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Analysis
1 month before
the poll

The Serbs will be renewing all of their political representatives (president of the Republic, MPs and local representatives) on 6th May

On 13th March last the President of the Republic, Boris Tadic (Democratic Party, DS), set the 6th May as the date for the next general elections in which the Serbs will renew the 250 members of the National Assembly, the only chamber in Parliament. This election is the first not to take early since the fall of Slobodan Milosevic (October 2000). On 4th April the head of State decided to resign from office and to convene a presidential election (a few months ahead of the normal date), on the same day as the general elections. On 6th May next the Serbs will also be appointing their local representatives and voters in Vojvodina (a region in the north of the country) will be choosing their members of their regional Assembly.

Over the last few years the general elections in Serbia, have regularly brought the pro-European camp led by the President of the Republic Boris Tadic, into opposition against the pro-Russian nationalists led by Tomislav Nikolic (Serb Progressive Party, SNS). After years of war and isolation in the international arena and since they have been able to elect their representatives democratically, the Serbs have always chosen the path of reason, by electing parties to office which have promised them a European future.

In 2008 the signature of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement between Serbia and the EU helped enormously towards the victory of the Democratic Party in the general elections. On March 1st Serbia achieved official EU candidate status on the part of Brussels. This might not now weigh as much as before in the electorate's choice. "The citizens of Serbia have carried a heavy burden in the shape of the reforms our country has undertaken to turn it into a democratic society in which human rights and minorities are respected and European values asserted," stressed President Boris Tadic after the Brussels announcement. "The EU is vital for Serbia because it keeps it on the path of reason," said Ognjen Pribicevic, Belgrade's former Ambassador to Germany. Bosko Jaksic, a journalist at the

daily *Politika*, notes that for the first time ever the EU's decision has not been motivated by fear of seeing Tomislav Nikolic rise to power but rather more because of the deterioration in the situation in Kosovo. The former radical leader quit the Radical Party (SRS) after the last general elections on 11th May 2008, to create a new one, the Progressive Party (SNS), and now claims to be pro-European.

The outgoing government led by Prime Minister Mirko Cvetkovic, (independent) comprises the Democratic Party, the Socialist Party (SPS) led by Ivica Dacic (founded in 1990 by Slobodan Milosevic), the United Pensioners Party (PUPS) led by Jovan Krkobabic, G17+ led by Mladjan Dinkic, the United Regions Party (URS), the Social Democratic Party (SDP) led by Rasim Ljajic and Democratic Action of Sandjak (SDA). The general elections on 6th May should, amongst other things, be a test of strength of the alliance between the Democratic Party and the Socialist Party.

Presidential Election: Boris Tadic vs Tomislav Nikolic, round 3.

"I have decided to shorten my mandate so that a presidential election can take place on 6th May and I shall be running. These elections (presidential and gene-

ral) will provide citizens with an opportunity to choose the path they want to take. I am offering the path of European integration and the protection of our territory," declared outgoing Head of State Boris Tadic on 4th April last as he announced his resignation. The outgoing president's mandate was officially due to come to an end on 15th February 2013.

Boris Tadic is running for his third consecutive mandate as head of State. The 2006 Serb Constitution prohibits the Presidents from undertaking more than two mandates but this text was adopted during Boris Tadic's first mandate (2004-2008), when he was elected for the first time as Head of State of Serbia and Montenegro. On 5th June 2006 Serbia became independent after a referendum organised in Montenegro on 21st 2006, when 55.5% of the electorate voted in support of the end of the union between Podgorica and Belgrade. Boris Tadic was re-elected as President of Serbia on 3rd February 2008.

The presidential mandate is five years. Each candidate running for the supreme office has to collate at least 10,000 signatures if he is to stand. If none of the candidates wins the absolute majority on 6th May next, a second round is organised two weeks later on 20th May.

To date 8 people are running for the Presidency of the Republic:

- Boris Tadic (Democratic Party, DS), outgoing head of State;
- Tomislav Nikolic, leader of the Progressive Party (SNS);
- Cedomir Jovanovic, leader of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP);
- Itsvan Pastor, candidate of the Union of Hungarians of Vojvodina (VMSZ);
- Alexandr Martinovic, the Radical Party's candidate (SRS);
- Vojislav Kostunica, former Prime Minister (2004-2008) and Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) candidate;
- Ivica Dacic, leader of the Socialist Party (SPS);
- Zoran Stankovic, present Healthcare Minister and former Defence Minister (2005-2007), candidate of the United Regions Party (URS).

Other people may come forward as candidates in the

presidential election within the next few days.

