



Serbia

Last update:	13 August 2008
Author:	
Population:	7,379,339 (July 2009 est.)
Prime minister:	Mirko Cvetkovic (DS)
President:	Boris Tadic (DS)
Governemental type:	Republic
Ruling coalition:	Democratic Party , G17 Plus, Serbian Renewal Movement, League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina (LSV)
Last election:	Parliamentary May 2008
Next election:	Parliamentary May 2012
Sister parties:	Democratic Party (DS), League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina (LSV) and Social Democratic Union (SDU)



In a short period of time Serbia experienced some very important and rather tumultuous political developments which were closely, and with great concern, followed by the EU and the international community. In 2008 Serbia had crucial presidential and parliamentary elections, the country lost Kosovo, signed the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU and under the new elected pro-European government it finally succeed in improving the cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia (ICTY) as it delivered Radovan Karadzic to the ICTY.

In the second round of the presidential election on 3 February 2008, pro-European President and leader of the Democratic party (DS) Boris Tadic defeated the nationalist Tomislav Nikolic of the Serbian Radical Party (SRS) by getting 50,5% of the votes whilst Nikolic got 47,7 % of the votes. This was an a great and somewhat unexpected delight as in the run towards the elections the predictions suggested otherwise. Two weeks later on 17 February 2008, Kosovo unilaterally declared its independence from Serbia. It was a big challenge for Serbia to cope with the new political situation. The independence of Kosovo and the disagreement on the relations with the EU led in the end to a break-up of the ruling coalition and than Serbian President Boris Tadic dissolved the parliament on 13 March, as the ruling DSS party of Vojislav Kostunica did not want any further cooperation with EU as long as EU countries recognize Kosovo. The new parliamentary elections were scheduled for 11 May of 2008. Twelve days before the elections the EU signed the SAA with the Serbian government in order to support the pro-European forces in the country. These very important elections for the future of Serbia were won by the pro-European coalition 'For a European Serbia (ZES). However, this did not meant that the pro-European forces had won in the end. It appeared to be rather difficult to form an absolute majority in the parliament as ZES depended of the willingness of the Serbian Party of Socialists (SPS) to form a coalition. On 4 July a coalition agreement was signed between ZES and SPS. The arrest of Radovan Karadzic on 21 July showed the willingness of the new government to cooperate with the ICTY and is widely considered as an important step towards EU membership. Although these developments are very encouraging it is to be awaited how the new government will tackle new challenges laying ahead. One of these challenges is the polarisation of the society as Serbia is divided between a pro-European and a nationalist camp.

ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL SITUATION

Parliamentary elections 11 May 2008

The parliamentary elections were a consequence of the dissolution of the parliament by the Serbian President Boris



Tadic on 13 March. This was a result of a major political crisis concerning the coalition agreement between the ruling coalition parties Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) of Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica on one side and the Democratic Party (DS) and G-17 Plus on the other. This dispute was mainly about the cooperation with the European Union. Tensions in the ruling coalition had already been apparent for a longer time, with DSS arguing against the strengthening of ties with the EU, now most EU member states have recognized Kosovo's independence, whereas DS was also against Kosovo independence, but did not think this issue should influence Serbia's European integration. In the end the coalition's demise came after pro-European forces voted down a resolution on 6 March that would have halted Serbian efforts to join the EU until Brussels stopped supporting Kosovo's independence.

On 11 May 2008, elections for the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia were held at the same time the regularly local and provincial elections were scheduled which, according to some analysts, resulted in a domination of national political issues over the local issues in the local elections. The National Assembly of Serbia consists of 250 members that are elected for a four-years term. Parliament seats will be distributed proportionally to those parties that have reached the threshold of five percent of the votes. However, this threshold does not apply for the minorities parties. The Republic Electoral Commission (REC) registered 22 candidate lists of parties and coalitions of which ten were minority lists, which is four more compared to the parliamentary elections in January of 2007.

Although generally speaking the election campaign can be described as fair, complying with democratic standards, the signing of the conditional Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) on 29 April— conditional as its full implementation depends on the cooperation of Serbian authorities with the Hague Tribunal — increased the tension in the run to the elections. The signers of the agreement, President Boris Tadic and Deputy Prime Minister Bozidar Djelic, have been labelled as traitors and enemies of the state on posters in the streets of Belgrade and received several death threats. Furthermore, during the election period some tensions emerged in Sandzak, southern Serbia, which has a Bosniak majority.

