



## ALL OR NOTHING GAME

Two weeks after the triumph of Tomislav Nikolić at presidential elections in Serbia it is not known who is going to constitute the future Government. No one can even dare to predict who is going to be the leader because in Serbia everything is possible so even the situation that in the government cooperate fiery enemies or parties being on completely different ideological sides.

Only a few days ago it seemed almost certain that the former President and the leader until these elections of the governing Democratic Party ( DS ) Boris Tadić is going to succeed to gather parliamentary majority that would support the Government which Prime Minister would be Boris Tadić. Tadić has also needed almost entire week , after , for him, unexpected defeat at presidential elections, to accept the candidacy for the Prime Minister. This decision was not easy because he exposes his successful political career to the great risk. However, honestly speaking, after the defeat at the presidential elections he did not have much choice – either to abandon politics or to continue struggling and that was possible only from the position of the Prime Minister. Simply, the position of the Prime Minister means that the leader of the democrates ( public name for the Democratic Party ) Boris Tadić stay as the head of the Democratic Party in the following period as well as that he is going to stay the most influential politician in the country.

***By accepting the candidacy for the Prime Minister Tadić has played on all or nothing. If he becomes the successful Prime Minister he is going to stay the head of the party and continue his successful political career. If he fails to become the successful Prime Minister the chances are great that the party is going to abandon him as the unpopular politician at the next elections. Maybe it is not correct because Tadić is the one who was providing for years good electoral results due to his popularity but it is cruel political reality. Because of it all, Tadić is aware that he has to form the Government quickly as well as that it has to be efficient, professional and capable of dealing with enormous political and economic problems that our country is facing with.***

Immediately after accepting the candidacy Tadić met Ivica Dačić, the leader of Socialists Party of Serbia ( SPS ) who he has had the cooperation in the previous government with. This step was quite important because without the socialists ( public name for the Socialists Party of Serbia ) is not possible to constitute the Government unless it is done by the two strongest parties – Democratic Party ( DS ) and the Serbian Progressive Party ( SNS ) of the current President Tomislav Nikolić. Despite the fact that it is not impossible, the cooperation between the democrates and the progressives ( public name for the Serbian Progressive Party ) which are fiery political opponents, meaning the forming of big coalition would be an exception. That the coalition will not be formed announced the leader of the democrates Boris Tadić at the meeting of the Main Council of the Democratic Party when he said that his party will not cooperate with the Serbian Progressive Party and the Democratic Party of Serbia ( party of former Prime Minister and the President Vojislav Kostunica that clearly stands up for political and military neutrality of Serbia and the abandoning of the negotiations with the European Union ).

Thus Tadić lessened the space for manoeuvring for his party and sent clear message – that it can constitute the government with the Socialists Party of Serbia. The third partner in that government coalition is being looked for because it is possible it to be Liberal-Democratic Party ( LDP ) of Čedomir Jovanović or The United Regions of Serbia of Mladjan Dinkić, or both of the parties. It is known that the Democratic Party and the Socialists Party of Serbia have different attitude towards these two smaller parties but it is certain that one of the parties or maybe both are going to enter the government without any problems, meaning that two of the parties are not arguing about that. As things stand right now, the Democratic Party does not want Mladjan Dinkić in the government so that choosing of Jovanović's liberals ( public name for the Liberal –Democratic Party ) is logical. Concerning that Jovanović stands for the independence of Kosovo as well as that he has got critical attitude towards the Republic of Srpska ( the part of Bosnia and Herzegovina that includes 49 per cent of the country populated mostly by Serbs and which has got high level of autonomy concerning the central government ) that are non-acceptable for the Socialists Party of Serbia, there are potential problems in cooperation.

***Still, it seems that the Socialists Party of Serbia and the Liberal-Democratic Party could overcome these problems. However, the agreement is not yet to come. Why? It seems that there are two obstacles. First one is the situation in the Democratic Party and the second is different understanding of the economic policy of the country from Democratic Party and the Socialists Party of Serbia.***

Immediately after the decision of Tadić to accept the candidacy for the Prime Minister emerged the question whether he can maintain that function as well as is it moral for the one who lost the presidential elections to now become the Prime Minister? Tadić has actively been in the politics for twenty years. In that period he was the President of Municipal Council of the Democratic Party , the Secretary of the Main Council, the Deputy President of the Executive Council, the Head of the Political School, the Deputy President and the President of the Democratic Party. At the same time, he was the representative in the Parliament, the Minister of Communications, the Minister of Defence and two times the President of Serbia. Someone who has got such an impressive political biography and enormous experience is certain to have qualifications to maintain any state functions and thus the function of the Prime Minister. The objections that the politician who has lost the presidential elections can not be the candidate for the Prime Minister are not righteous. In the democratic societies the President of the Parliament is chosen by the parliamentary majority, and in the case of Serbia it is 126 representatives in the Parliament. In case that Tadić and his Democratic Party gather parliamentary majority it is legitimate that they constitute the Government. Is it good for Tadić personally as well as for the Democratic Party – the voters will let us know at the next elections.

Tadić's advantage is that he would be the Prime Minister with strong political authority. That authority is the result of the fact that he is the president of the greatest political party in the leading coalition, that he has at just finished presidential elections won almost 1,5 million votes as well as that he was the President of Serbia for eight years. The leader of the democrates is the authority for the presidents of minor political parties that would be the members of the Government.



All of that would enable him make fast decisions as well as to solve all problems in the Government itself. That is exactly what missed in the Government of the former Prime Minister Mirko Cvetković. As the Prime Minister of Serbia Tadić could perform his ideas which is the important postulate for being the successful president of the Government.

So, Tadić would be in a position to bring the decisions but the question comes is he going to have anyone to administer the decisions with? If he is not going to be in a position to choose ministers who are going to be proposed by his coalitional partners he is going to be in a position to do so with the ministers from his party and they are going to be at least the half of his cabinet. The president of the Democratic Party is going to face the choice either that the ministers are political representatives ( due to their working or not working he is not the President at this moment ) or those who he considers to be hard workers and are going to do their job no matter if they are members of the party or not. Simply, Tadić will have to decide whether he is going to satisfy the needs of his party's colleagues or he is going to form the efficient government. Of course, it does not mean that all party's representatives who were at the functions of Ministers in the former government did their job badly, but Tadić knows quite well that there are those whose work was not satisfactory. Simply, while he was President of the Republic, Tadić formally was not responsible for the (not)working of certain Ministers from his party but he was responsible politically and partially and that was the reason of his defeat at the presidential elections. Now he is formally responsible for their work and that is why among the Minister should be expected not only party's representatives.

***At that point we come to the problem Tadić is facing with. If in the government would not be other party's functionaries the question is how the party is going to accept his government? Tadić became the President of Serbia just a few months after he had won the party's elections so that he was managing both functions almost all the time. He has almost neglected the party by dealing with state functions and business.***

So it happened that few of his associates grow up into the autonomic leaders who were connecting their political and party careers for the particular parts of the country ( and parties as well ) in which they were maintaining the government. Those are the mayor of Belgrade Dragan Djilas, the Prime Minister of Vojvodina ( northern province in Serbia which is together with Belgrade the most developed part of the country) Bojan Pajtić and Dušan Petrović who emerged as the leader of the party from rural Serbia. If we also add the favorite Minister of Defence Dragan Šutanovac, who is out of all Tadić's associates the most popular and has got the longest party working age, but also controversial Minister of Foreign Affairs Vuk Jeremić, it is clear that Tadić did not have the total control in his party. These party's leaders that showed up together with Tadić were an enormous advantage of the Democratic Party because each of them used to bring the additional votes to the party. It seemed that after the retreat of Tadić from politics which he announced for the year 2017, after the end of his presidential mandate that he currently struggled , party will not have any problems that one of his associates take over the leadership of the Party. The only problem might have been the fight of his inheritors about the position of the president in the Party but Tadić as the leader without doubt was expected to solve that problem as other problems.



The defeat at the presidential elections has changed everything. Now Tadić must be the Prime Minister, and his associates who know that usually the Prime Ministers are not popular, will try to save their ratings in order to have better chances at the next party congress. By keeping their ratings they are going less and less to wish to be connected to Tadić's government especially if it is going to be unpopular. Exactly there lies the greatest Tadić's problem – is his Democratic Party going to stand by him as the Prime Minister of Serbia? There is an impression that the leader of the democrates can face more problems from his party than from his political opponents that are the opposition now. Because of that Tadić is facing the dilemma – should he invite all of his political inheritors in the government and thus force them to share the responsibility with him or constitute the efficient government out of skillful people in which the mandatary can have trust, and then from that position control the situation in his party. It all tells us that the next congress of the Democratic Party is going to be quite interesting and unpredictable. It is going to be the struggle that is going to be more exciting than the one in the parliament.

Tadić must not wait long because the democrates are already losing the governing in one significant number of important cities in Serbia. It is interesting that in many of them the Socialists Party of Serbia has made the coalitions with the Serbian Progressive Party of the President Nikolić. It does not have to be significant for forming the same republic coalition, because almost all parties gave to their cities' local councils autonomy to form the governments with the parties they want to, but it leaves one number of functionaries without their jobs. Still, it is very symptomatic that the excluding of the Democratic Party from local governments happens mostly in towns where Democratic Party where Tadić convincingly lost the presidential elections. What is the reason for that we will see, but losing the government in a whole line of local self-governments increasing the tensions in the Democratic Party. These local functionaries that are no longer governing do not have anything to lose if they oppose to the official politics of the Democratic Party at the following congress.

So, the support of the Democratic Party to the government of their leader is going to depend directly on his efficacy at the position of the Prime Minister. If he were successful, he is going to drive a train which everyone are going to jump in. If opposite – everyone are going to run away from him. That is why Tadić needs the efficient and functional cabinet. It naturally does not mean that the cabinet has to be necessarily small, meaning that the government has to consist of 12 or 14 Ministries as it is speculated in media. The constrainedly joining of the Ministries, despite the fact that their number is going to be smaller, does not mean that the public is going to approve it. It is much more likely that public is going to deride to such Ministries. Besides, everyone knows that the smaller number of Ministries does not mean smaller administration because the employees, management and state secretaries stay because they have to do their jobs in administration whether there are Ministers or not. Only because of the public it is important for Tadić to have at least one member less than the Government of Mirko Cvetković which had 17 departments and 21 member. However, new Prime Minister is about to know that public is easily going to „forgive“ him if the Government has got one member more if it does its job efficiently as well as it will not be of any help the fact that there are 12 Ministers if the most important problems of citizens can not be solved. Thus, Tadić needs an efficient cabinet that can carry out its obligations.



The efficient cabinet does not mean only Ministers carrying on tasks but also that the Prime Minister will provide the analysis of their work every few months and that the public will exactly know what has been fulfilled out of promised and what is going to be done in the following period. On the other hand, his cabinet must not be „completely separated“ from his party so that he is going to be forced to do compromises between the efficacy and fulfilling of the party's wishes.

By administering the function of the President of Serbia, Tadić solved strategic problems of the country, he was dealing with the international cooperation, cooperation with the Hague Tribunal and the problem of Kosovo. The function of the Prime Minister is quite different and consists more of daily solving of fiery problems. Without strong cabinet and reliable associates in the Government as well as in the surrounding, it can happen to Tadić to become „strangled „ by solving the daily problems, so that he does not have time either for his party or for strategic politics.

The additional problem for Tadić are great expectations from the citizens. The living in Serbia is hard, economic crisis has almost stopped the economy, national currency dinar is daily losing its value, and the state is encumbered by the enormous public debt, the large amount of employees in public sector and the unemployment. Many citizens do not have any patience and they are going to expect from the Prime Minister to solve these problems. That is why the President of Republic is in much easier position because no one expects from him to solve these everyday problems and he can lecture moral advice or include in solving only these problems that can bring him political benefit. The Prime Minister can not choose. He has to deal with every problem and can only be either successful or not.

Tadić's advantage lies in the fact that the cabinet is going to have much more appearance in media than the cabinet of the former Prime Minister Mirko Cvetković. As to say, one of the greatest problems of former Government was that it stayed completely in the shadow of President Tadić so that even the good things it had done was not capable to promote. So about Cvetković's cabinet in public was created an impression as the one that it does not do anything, that it does not solve any problems, and that the decisions are not made in the Government. The partial guilt goes to the president Tadić himself but the fact is that no one was preventing the Government from creating a good picture about its work in media. The Government did not succeed in that and it is going to stay remembered as the one of the worst governments in the history of Serbia. Still, the facts do not say so.

The Government did so much for Serbia to avoid negative scenario that happened in some other countries in our surrounding in times of great crisis, it struggled the inherited problems, and at the same time in some sectors such as the defence were provided crucial reforms. Tadić will not have any problems with the media presence, meaning that everything his cabinet is about to do is going to be known to the citizens. The problem is whether he is going to have anything to present to the citizens?

It seems that Boris Tadić has missed the opportunity to constitute the majority in the first two weeks and to demonstrate strength and energy before President Nikolić starts the consultations. Even though it seemed that Nikolić was going to get on his table on the first day of his mandate the requirement of the parliamentary majority to give the mandate to Tadić it did not happen.



Now, when the President started consultations, things are going to move far more slowly. It can be expected that the mandate is going to be offered first to the representative of the party with the most representatives in the Parliament, Serbian Progressive Party ( SNS ) that won 73 mandates so that if it fails to form the Government than to get the mandate to the Tadić's democrates that won 67 mandates while the third option would be Dačić's socialists, having 44 mandates.

Since it is clear that the Democratic Party does not want in parliamentary majority Dinkić's United Regions of Serbia, they pushed them towards Serbian Progressive Party. However, both parties are of the right wing so that the coalition between them is not unnatural. Thus the democrates unconsciously enabled the progressives to come one step close to the forming of the parliamentary majority. Dinkić has got 16 representatives which is together with 73 representatives of the Serbian Progressive Party in total 89 representatives. In that puzzle only Dačić's socialists are missing.

That is exactly why in the following period the leader of the socialists Dačić will face sweet warries because the offers will be coming from both sides and he is in a position to choose. Maybe that is the reason why the majority had not yet been constituted by the beginning of the consultations of the President because now Dačić can get better terms. As in the year 2008, the socialists are going to decide who is going to be in the government. However, even though it seems that Dačić is only waiting for the better offer, the core of the negotiations is not going to be the number of members of the parliament. That question is simply not mentioned because Dačić knows that he can get whatever he wants. In negotiations Dačić is going to insist on the programme of the Government, that the Serbian administration accepts French concept of getting out of crisis which includes larger consumption. What is interesting is that the same concept supports Mladjan Dinkić, the leader of the United Regions, who could become Dačić's partner in the Government if he accepts the offer of the progressives. Is Serbian Progressive Party going to accept the same concept – the time will tell but if it does so that leads them into the Government. On the other side, the Democratic Party has by now supported the concept of saving, decrease of wages and pensions, which means the way of the IMF.

***The next week is going to reveal who is going to constitute the Government in Serbia and how it is going to struggle the crisis. The politicians have time because the Constitutional deadline for the constitution of the Government have started last week and it is going to last for three months. The problem is only that Serbia does not have more time.***