Officially, the outgoing president has justified the organisation of the early election because he says it will save time and money. By holding all of the elections at the same time helps Serbia avoid long months of electoral campaigning. But it also enables Boris Tadic to take advantage of the fact that Belgrade achieved official EU candidate status on March 1st last in Brussels; it also enables the Democratic Party to benefit from the charisma of its leader, whose portrait is now on the party's electoral posters. Another important point: the government that is appointed after the general elections on 6th May will have to take some difficult and unpopular decisions very quickly, which might have damaged the re-election of the outgoing Head of State if the Presidential election had taken place as planned. Boris Tadic will be facing Tomislav Nikolic who he has beaten twice already: 53.97% of the vote on 27th June 2004 (46.03% for the nationalist leader) and on 3rd February 2008, 50.31% of the vote against 47.97% to his rival.

Tomislav Nikolic who is standing against Boris Tadic's for the 3rd time running has changed his stance over the last few years. After the general elections on 11th May 2008, the Serb Radical Party led by Vojislav Seselj divided and in the autumn Tomislav Nikolic and Aleksandr Vucic left the party to create the Progressive Party, which unlike the Radical Party says it supports Serbia's integration of the EU. Tomislav Nikolic is therefore standing as a pro-European nationalist candidate. He is careful however, since he is aware that Belgrade's membership is not due to take place before 2020, whilst the Serbs are expecting real responses to their present economic difficulties.

Hence Tomislav Nikolic regularly accuses Boris Tadic of having set the goal of Serbia's accession to the EU over that of improving living standards and the fight to counter corruption. "If we were in power we would have a better living standard and we have many friends across the world who might help us," he declared, referring to Russia and China with whom he would like Serbia to have closer links.

Socialist, Ivica Dacic, is unhappy about the Presidential

election taking place on the same day as the general election. Indeed he fears that the media will only be interested in two personalities, i.e. Boris Tadic and Tomislav Nikolic and their parties, to the detriment of other political movements. This is why Mr Dacic decided to run in the presidential election. Liberal Democrat Cedomir Jovanovic has also protested against the early presidential election and stressed the fact that a duel between Boris Tadic and Tomislav Nikolic would dominate the heart of the electoral campaign, which would in turn be detrimental to the latter and overshadow all of the other candidates and parties.

"Boris Tadic and Tomislav Nikolic want to cut Serbia in two, but Serbia is bigger than that," declared the socialist leader. Djodje Jovanovic, a political analyst from the Centre for Political Innovation in Belgrade recalls that the fact of putting the same candidate forward for the post of Prime Minister and head of State is customary in Serbia.

The General Elections: the progressive opposition in the lead but with what kind of majority?

In the general elections Boris Tadic's Democratic Party has chosen to join forces with the Social Democratic Party and the Social Democratic League of Vojvodina, in a coalition called "*The choice of a better life-Boris Tadic*". It maintains that it will not govern with any of the following parties: the Renewal Party (SPO) led by Vuk Draskovic, the United Regions Party, the Progressive Party, the Democratic Party of Serbia led by former Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica, the Radical Party and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

As four years ago the Democratic Party's programme is defending a European Serbia. "*A European Serbia is a modern country with the rule of law, it is an efficient country with infrastructures, quality communication, universities – a country where people want to stay and from which they are not trying to flee,*" declared Boris Tadic. He admitted that a great deal still had to be done to achieve this; he said he wanted the next government to be appointed as quickly as possible after the election, saying that a great number of major reforms had to be set in place. "*The next government will have to take some difficult, complicated decisions*

to guarantee a better future for our citizens," he said. "*During the general elections we have to be wary of those who might destroy everything that has been done since 2000,"* he warned, declaring that some parties, that were previously in favour of a Grand Serbia and that were now pro-European had neither vision nor programme and were threatening to take the country into a dead end.

The achievement of official EU candidate status for Serbia was mainly done by Boris Tadic. "*The path towards Europe will guarantee stability, better living standards, new investments and the country's modernisation. We must not stop, whatever the problems encountered by the European Union,"* he stressed. For 2012 the democratic leader set himself several goals: the reduction of unemployment, increased investments and improved living standards. "*We have to be prepared for a new wave in the economic crisis,"* he indicated.

The Serb Progressive Party led by Tomislav Nikolic is offering a 120 page programme in which it promises a decrease in taxes and a campaign against monopolies and tycoons. It has announced a reduction in corruption that will enable savings of 62 billion dinars, i.e. around 2% of the country's GDP. It has joined forces in a coalition called the SNS-NS-PSS-PS Tomislav Nikolic, which comprises the Progressive Party, New Serbia (NS) led by Velimir Ilic, the Strength of Serbia Movement (PSS) led by Bogoljub Karic and the Socialist Movement (PS). Tomislav Nikolic has ruled out working with Boris Tadic's Democratic Party.

On 11th March last the Liberal Democratic Party led by Cedomir Jovanovic, who is fighting for development in the policy undertaken in Kosovo in support of an acceptance of the declaration of the country's independence, has joined forces in these general elections with the Serb Renewal Movement and the Social Democratic Union.

The Question of Kosovo

On 24th February last Serbia and Kosovo signed a regional cooperation agreement which allows Pristina

to take part in conferences that are held concerning the Balkans without Belgrade having officially acknowledged Kosovo's independence. This agreement that opens up dialogue between the two countries enabled Serbia to achieve official EU candidate status from Brussels.

On 14th and 15th February last a large majority of the Serbs of Kosovo living south of the river Ibar (99.74%) voted by referendum and rejected the institutions of the "supposed Republic of Kosovo". Three quarters of the 35,000 voters (75%) took part. 120,000 Serbs live in Kosovo, 40,000 of them live in the border region between this country and Serbia. The President of the Republic Boris Tadic, denounced the organisation of the popular vote that "*was damaging to the interests of the Serb State.*"

The pro-European parties are defending both the idea of a European Serbia and that of a Serbian Kosovo. "*All of those who suggest giving up European integration to save Kosovo should be aware that Serbia would lose all hopes of maintaining its national interests in Kosovo and in Metohija. Belgrade must draw up a solution that respects the legitimate interests of the Albanians and the institutions of Pristina but which at the same time do not infringe Serb interests. I am sure that a solution like this is possible,*" repeats Boris Tadic.

The Progressive Party is against any acknowledgement of Pristina's independence or solutions that "*would humiliate Serbia*" because "*Kosovo is just as much Serb as it is Albanian*" he stresses. Tomislav Nikolic does not want his country to join the EU to the detriment of Kosovo and is particularly sceptical about real EU membership for Serbia. "*The achievement of the status means nothing. Look at Turkey, which has officially been a candidate since 1987,*" declared the progressive leader. "*I do not know what kind of promises the government had to make to achieve official candidate status, so I cannot really rejoice about it,*" he maintained.

The Kosovar authorities have refused the organisation of local elections in the Serb towns in Kosovo on 6th May and have called on the EU to intervene to prevent their occurrence. The Ambassador of the USA in

Kosovo, Christopher Dell, said that this election would infringe UN resolution 1,244. Farid Zarif, head of the UN mission in Kosovo (MINUK) said that the local election could not be organised because of the tension that existed between the two countries. Oliver Ivanovic, Secretary of State for Kosovo and Metohija within the government indicated that the Serb institutions would continue to exist beyond 6th May because the government would appoint local representatives after the elections.

The Serb Political System

The Serb political landscape has changed a great deal over the last few years. The country has 82 parties (45 of which represent national minorities) in comparison with over 600 before the modification of the electoral law in 2009. Since last year a new change to the law enables representatives to fulfil their mandates and therefore to change party if they want to. Many political analysts fear that this measure will downgrade the general election and that the richest parties will try to "buy" representatives. Moreover Serbia now has a single national electoral list which replaces the previous local list system. On 6th May next, in the presidential and general elections, the Serbs will be able to vote in any of the country's polling stations and not only in their place of domicile as before.

The National Assembly, the only chamber in parliament comprises 250 members elected for four years by proportional representation within a single constituency. Each candidate list has to find at least 10,000 citizens' signatures if they want to stand in the elections (3,000 for the parties representing national minorities: Roma, Hungarians, Croats, Romanians, Bosnians, etc.). Every political party has to win at least 5% of the vote cast to be represented in the National Assembly except for the parties representing the national minorities. Finally every list must comprise at least 30% of women amongst its candidates.

After the last general elections on 11th May 2008 the following political parties were represented in the National Assembly:

- the five parties within the coalition "For a European

Serbia": the Democratic Party led by Boris Tadic (DS), G17+ led by Mladjan Dinkic, the Serb Renewal Movement (SPO), the Social Democratic League of Vojvodina (LSV) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP), have 102 seats together;

- the Serb Radical Party (SRS), an extreme nationalist party is led by Dragan Todorovic, who is replacing Vojislav Seselj, former Prime Minister under Slobodan Milosevic, who has been in prison in The Hague since he was surrendered in February 2003 and accused of crimes against humanity and war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). The party divided in October 2008 and the two main leaders, Tomislav Nikolic and Aleksandar Vucic left it to found the Serb Progressive Party (SNS). The Radical Party has 56 seats and the Progressive Party, 21;
- the Democratic Alliance Party of Serbia (DSS) led by former Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica and New Serbia (NS), led by Velimir Ilici has 30 MPs;

- the coalition comprising the Socialist Party (SPS), founded on 27th July 1990 founded by Slobodan Milosevic and led by Ivica Dacic, the United Pensioners' Party (PUPS) led by Jovan Krbobabic and United Serbia (US) led by Dragan Markovic, has 20 seats;
- the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), founded in 2005 after a split in the Democratic Party, led by Cedomir Jovanovic, with 13 seats;
- the Hungarian Coalition has 4 seats;
- the Bosnian List for a European Sandjak, led by Esad Dzudzevic has 2 seats;
- the Albanian Coalition of the Presevo Valley has one MP.

The polls forecast victory for Boris Tadic, in the first round of the presidential election with 40.9% of the vote ahead of Tomislav Nikolic, who is due to win 33.4% of the vote. Moreover nearly half of the Serbs (47%) say they are satisfied with their head of State.

Reminder of the presidential election results of 20th January and 3rd January 2008 in Serbia

Turn out: 61.37%

Candidates	No. of votes won (1st round)	% of votes won (1st round)	No of votes won (2nd round)	% of votes won (2nd round)
Boris Tadic (Democratic Party, DS)	1 457 030	35,39	2 304 467	50,31
Tomislav Nikolic (Radical Party, SRS)	1 646 172	39,99	2 197 155	47,97
Velimir Ilic (New Serbia, NS)	305 828	7,43		
Milutin Mrkonjic (Socialist Party, SPS)	245 889	5,97		
Cedomir Jovanovic (Liberal Democratic Party, LDP)	219 689	5,34		
Istvan Pasztor (Hungarian Union of Vojvodina, VMSZ)	93 039	2,26		
Milanka Karic (Serb Strength Movement, PSS)	40 332	0,98		
Marijan Ristic (Farmers' Peoples Party, NSS)	18 500	0,45		
Jugoslav Dobricanin (Reform Party, RS)	11 894	0,29		

Source : Electoral Commission of Serbia

Reminder of the General Elections Results of 11th May 2008 in Serbia

Turn out: 61.33%

Political Parties	No of votes won	% of votes won	No of seats won
For a European Serbia, (coalition with Democratic Party, G17+, Movement for Serb Renewal, Social Democratic League of Vojvodina and Social Democratic Party (DS-G17+-SPO-LSV-SDP)	1 590 200	38,42	102
Serb Radical Party (SRS)	1 219 436	29,46	78
Democratic Party of Serbia-New Serbia (DSS-NS)	480 987	11,62	30
Socialist Coalition Party –United Pensioners Party-United Serbia (SPS-PUPS-US)	313 896	7,58	20
Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)	216 902	5,24	13
Hungarian Coalition	74 874	1,81	4
Bosnian List for a European Sandjak	38 148	0,92	2
Albanian Coalition of the Valley of Presevo	16 801	0,41	1
Others	77 742	0,83	0

Source : Electoral Commission of Serbia

The outgoing President of the Republic Boris Tadic, favourite in the Serb presidential election. His party (DS) might win the general elections.

D-7
7 days before
the poll

On 6th May next the Serbs are being called to ballot in three elections: the 1st round of the presidential (if necessary a second round will take place two weeks later, on 20th May), general elections (renewal of the 250 members of the National Assembly, the only chamber in Parliament) and finally local elections. The electorate of Vojvodina (north of the country) will also be appointing its regional assembly.

This is an electoral venue of the highest importance for 7 million Serb citizens, who will be renewing in just a few days all of their political representatives.

Presidential Election

12 candidates are officially running in the Serb presidential election:

Boris Tadic (Democratic Party, DS), outgoing head of State;

- Tomislav Nikolic, leader of the main opposition party, the Progressive Party (SNS); running for fourth consecutive time for the presidential office

- Cedomir Jovanovic, leader of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) is running for the second time in the presidential election (he won 5.34% of the vote in the first round of the presidential election on 20th January 2008);

- Itsvan Pastor, candidate of the Union of Hungarians of Vojvodina (VMSZ); he is also running for the second time (he won 2.26% of the vote on 20th January 2008);

- Vojislav Kostunica, former Prime Minister (2004-2008) and Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) candidate;

- Ivica Dacic, leader of the Socialist Party (SPS); and outgoing Interior Minister who is running for the second time (he won 4.04% in the first round of the presidential election on 13th June 2004);

- Zoran Stankovic, present Healthcare Minister and former Defence Minister (2005-2007), candidate of the United Regions Party (URS). ;

- Jadranska Seselj (Radical Serb Party, SRS), wife of the party's leader Vojislav Seselj, presently being held in The Hague and waiting for his trial in which he is accused of crimes against humanity and war crimes by the ICTY ;

- Vladan Glisic, independent candidate supported by the far movement Dveri;

- Danica Grujicic, the Social Democratic Alliance candidate;

- Zoran Dragisic, an independent candidate supported by the Movement of Workers and Farmers of Serbia;

- Muamer Zukorlic, mufti of the Islamic Community of Serbia supported by the Coalition of Albanians of the Presevo Valley led by the only Albanian MP in Parliament Riza Halimi;

The decision taken by the outgoing President Boris Tadic on 4th April to convene the presidential election on the same day as the general elections was a wise

one, because it enables him to support his party's campaign (DS), which has been struggling in the polls, by means of his own personality and to provide impetus to an electoral campaign that has been a little lifeless to date. *"The presidential election will help the political parties because the charisma of their leaders will raise the turnout rate,"* believes political expert Vladimir Goati. The Democratic Party (DS) should therefore benefit from this – since the electorate of the main opposition party – the Progressive Party (SNS) are traditionally keen.

Can the Democratic Party retain power?

"These elections are an opportunity to decide if we want to continue the reform process that has earned us acknowledgement on the part of the EU and the Council of Europe and has given us the chance to continue a policy that attracts investors and creates jobs," declared the outgoing head of State.

He repeats to his fellow countrymen that the path chosen by his party is a guarantee for the future of Serbia. *"Any other route is uncertain and would be dangerous for both citizens and State. We do not know where the country would be going if the coalition rallied Tomislav Nikolic (SNS leader), Bogoljub Karic (who leads the Movement of Strength, PSS) and Velja Ilic (leader of New Serbia, NS) won the elections,"* stresses Boris Tadic. He warned of the way Tomislav Nikolic was developing, who, he recalled, is saying different things at present from what he maintained in the past. *"The question is: what will he say tomorrow?"* asks the outgoing President.

"The Democratic Party has modernised the country to improve the Serbs' lives. We have taken risks at difficult times including the choice of being unpopular. The Progressive Party does not hide the fact that it says things, the sole aim of which is to win the elections;" he emphasised.

"I am expecting Belgrade to start EU membership talks at the end of the year. If Serbia continues along the same path it will certainly join the EU in 2020," repeats Boris Tadic. The head of State said that he ruled out any agreement with the Progressive Party as well as with the Radical Serb Party. *"We are ready to negotiate with all of the other parties,"* he declared.

The Democratic Party is however facing the disenchantment of the Serbs who are experiencing a serious economic crisis even though the country has had positive growth since 2010. GDP growth is slow (0.5% in 2012), unemployment is affecting nearly one quarter of the working population (23.7% in February), 400,000 jobs have been destroyed since the start of the economic crisis and 7.3 million Serbs are living below the poverty line. In January last the IMF froze part of its aid of 1.3 billion \$, since the country had not succeeded in consolidating its public finances sufficiently. The IMF is asking Serbia to reduce its public deficit to 4.25% of the GDP.

Has the time come for Tomislav Nikolic?

"The people in office do not care about your living conditions," declared the Progressive Party leader as he spoke to the 10,000 Serbs who demonstrated on 26th April last in the centre of Belgrade against economic difficulties and corruption. *"If they were concerned they would have done something to reduce unemployment and to attract investments?"* he added Tomislav Nikolic said that if he was elected as head of the country he would improve the Serbs' daily life by reforming the tax system, by increasing pensions and also by attracting financial investments.

Still a nationalist, but now pro-European and therefore in support of Serbia's integration into the EU, Tomislav Nikolic says however that Belgrade's membership must come after the improvement of living conditions in Serbia. *"Our entry into the EU will not occur before 8 to ten years. But it is now that we have to live. We must find responses to the difficulties we encounter. We cannot just lie down and wait to join Brussels. What will happen if it never happens?"* wonders the Progressive leader.

The latter also likes to recall that Serbia is "a house with two doors" one on the West and one on the East – *"which must both remain open."* In Tomislav Nikolic's opinion Belgrade has to step up its relations with Russia.

It remains that some Serb and European analysts still fear however that once in power the Progressive Party leader will take the country back to the years of war, which are not so far in the past and will entertain tense relations with the countries in the West.

Boris Tadic is the favourite in the presidential election and political analysts say that the Democratic Party should, after the general election, be in a position to hold a parliamentary majority and to form a government coalition.

According to the most recent poll by Faktor Plus at the end of April, Tomislav Nikolic and the outgoing Head of State, Boris Tadic were running neck and neck in the presidential race. The first is due to win 36.1% of the vote and the second 35.7%. Socialist Ivica Dacic is due to come third followed by Liberal Democrat Cedomir Jovanovic and by former Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica. Tomislav Nikolic and Boris Tadic are due to face each other in the second round of voting on 20th May next.

As far as the general elections are concerned the Progressive Party (SNS) is credited with 33.5% of the vote ahead of the Democratic Party (DS) by five points, which is due to win 28.3% of the vote. The Socialist Party (SPS), a member of the present government coalition led by Prime Minister Mirko Cvetkovic, (which rallies the Democratic Party, the Party of United Pensioners (PUPS) led by Jovan Krkobabic, G17+ led by Mladjan Dinkic, the United Regions Party (URS), the Social Democratic Party (SDP) led by Rasim Ljajic and Democratic Action of Sandjak (SDA)) is due to come third with 11.8% of the vote and would find itself in the position of kingmaker. The party may achieve, in exchange for its support of the Democratic Party, the post of Prime Minister for its leader Ivica Dacic.

After approximately ten years of democracy in Serbia and two clashes between the two political leaders, Boris Tadic might however find this round slightly more difficult than he had expected.

New duel between Boris Tadic/ Tomislav Nikolic for the Second Round of the Serb Presidential election on 20th May

The two favourites in the polls came out ahead in the first round of the presidential election on 6th May in Serbia. Outgoing president of the Republic Boris Tadic (Democratic Party, DS) won 26.7% of the vote. He took the lead over Tomislav Nikolic (Serb Progressive Party SNS), who won 25.5% of the vote. Both men each won less than in the previous presidential election on 20th January 2008 – 8.9 points less for the outgoing head of State and 14.39 points less for his nationalist rival. Boris Tadic and Tomislav Nikolic will be facing each other in the 2nd round of the election on 20th May.



Results

In the general elections that took place on the same day the coalition rallying the Serb Progressive Party led by Tomislav Nikolic, New Serbia led by Velimir Ilic, the Strength of Serbia Movement and the Socialist Movement (SNS-NS-PSS-PS) - came out ahead winning 24% of the vote (73 seats) whilst the Democratic Party in office won 22.3% of the vote (68 seats). The Socialist Party (SPS) led by Ivica Dacic came third with 14.7% of the vote (45 seats). It leads over the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) led by former Prime Minister (2004-2008) Vojislav Kostunica, (6.8%) and the U-Turn Coalition led by the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) under Cedomir Jovanovic (6.7%) which each won 20 seats.

The United Regions Party (URS), a party in the outgoing government, won 5.4% and 16 seats; the Hungarian Union of Vojvodina (VMSZ) won five seats and Democratic Action of Sandjak (SDA), another party in the outgoing government won 1 seat.

Finally the Serb Radical Party (SRS), an ultra-nationalist party led by Dragan Todorovic failed to win 5% of the votes cast which are vital to be represented in the National Assembly, the only Chamber in Parliament.

As in the previous general election on 11th May 2008 the Socialist Party, which almost doubled its result in comparison with the previous election four years ago, finds itself in the position of kingmaker. Its leader Ivica

Dacic, should, in all likelihood re-iterate his support for the Boris Tadic's Democratic Party and be given the post of Prime Minister. *"We do not yet know who the next president of the Republic will be but we know who the new Prime Minister is,"* declared the socialist leader on the announcement of the results.

Turnout was also slightly down, two points less than that recorded in 2008, rising to approximately 59%.

"I shall face Tomislav Nikolic" said outgoing President Tadic on the announcement of the results. *"Will the country be governed by those who have shamed us, those who threatened to kill hundreds of members of other nations and other religions for every one of our citizens who is killed? No, this country has to be governed by those who have international credibility,"* he stressed adding that *"the improvement in living standards"* was his strategic objective. *"We shall rapidly take Serbia towards European integration and continue changes and development,"* he promised by saying he was confident in his victory on 20th May next.

His rival Tomislav Nikolic said he was convinced that he would win the presidential election. *"It is not the first time. But this time it is for sure. Serbia is impatiently expecting vital change. Victory is close to hand,"* he maintained. The Progressive Party leader is promising to improve living standards of those who have "lost

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out in the transition over to the market economy" and to invest in agriculture and industry. He wants to raise taxes on the wealthiest and re-assess privatisations. "Even under the cover of a pro-European rhetoric Tomislav Nikolic's discourse is still oriented according to populist, nationalist tradition which is still very much alive in Serbia," analyses historian Latinka Perovic.

The two candidates in the presidential election are promising to reduce the numbers of employees in the civil service, to create jobs, to attract foreign investments and to counter corruption. "These are the first elections since 1990 in which the economy has been a focal point," stresses sociologist Srecko Mihajlovic. "The candidates have made lists of what they want to do. Neither has presented any real measures that will lead to the creation of jobs or to attract billions of

euros in investments," regrets political scientist Bojan Panajotovic.

Serbia has been seriously affected by the international economic crisis. Unemployment totals 24% of the population, the black economy represents around 30% of the GDP and 7.3 million Serbs live below the poverty line. Moreover growth of 0.5% planned for 2012 is far from guaranteed. In January the IMF froze a payment of aid totalling 1.3 billion \$ that had been set aside for Serbia since Belgrade had not succeeded in consolidating its public finances enough. The second round of the presidential election on 20th May next is vital: there is a choice between continuing reform and following the path towards the EU with Boris Tadic or adopting a more social policy with Tomislav Nikolic - this is the alternative which the Serbs face.