According to the reports of OSCE who observed the elections in Serbia, the diversity of media in the country and the free and loosely regulated media environment resulted in a neutral coverage of the elections. For example, according to the OSCE the "preliminary TV monitoring results indicate that the campaign is being covered in a wide range of formats including debate programmes and panel discussions with experts". In addition, all rules concerning media coverage of all participating parties were respected. The public broadcaster, RTS, provided coverage of all contestants and they had their equal free broadcasting time to their disposal. Furthermore, the "overall tone of the media coverage in the monitored media remained predominantly neutral" according to the OSCE.

The campaign focused on three main issues: Kosovo, EU integration and the work of the dissolved government. The two largest parties in the opinion polls were the Serbian Radical Party of Tomislav Nikolic and the pro-European coalition (ZES, Zajedno za Evropsku Srbiju) which is a coalition of the Democratic Party (DS) of Boris Tadic, G 17 Plus and some minority parties. SRS and ZES clearly marked their differences concerning EU integration and Kosovo which framed the political debate in Serbia during the campaign period. Furthermore, it underlined the division in politics and society between those who aspire European integration and those who regard such integration as the selling of the Serbian soul as it equals giving up of Kosovo.

Results of the parliamentary elections in Serbia held on 11 May 2008 (Turnout: 60,7%):

Party	% of votes	amount of seats (total 250)
Za Evropsku Srbiju (ZES), For a European Serbia coalition, DS, G17 Plus, SPO, League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina (LSV)	38.4	103
Serbian Radical Party (SRS)	29.5	77
Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) and New Serbia (NS)	11.6	30
Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) and United Serbia (PUPS-JS)	7.6	20



Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)	5.2	13
Hungarian Coalition (MK)	1.8	4
Coalition List for Sandzak (SDA)	0.9	2
Koalition of Albanians from Presevo Valley (KAL)	0.4	1

As stated in official OSCE reports, “elections in Serbia were overall in line with OSCE and Council of Europe commitments for democratic elections, although they were overshadowed, in part, by some negative aspects of the campaign”. These negative aspects are primarily the death threats to politicians, for example the spreading of posters which to a certain extent suggested the assassination of state officials. No other major irregularities have taken place, whilst only 48 complaints, of which none were upheld, were submitted to the REC.

Immediately after the exit polls were announced on Sunday night, Boris Tadic claimed victory, saying “Serbia has chosen the path towards the EU”. Seventeen EU member states decided on 6 May to waive visa fees for Serbian citizens, in a bid to support the Serbian pro-European forces in the elections. The election victory of the pro-European coalition was certainly received as a relief in Europe which qualified it as a “pro-European choice” of the Serbians. However, it was not yet clear how the winning coalition will form a government, as it did not receive an absolute majority of the votes.

The Serbian Radical Party (SRS), took the first initiative to form a coalition as they started negotiating with the DSS of Vojislav Kostunica and the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) of the late President Slobodan Milosevic. The SPS had a key position in the coalition negotiations as both DS and SRS needed them in order to get an absolute majority. The two most likely options were a pro-European coalition, headed by DS of Boris Tadic together with SPS or a pro-Russian nationalist coalition led by the Radical Party together with DSS and SPS. The important coalition talks for the future of Serbia took two months and for a long time it was rather uncertain which way Serbia was heading. In the end the pro-European forces managed to form a coalition by signing the coalition agreement on 4 July and on 7 July the parliament approved the nomination of Mirko Cvetkovic of DS as Prime Minister. Earlier, on 25 June, the Serbian parliament elected Slavica Djukic-Dejanovic of the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) as its new speaker. Apart from the SPS-led coalition, the Democratic Party (DS)-led coalition also supported her, as did ethnic minority parties. On the municipal level, the coalition negotiations for the Belgrade city assembly took even longer. For a long time it looked if the Radical Party was going to succeed in forming a coalition with SPS, however, under great pressure of DS on 21 July SPS finally agreed to form a new ruling coalition in Belgrade with DS. The member of the DS, Branislav Belic, was elected by the city assembly as the new mayor of Belgrade.

The EU reacted delighted with the new pro-European government in Serbia and argued that Serbia had taken an important step towards further EU integration. It is, however, to be awaited if the ruling coalition will manage to cope with the big challenges, such as the independence of Kosovo, laying ahead. Despite this, the coalition has passed the first important test for further EU integration as the former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic who is, among other things, accused of war crimes in Bosnia and Herzegovina, has been arrested in Belgrade on 22 July.

