more with the living standards of citizens and less with marketing and public relations. Foreign policy, however, is on a seesaw, without any clear definition of what it is Serbia aims to do.

Conclusions

Reform governments in Serbia after 2000, as well as other reform governments in Central and Eastern Europe during the 1990s, paid attention to social programmes and the habits of citizens which were created in the time of communism. Therefore, economic reforms, market economy, and privatisation have not been entirely completed. The lines of political divisions or cleavages in Serbia have changed over time. During the 1990s there were divisions along the lines of communism-anticommunism, monarchy-republic, war-peace. The cleavage between repre-

representatives of the *ancien régime* and reformists lost its strength in a double sense over the past fifteen years. On the one hand, the dissident credibility and legitimacy from the 1990s of parties which had fought against the old regime was ingloriously lost during DOS rule. On the other hand, the return of SPS to power, first with the support of the minority DSS government and later in coalition with DS, as well as the creation of SNS out of SRS, legitimized the parties of the old regime. This significantly alleviated the hitherto sharp line between parties of the old and the new regime. The westerner-nationalists cleavage is permeated by the European road of Serbia, intertwined with the issue of Kosovo and Metohia, further deepening this cleavage and prolonging its effect. UN sanctions, NATO intervention and support for separation of Kosovo and Metohia put the wind into the sails of anti-Western sentiments, or at least provided the basis for mobilisation of such feelings. These divisions have not always been clear. Sometimes there were oscillations and a re-positioning of certain parties. SPO varied between the nationalist (1990s) and a civil orientation (after 2000). DSS tried to combine nationalism and democracy. Even DS flirted a bit with nationalism. SPS and SNS were harder nationalists in the past, who are now more prone to civil orientation, but remain soft nationalists. The dominating dividing line after 2000 was the civil-national division, i.e. between traditionalism-modernism. This was best reflected in the relations toward Europe, and Kosovo and Metohia. Today, since SNS has chosen the European line, parties in Serbia are in search of a new line of cleavage. It is possible that in the coming period it will EU-Russia, i.e. NATO versus military neutrality.

The process of EU accession was contributed to by certain parties joining to the European party federations (DS, DSS, G17 Plus, LDP and SVM). Experiences from other countries which passed through the transition process suggest that ethnically more homogenous states where transition to market was made in a more timely matter, such as the Czech Republic, and Poland, tend to have moderate electoral instability and a high level

of commitment to democracy. Development of social cleavages, identities of parties and ideological orientations lead to electoral stability, without which political systems are sensitive to disturbances arising out of the personalisation of politics and authoritarian populism. To the contrary, where cleavage lines have not been permanently shaped and where electoral instability is greater, there are more chances for winning an election on the basis of social demagoguery and populist messages. Serbia is still closer to this latter case. Voters react on the basis of impressions left by party leaders and the overall image of parties, rather than on the basis of programme preferences in accordance with their interests. This leads to an instability of electoral choice and therefore the instability of the party system. The leader is frequently a bigger and more important "brand" than the party. Party identification is not solid. People perceive a party through the politics it carries out, through organisation, and also through people which represent it, particularly the party leader. All this makes for a party image which is often condensed in a single slogan or label. Where the party system is not institutionalised, the dominant identification of voters is set against the leader. At elections in Serbia (2000–2014) parties identified, differed and were perceived more through their leaders than through their programmes. As Serge Moscovici puts it, the masses are in love either with an ideal or with a man. In the key personalities the people see the embodiment of the entire party programme. Leaders, beside offering charismatic appeals, expect success by promises that they will feed the clients. There is an understanding of parties as employment agencies. By providing goods through clientelism, voters can realise their material interest in a manner which was not possible through public goods at a very limited scale. In party systems where electoral competition is carried out in accordance with clientelism and not according to party principles, chances for the consolidation of democracy are weaker. Weakness in distribution of goods will lead towards a decrease of trust in democracy. When institutions

are inefficient, dissatisfaction overruns to the streets, and party systems are not institutionalized but destroyed. For such tendencies, there are examples elsewhere in the region and indicators in Serbia as well.

Abbreviations:

- SPS – Socialist Party of Serbia
- NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
- SDA – Party of Democratic Action
- SRS – Serbian Radical Party
- DZVM – Democratic Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians
- SVM – Alliance of Vojvodina Hungarians
- DS – Democratic Party
- SDA – Party of Democratic Action of Sandžak
- SPO – Serbian Renewal Movement
- DSS – Democratic Party of Serbia
- NS – New Serbia
- DEPOS – Democratic Opposition of Serbia
- DOS – Democratic Opposition
- EU – European Union
- LDP – Liberal-Democratic Party
- SNS – Serbian Progressive Party
- GSS – Civil Alliance of Serbia
- DHSS – Christian Democratic Party of Serbia
- URS – United Regions of Serbia
- SDPS – Social Democratic Party of Serbia
- NDS – New Democratic Party
- LSV – League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina
- ZZS – (Together for Serbia)
- VMDK – Democratic Fellowship of Vojvodina Hungarians
- DLR – Democratic Left of Roma

- BDZ – Bosniak Democratic Union
- GSM – Hungarian Civic Alliance
- DZVM – Democratic Fellowship of Vojvodina Hungarians
- NOPO – None of the Available Answers
 - BIA – Security Information Agency
 - VOA – Military Intelligence Agency
 - VBA – Military Security Agency
- ICTY – International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia