



ELECTIONS, ELECTIONS, ELECTIONS....

The president of Serbia **Boris Tadić** and the president of Serbian Assembly **Slavica Djukić Dejanović** scheduled local and parliamentary elections in Serbia on 6th of May. It is still unknown whether the citizens of Serbia are going to elect the new president of Serbia together with the local governments and members of the assembly at the beginning of May. The decision has not still been made by the President of Serbia **Boris Tadić** who, according to the Serbian Constitution, should resign and thus enable the schedule of the early presidential elections. If that would not be the case, regular presidential elections would be scheduled by the end of the year.

Parliamentary and local elections are scheduled in regular term so the parties in Serbia have been preparing for them for quite some time. Some kind of 'silent' electoral campaign has started over a year ago when the Prime Minister of Serbia **Mirko Cvetković** reconstructed his government. Maybe the certainty of the scheduled elections contributed to the fact that the parties had enough time to prepare, far from the public eyes, their coalitions. There were not any surprises as well because the parties are coming out at these elections more or less at the same coalitions as they did on previous elections held in May 2008.

Following elections are going to be different in some technical characteristics from any other previous elections. For the first time there is going to be formed a unique electoral list and is going to be public so that every citizen can personally check if he can vote or not. Forming of the unique list will enable citizens to vote in their place of sojourn as well and not, as it was the case, in their place of residence only so students or temporarily employed citizens now can vote at the current place of living and working. Besides, new electoral rules became effective concerning the way of forming candidate list in which parties, coalitions and citizen groups take part in elections. So far, for the parliamentary elections, the parties used to nominate 250 candidates lined according to ordinal numbers and after the elections the parties themselves would make the decision which of the candidates would enter the Assembly. According to the new law mandates will be automatically assigned due to the candidate list order. From the elections on, mandate once elected member of the assembly belongs only to him and the party will not be in a position, as it was the case, to remove the member of the assembly who is not obeying the party's discipline. This legal solution was adopted under quite a pressure from the European Union and with strong opposition and obstruction of Serbian political parties. At this moment it is quite unknown whether the implementation of the regulation about the independent delegates would 'turn the parliament into a market' as the opponents of this regulation claim but the fact is that this regulation will increase the importance of each delegate respectively since they will have the opportunity to make decisions independently, without being afraid of their parties' divesting their mandates. It is certain that new regulations about the delegates' independence will influence the strengthening the institution of parliament in the political life of Serbia.



Despite the pressures from the European Union Serbia scheduled local and parliamentary elections on the territory of Kosovo as well. This governmental decision was expected because every other would be a derogation of Serbian Constitution which defines Kosovo as the part of Serbia. However, that does not mean that all elections on Kosovo are going to be held as well.

That claim is confirmed by the statement of the leader of the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) and the Vice President **Ivica Dačić** in the interview to the Belgrade daily news 'Press' where was announced that he was asked from the European Union to **'as the leader of the Socialist Party of Serbia order Slavica Djukić-Dejanović (the president of the national Parliament and the president deputy of SPS) not to schedule the elections on Kosovo'**. That would mean that **I am abandoning Kosovo. There is no such a demand that would force me do such a thing. The elections have been scheduled and whether they are going to be held and how, is another question. But we did not give up Kosovo.'**, said Dacic and this way indirectly confirmed that Brussels and Belgrade are still searching for compromising formula for holding the elections on Kosovo. It is exactly the topic that well informed Belgrade daily news Blic wrote about and alluding on the **'well informed source' announced that 'Belgrade government's most likely decision is not to hold local elections on Kosovo.'** **According to the news'** writing', the international community is trying to maintain that neither Belgrade nor Pristina during the following elections become losers'. Based on this script, the parliamentary elections could be held on Kosovo and would be monitored by OSCE staff. **Brussels and the USA practically do not support any elections on Kosovo organized by Belgrade but will not let Kosovo's government to be repressive in case that only parliamentary elections would be held.'**, claims the colloquist of Blic. Since the withdrawal of Serbian army and police from Kosovo in June 1999. Belgrade has held continuous parliamentary and presidential elections while local elections were held only once and it was in 2008. Even the government in Pristina which suggested to the Kosovo parliament to adopt the Declaration on forbidding the elections organized by Serbia on Kosovo in a way supported this compromising solution. The Deputy Prime Minister of Kosovo's government **Hajredin Kuci** said that **'the citizens of Kosovo who have the citizenship of Serbia could be enabled to vote on Serbian parliamentary or presidential elections but on the territory on Kosovo to be organized by OSCE'**. On the basis of all this it is quite obvious that the most likely compromise concerning the elections would be that all sides agree that Serbs from Kosovo can vote on parliamentary and presidential elections in Serbia and that local elections are going to be postponed because of 'technical reasons'. This solution will please everyone but will not solve the problem existing among Serbs on Kosovo who do not admit government in Priština. They can not be stopped by anyone to independently organize local elections or to be forced to take part in local elections organized by Pristina.

The strongest party of the leading coalition, Democratic Party (DS) led by Boris Tadic is coming out to the elections in a coalition named **'A choice for better life – Boris Tadić.'** Coalition headed by the Democratic Party consists of five smaller parties besides the Democratic Party. These smaller parties will not bring many new votes to the democrats (colloquial name for Democratic Party in Serbia) concerning the individual ranking of these parties but they will bring so-called 'Synergy effect', in other words the possibility to face the voters as a movement. In



Serbia it is very important since voters generally share bad opinion about politicians and parties so they are just for that reason trying to turn towards creating coalitions and movements under the name that is some kind of electoral slogan. Democrats did that on previous elections held in 2008. when they in slightly wider coalition named ' for the European Serbia' triumphed with 102 mandates out of total of 250 mandates in Serbian parliament. Democratic Party scheduled elections straight after Serbia gained the European Union member candidate status and started campaign trying to capitalize this event. Taking into account that the European integrations have presented the trademark of the democrates for the decades it is natural that this party will use the successful process in their pre-electoral campaign. This is why the basic message of Democratic Party to voters will be – we are running the process of European integrations, we have fulfilled the promise given on the previous elections and so we are asking for another mandate to successfully end up this started process. Being aware of the fact that European integrations are their main electorate trump democrates at first appearance celebrated the candidacy loudly by gathering of the followers in Belgrade. Again, at first appearance, this celebration looked unsuitable because of the difficult situation Serbia is facing, but they achieved their objective.

They managed to align the candidacy only with their party and there were other parties, originally of European orientation, which pretended to use the candidacy of Serbia for the European Union membership into their favour and for their political promotion. The democrates thus have the basic topic for the elections, but it is not enough for the winning. The party is facing the problem that citizens are dissatisfied with the work of the government, economic situation, standard decrease, corruption increase in public sector and the loss of working places and all of it is in a connection with the Democratic Party. Democrats are trying to solve this problem with the campaign slogan ' business, investments, safety' as an amplified campaign in which their leader Boris Tadić attends foreign investments, new factories sending messages to voters that Democratic Party guarantees new investments, new working places and the economic prosperity of Serbia. The campaign of Democratic Party appears to be modern, at times even too modern, but making the impression of the Party that knows what it wants. Still, the problem with this campaign is that it only shows one man for now – the leader of the party Boris Tadić. For the governing party with certain number of the most important state representatives in its highest positions showing the voters certain competence for governing the state, is not advantageous to send a message of only one man, leader, that can communicate with voters. It may be the case that the democrates at the moment can not appear in front of the voters with the candidate for the Prime Minister. Indisputable candidate for the Prime Minister, a popular mayor of Belgrade **Dragan Djilas** who is also the president deputy in the Democratic Party, decided to accept the candidacy for the first man of Serbian capital. Every other suggestion for the Prime Minister apart from Dragan Djilas at this moment causes tumbles and problems inside the party itself and the democrates do not need such a thing during their campaign. Democrats have tried to solve this problem by placing Dragan Djilas as the first candidate on their electoral list (according to the Serbian law the name of the first candidate is placed just right after the name of the party on the ballot paper). Whether it is going to be enough time will tell, but the impression is that the Democratic Party campaign at this moment appears to be most organized and serious.



And what is most important, the democrats always make an impression on voters to be the party with the plan and it is widely known that those who vote , in Serbia and all over the world, appreciate that.

The most serious opponent to the leading government is the oppositional party, Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) led by Tomislav Nikolić who has already twice lost in tight encounter in the second ballot in the previous presidential elections from Boric Tadić . The progressives (the colloquial name for the Serbian Progressive Party) did not manage to create oppositional movement that would gather all or at least most of the oppositional parties . Despite the fact that on their list there are several parties and individuals which are not the members of SNS in the eyes of voters they are taking part in the elections as a party and that can cause a problem to SNS.

Most voters of this party are angry people, collaterals in the transition and disappointed citizens because of the decrease of living standard or the loss of their job. Thus, voters are looking for aggressiveness in the political appearance. For the political party pretending to win the government is not recommended to send aggressive messages during the campaign because it is not the way to attract new moderate voters of the leading coalition. And without those voters that want to hear opposition will not make any sharp cuts or bring instability – there is no winning. It is the reason why the position of the progressives on these elections is quite difficult because they need to satisfy their angry voters and at the same time to avoid scaring off voters that used to vote for the government and are now disappointed and may give their votes to the opposition. The campaign of SNS is led by the leader of the party Tomislav Nikolić and his deputy and the candidate for the Belgrade mayor **Aleksandar Vučić** and it is clearly seen that they address to the different voters. Vučić on purpose has taken over a role of the fiery critic of the government and the politician who reveals affairs while Nikolić is sending moderate messages to the voters. The impression is that the campaign of SNS has got the energy but it lacks transparent message does not offers to the voters a vision of the country future.

There can be noticed some trials of the progressives to offer something new to the voters such as the office for instant answers, a new law about public procurements or legalization at lower price but all of that still does not remind of the whole politics that would offer changes. That can be a problem for the party because the voters are expecting that the party which is pretending to be the governmental should expose the plan for the changes and the vision of country's future. Instead of that, in the campaign of Serbian Progressive Party are still dominant negative and critical tones. The slogan of the progressives ' Actuate Serbia ' sounds motivational and is appropriate for the oppositional political party. Still, the impression remains that the slogan is broad and that it could have been more explicit to the ordinary voters.



As the situation shows for now, the winner of these elections will not be decided between the two most powerful parties but among those that come from the third to the fifth place on the following elections. According to almost all researches the third place is going to be a coalition around Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) headed by the actual Deputy of Prime Minister and the minister of the police, Ivica Dačić. The socialists are coming out to the elections in the same coalition as it was in 2008., when his party joined the government after eight years of the opposition.

Dačić has made great effort to save the coalition by giving bigger concessions to the Pensioners' Party. He decided to do such a thing because he believes in ' the effect of synergy' that these three parties have, meaning in better result that can achieve the coalition rather than his party as individual. Dačić's goal is the place of Prime Minister after the next elections. His calculation is quite simple – the leader of the Democratic Party Boris Tadić is the President and his certain candidate for the Prime Minister and the deputy of Tadić Djilas is going to be the mayor of Belgrade. He believes that the democrates will not be in a position to come up with the third candidate because of the possible collisions inside the party and that in this kind of scenario he could have greater chances to win. Besides, he is the best marked minister of the actual government of the Prime Minister Cvetković. Still, for the place of the Prime Minister he needs excellent electorate result – 15 per cent of all votes. The problem with the socialists (colloquial name for the SPS) is in the fact that besides personal range of their leader party does not offer any politics to the voters. This party has still not offer their own programme, to claim what will future government have to provide if the socialist are going to be the part of it, to as the party of left wing make tougher relationship with the Union. Besides, the socialists are always under constant attacks of the progressives. It is quite logical because the voters of the Socialist Party of Serbia are potential voters of Serbian Progressive Party and the progressive know that most of their voters they can overtake from the socialists. Most of the voters from the Socialist Party of Serbia are conservatives who have been voting for this party for the decades, since the time when its leader was Slobodan Milosevic, the former president of Serbia. That is why Socialists Party of Serbia is the party of left wing with the electorate of the right wing. Since Serbian Progressive Party is the party of the right wing the electorate of the Socialists Party of Serbia is their target. Dačić is trying to defend from the attacks on his voters by aggravating the rhetoric about Kosovo as well as about some internal questions. This rhetoric may help him to save his voters but will prevent him from gaining new ones, those who do not have anything in common with the history of his party and who want now to vote for his party which now seems to gain trust in certain voters. It is the reason why Dačić's party is the favourite for the third place but also the great mystery of these elections.

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and its leader **Čedomir Jovanović** as it looked like by the end of the last year seem to have found the formula for success at the elections and may be the third place and today they are having serious problems. This party with the slogan ' The truth ' is the unique in Serbia because it is the only party speaking in public that Serbia should admit the independence of Kosovo. It offers to Serbia essentially new politics. The problem this party is facing is the unpopularity of its leader as well as the fact that Serbia is not ready for the politics that is offered by the liberals (colloquial name for the members of Liberal Democratic Party).

By the end of the last year at the moment when all the negotiations with Kosovo were stopped and when the decision about the European Union membership candidacy was delayed the liberals joined together with the Serbian Movement of Changes (SPO) and formed a coalition named ' Reversal'. Many respectable intellectuals of liberal orientation joined this coalition. At that moment it seemed that Jovanovic has got the ideal combination for the winning the elections. He himself unpopular hid behind the ' Reversal' , and the fact that government could not make any positive movements in negotiations with Pristina as well as the fact that there were some delays in Euro integrations was bringing him the votes of disappointed voters of the Democratic Party. In the meantime, Serbia has become the candidate for the European Union membership and several important agreements have been signed with Priština and Jovanovic has lost the topic for the campaign.

The Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) ,the party of former Prime Minister **Vojislav Koštunica** is the potential partner of Serbian Progressive Party concerning the fact that both parties are of the right wing. That party is coming out at the elections by itself and with a slogan ' For Serbia, you know why'. The slogan hasn't got the energy but truly depicts the political programme of the Democratic Party of Serbia. It is interesting that of all parties that are taking part in these elections , the Democratic Party of Serbia offers most transparent political idea – political and military neutrality of Serbia. This idea has got many followers in serbian society but the Democratic Party of Serbia itself does not have energy to capitalize it into the electoral result. Among the reasons is the sluggishness of the leader of the party. It is interesting that DSS itself missed the opportunity to achieve better electoral result by joining to its list the right wing movement ' Dveri' gathering young people in Serbia of right wing political orientation. This movement that can not pass the census independently is quite popular at the right wing and would bring to the Democratic Party of Serbia exactly what the party is lacking – the energy. They would have more chances that way together with transparent political idea and ' synergy effect' to provide good result at the elections.

The United Regions of Serbia (URS) , unlike the elections in 2008. when they were part of the coalition of Boris Tadić are now coming out at the elections independently. The head of the regions is very dynamic and and skillful man former deputy president of the Serbian government, **Mladjan Dinkić**. That party emerged out of economic experts group and has chosen a slogan ' Strong regions, strong Serbia.' The slogan truly depicts the programme of the party and this is maybe the best example of good electorate message. Dinkić is the politician with a lot of energy completely devoted to his work. Still, the impression is that he entered this campaign with less energy than usual. The basic reason is the fact that the Democratic Party took the basic electoral topic from Dinkić's party – the economy and attracting of foreign investments. During his three years long stay in the government (he was deposed in March last year), Dinkic was building his reputation on economy and the attracting of foreign investments in towns all over Serbia thus creating the base for his politics or regionalisation of Serbia. The fact is that Mladjan Dinkić by chosing regionality as his politics took the topic that is very important in Serbia and thus is politically profitable. However, the economy and the attracting of the foreign investments have become the politics of the governing Democratic Party and are strongly promoted by the president at these elections. Tadic daily visits new opened drives all over Serbia. For that reason the Democratic Party took over from Dinkić his most important topic for the campaign.



The question is why the Democratic Party is doing that if it knows that Dinkić is a potential coalitional partner of this party after the elections? It seems that the personal relations leader of the regions has had with the leading people of the governing coalition and because of which he was deposed from the government a year ago, are the prevailing reasons. Besides, in current governing coalition they can not be certain that Dinkic will not go and make a colalition with the progressives after the elections? Even though at first sight it seems strange, the United Regions of Serbia is the right wing party and with programme it is closer to the Serbian Progressive Party rather than to the Democratic Party or the Socialist Party of Serbia which are the parties of the left wing, so the fears at the government are not completely without a reason. Concerning the regionalisation itself, Dinkić did not manage to gather enough number of strong regional leaders that would guarantee him the winning at the elections. The things came only to the mayor of Kragujevac (the forth largest town in Serbia) , Verko Stevanović and several local leaders from smaller places. That is why the success of this party is linked to the energy of its leader and his capability to impose to the voters. The impression is that it has never been more difficult than nowadays, and it is questionable whether the party is going to pass the census on these elections.

The last party that has a chance to pass the census at the following elections in Serbia is Serbian Radical Party (SRS) of the Hague's prisoner Vojislav Šešelj. The radicals (a colloquial name for SRS members) base their politics on the character of their leader. Their programme – The Great Serbia – has not been changed for 20 years now. Still, it seems that they are only talking about their political goal. The party is actually the remnant of the former strongest oppositional party which was devided when in 2008 from Serbian Radical Party (SRS) separated the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS). It is interesting that the growth of radicals at this moment suits best to the democrats because it lessens the power of the progressives. Because of the conflicts with former party's colleagues , despite the fact that both parties are of the right wing, the radicals and the progressives can not enter the coalition. Because of that for the Democratic Party is desirable good score of Seselj's followers. It can be noticed through promotions they get in media or the prime time for their leader Vojislav Šešelj while exposing his defence in front of the international war crimes tribunal in the Hague. The impression is that the radicals will surely cross census of five per cent but that they will in ever y coalition combining stay out of government.

The current electoral picture of Serbia can be changed by scheduling the presidential elections. The fact is that the presidential elections , together with local and parliamentary , suits most to the favourites Boris Tadić and Tomislav Nikolić, and their parties, the Democratic Party and the Serbian Progressive Party. The presidential elections would overcome parliamentary and local elections and would probably create some kind of referendum atmosphere.

This calculation may only disturb the leader of the socialists Ivica Dačić who personally has got better ranking than his party. On the other hand, the presidential elections would open to the leader of the socialists highway to the place of Prime Minister. Concerning that it is quite clear that neither Boris Tadić nor Tomislav Nikolić would not win the elections in the first round the third ranked candidate would probably with his support decide in the second round the winner and future president of Serbia.



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Being so, for such an support the place of Prime Minister is a reasonable award. The presidential elections will lead smaller parties such as DSS, LDP, URS or SRS into problems because their potential candidates can not achieve better results from the party, and part of their voters will vote for one of the two strongest presidential candidates. Just because of that it is possible that the presidential elections enable better electoral results for the two leading parties as well as for the Socialists Party of Serbia, but as for the other parties, it will leave them without their part of the voters and they could stay under the census.