Result of the first round in the Presidential election on 6th May 2012 in Serbia

Turnout: 59%

Candidates	No. of votes won
Boris Tadic (Democratic Party, DS)	26,7
Tomislav Nikolic (Serb Progressive Party, SNS)	25,5
Ivica Dacic (Socialist Party SPS)	15,3
Vojislav Kostunica (DSS)	7,7
Zoran Stankovic	7,1
Cedomir Jovanovic	5,3
Jadranska Seselj	3,9
Vladan Glisic	2,7
Istvan Pastor	2,3
Zoran Dragicic	1,7
Muamer Zukorlic	1,1
Danica Grujicic	0,7

Source : Centre for Free Elections and Democracy (CeSID) <http://www.cesid.org/>

General Results in Serbia 6th May 2012

Turnout: 59%

Political Parties	% of votes won	No of seats won
Coalition Serb Progressive Party, New Serbia, Serb Strength Movement and the Socialist Movement (SNS-NS-PSS-PS)	24	73
For a European Serbia, a coalition formed by the Democratic Party, G17+, the Movement for Serb Revival, the Social Democratic League of Vojvodina and the Social Democratic Party (DS-G17+-SPO-LSV-SDP)	22,3	68
Socialist Party (SPS)	14,7	45
Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS)	6,8	20
Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)	6,7	20
United Regions Party (URS)	5,4	16
Hungarian Union of Vojvodina (VMSZ)		5
Democratic Action of Sandjak (SDA)		1

Source : Centre for Free Elections and Democracy (CeSID) <http://www.cesid.org/>

Dramatic Development in Serbia where Tomislav Nikolic is elected as President

The third time round was the right one for Tomislav Nikolic (Serb Progressive Party, SNS). With 49.7% of the vote he won the Serb presidential election, the second round of which took place on 20th May. He drew ahead of outgoing Head of State Boris Tadic (Democratic Party, DS) who won 47% of the vote, thereby failing to win a third term in office.

In the first round on 6th May last Boris Tadic took a short lead over his rival. 10,000 votes (out of a total of nearly 4 million) separated the two men: the outgoing President won 25.31% of the vote and the nationalist leader, 25.05%.

Between rounds, Tomislav Nikolic accused Boris Tadic of electoral fraud involving 500,000 votes in the first round and called on his fellow countrymen to demonstrate and denounce the theft on 12th May. "I maintain that hundreds of thousands of additional slips were printed and given to the Democratic Party and that it manipulated the result," he said. "It is time for citizens to see who they are dealing with. The Serbs do not deserve a president who is suspected of theft," he added describing the country as a "State led by criminals." All international and national observers deemed the Serb elections free and transparent, and in line with international democratic standards.

Turnout in the second round was low, totalling 46.32% - a high abstention rate that favoured Tomislav Nikolic.

Results
second round

"This day is the best one of my political career and of my life," declared Tomislav Nikolic who immediately insisted on reassuring his supporters and also the international community, regarding his commitment to Europe. "Serbia will stay on the path to Europe. This election has not focused on who will lead Serbia towards the European Union but on who will settle the economic problems caused by Boris Tadic's Democratic Party," he declared.

The alliance between rounds of the nationalist leader with the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) of former Prime Minister (2004-2008), Vojislav Kostunica, who is against Belgrade's accession to the European Union caused a stir and was used by Tadic's supporters to throw doubt over his European commitment. After the elections on 11th May 2008 Tomislav Nikolic quit the Radical Party led by Vojislav Seselj to found the Progressive Party, which says it supports Serbia integration into the European Union. Tomislav Nikolic stands as a pro-European nationalist: "We want to join the EU. It has plans for us and we shall provide input."

"Serbia has to develop its economy and do away with poverty. We must start work to rid ourselves of corruption and criminality, put an end to political oligarchy and go and look for friends in the wider world," he declared. His party's programme is putting forward tax reductions, the end of monopolies and tycoons and is announcing a reduction in corruption (which it promises will bring savings of 62 billion dinars, ie around 2% of the country's GDP). During his electoral campaign Tomislav Nikolic suggested the construction of a canal linking the Danube to the Aegean, without however explaining how he intended to implement such a project, which would necessarily involve other countries in addition to Serbia.

"I congratulate Tomislav Nikolic on his well deserved victory. I wish him every success in this extremely difficult function," declared Boris Tadic. All of the polls forecast the outgoing head of State to win by a wide margin (58% in voting intentions) just a few days before the second round. "This is an electoral earthquake, totally unexpected results," stressed political analyst Slobodan Antonic. At the end of his electoral campaign the Democratic Party leader qualified the second round as a referendum for the European Union. "It is a vital day because we are deciding on the direction we are going to take over the next five years and even for the next decade. And the world is watching us to see our degree of democratic maturity," (...) "As the former President of Serbia, if anyone is still listening to me, I exhort the upkeep of the strategy leading us to the European Union," insisted Boris Tadic.

On 9th May after the general elections the socialists, led by outgoing Interior Minister Ivica Dacic, (Socialist Party, SPS) which came third (14.53% of the vote and 44 seats) decided to continue their alliance with Boris Tadic's Democratic Party (DS) (22.11% of the vote and 67 seats). Ivica Dacic was then quoted (with that of the Mayor of Belgrade, Dragan Dilas (DS)) as being the next Prime Minister.

Before the election of Tomislav Nikolic, as President the Progressive Party, which came out ahead in the general election with 24.04% of the vote and 73 seats, was due to try and form a majority, possibly with the Socialist Party. If it does not succeed in doing this, Serbia (where the Prime Minister has more powers than the President, even though the latter can veto laws) will find itself in a situation of cohabitation.

Aged 60, Tomislav Nikolic comes from Kragujevac. He is a trained engineer and has worked for several construction companies. In 1990 he joined the People's Radical Party which, with the Serb Chetnik Movement then formed the Radical Party. In 1991 he became an MP in the National Assembly where he has been regularly re-elected. In March 1998 the Radical Party formed a coalition with the Socialist Party of the President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milosevic and Tomislav Nikolic became the vice-president of the Federal Yugoslav government until the fall of the dictator in October 2000.

Candidate in the Serb in 2000 Tomislav Nikolic came third behind Vojislav Kostunica and Slobodan Milosevic. In 2004, he failed in the face of Boris Tadic (45% of the vote in the second round). In 2008, the same happened: he was beaten again in the presidential election by the outgoing Head of State winning 47.97% of the vote in the second round. On 6th September he resigned from the Radical Party (of which he was interim chairman in the absence of Vojislav Seselj, accused of war crimes against the non-Serbs of Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Vojvodina by the ICTY in The Hague) and founded the Progressive Party.

Tomislav Nikolic's obstination has paid off in the end. On 20th May he became the second president of the Serb Republic.

"The tight victory clinched by Tomislav Nikolic is not a vote of approval. Voters wanted to punish the Democratic Party. One of the ways was to vote for Tomislav Nikolic," analyses sociologist and NGO Citizens' Initiative director, Miljenko Dereta. The Serbs have indeed been severely affected by the economic crisis: low GDP growth (0.5% forecast in 2012), high unemployment (24% of the active population)

and a high percentage of the population living below the poverty level. Voters have therefore expressed their lassitude and sanctioned what some might qualify as the "Tadic System". By choosing change they will possibly be forced into cohabitation. Sociologist Vladimir Vuletic fears "a serious political crisis" and talks of "the danger of tension and disagreement between the President of the Republic and the government."

the poverty line. Moreover growth of 0.5% planned for

2012 is far from guaranteed. In January the IMF froze a payment of aid totalling 1.3 billion \$ that had been set aside for Serbia since Belgrade had not succeeded in consolidating its public finances enough.

The second round of the presidential election on 20th May next is vital: there is a choice between continuing reform and following the path towards the EU with Boris Tadic or adopting a more social policy with Tomislav Nikolic - this is the alternative which the Serbs face.

Results of the Presidential Election on 6th and 20th May 2012 in Serbia

Turnout: 57.77% (1st round) and 46.32% (2nd round)

Candidates	No. of votes won (1er tour)	% of votes won (1st round)	No of votes won (2nd round)	% of votes cast (2nd round)
Tomislav Nikolic (Progressive Party, SNS)	979 216	25.05	1 518 500	49,7
Boris Tadic (Democratic Party, DS)	989 454	25.31	1 489 800	47
Ivica Dacic (Socialist Party, SPS)	556 013	14.23		
Vojislav Kostunica (Democratic Party of Serbia, DSS)	290 861	7.44		
Zoran Stankovic (United Regions Party, URS)	257 054	6.58		
Cedomir Jovanovic (Liberal-Democratic Party, LDP)	196 668	5.03		
Jadranka Seselj (Serb Radical Party, SRS)	147 793	3.78		
Vladan Glisic (Dveri)	108 303	2.77		
Istvan Pasztor (Union of Hungarians of Vojvodina, VMSZ)	63 420	1.62		
Zoran Dragisic (Workers and Farmers' Movement of Serbia)	60 116	1.54		
Muamer Zukorlic (Coalition of Albanians of the Presevo Valley)	54 492	1.39		
Danica Grujicic (Social Democratic Alliance)	30 602	0.78		

Source : Centre for free elections and democracy (CeSID) <http://www.cesid.org/>

General Elections of 6th May 2012 in Serbia

Turnout: 57.77%

Political Parties	No of votes won	% of votes won	No of seats
Coalition of the Progressive Party (SNS), the Serb Force Movement (PSS), New Serbia (NS) and the Socialist Movement (PS)	940 659	24.04	73
Democratic Party (DS)	863 294	22.11	67
Coalition of the Socialist Party (SPS), the United Pensioners' Party (PUPS) and United Serbia (US)	567 689	14.53	44
Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS)	273 532	7	21
U-Turn (Democratic Liberal Party, LDP)	255 546	6.52	19
United Regions Party (URS)	215 666	5.49	16
Radical Serb Party (SRS)	180 558	4.63	0
Dveri	169 590	4.34	0
Others	444 602	11.14	0

Source : Centre for free elections and democracy (CeSID)

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