Participation of women

Although there are no legal impediments to the participation of women in Serbian politics, women are still underrepresented in parliament. According to the 2002 census, 51.4% of Serbia’s population was female. The inclusion of female candidates on party and coalition lists is stimulated by the requirement that every fourth candidate and no less than 30 percent of the candidates appearing on an electoral list must belong to the less-represented gender. However, the provision of the LER that allows political parties and coalitions to choose which candidates from their lists become members of parliament after the election, without regard to the order in which they were originally represented on the list, combined with a failure to extend the gender provision to the actual distribution of mandates, in fact renders this provision ineffective. In the end, 53 out of 250 seats, or 21.2 percent of the mandates, went to women. This is an increase with two seats compared to the parliamentary elections in January 2007.

Participation of minorities

According to the 2002 census, 17.14 percent of Serbia’s population identified themselves as non-Serbs,



representing more than twenty ethnic and national minorities. Some of these minority communities are concentrated to such an extent that in some areas they constitute majority populations, for example in Sandzak region in southern Serbia.

Several measures have been taken to stimulate the participation of minorities in the elections. Election material for the 2008 parliamentary elections was printed in Serbian and minority languages in 28 different combinations, depending on the region. Moreover, members of the National Assembly belonging to a minority group that constitutes at least two percent of the total population of Serbia are, according to provisions of the Serbian law, entitled to address the parliament in their native language.

The most important provision to stimulate the political participation of national minorities was the 2004 amendment to the Law on the Election of Representatives (LER), due to which the 5% threshold for parties and coalitions representing minorities was waived. Moreover, the number of signatures required in support of a minority party or coalition's list was reduced from the mandatory 10,000 required by law to 3,000. This has increased the participation of minorities in the Serbian elections, and led to the registration of 10 minority lists, out of 22 lists, in the 2008 parliamentary elections. Lists of non-minority based parties also included candidates of national minorities.

Although the OSCE has praised the inclusion of minorities in the political process, the organization has also raised concern over the fact that the LER does not contain a definition of a national minority party or the criteria by which a party or a coalition qualifies for this special status. According to the OSCE, this raises the chance of "potential future abuses by parties and coalitions seeking to gain access to the privileges prescribed for those representing national minorities."

All in all, most national minorities seemed not to face any obstacles to participate in the political process in Serbia. There are suspicions that a part of the Roma community is unable to cast their ballots, as they are unregistered and therefore are not registered as voters either. Furthermore, the Kosovo Albanians have, over the past years, continuously refused to take part in Serbian elections. In February 2008, Kosovo unilaterally declared its independence from Serbia.

Presidential elections 20 January and 3 February 2008

Serbian presidential elections took place in two rounds on 20 January and 3 February 2008. The presidential post is largely ceremonial, but the ballot is widely seen as an important barometer for the political climate. In the first round, nine candidates competed. It was, however, clear before the ballot that it would come down to a contest between pro-Western incumbent president Boris Tadic (DS) and its main contender, the nationalist Tomislav Nikolic (SRS).

The first round of the elections was won by Nikolic, with around 39 percent of the vote. Tadic came in second with 35 percent. Turnout was high for Serbia, at 61 percent. Since none of the candidates had been able to secure an absolute majority in the first round of the vote, a runoff between Nikolic and Tadic was held on 3 February.

Both Nikolic and Tadic campaigned actively ahead of the second round of the elections, offering voters a choice between two distinct political perspectives. According to the OSCE "the campaign environment was competitive and calm, the media provided equitable access to both candidates, and the process was efficiently administered."

The main campaign topics were related to ties with the European Union and the status of Kosovo. Tadic advocated for EU integration for Serbia, and wished for the country to move closer to Europe. Nikolic, on the other hand, advocated a stronger partnership with Russia, as, according to Nikolic, "Russia is closer to Serbia." The then still expected declaration of independence by the province of Kosovo overshadowed the vote. The two candidates' opinion differed on the relation between this topic and EU integration. Although Nikolic said he is in favour of joining the EU, he made it clear that this could only happen when the EU "does not make obstacles", and ruled out the possibility of joining the EU when it would accept independence for Kosovo. Tadic also opposed independence for Kosovo, but maintained that this issue should be dealt with separate from the decision of joining the EU.



On 28 January, the EU offered a political cooperation deal to Serbia in a bid to support Tadic's candidacy. The deal was to provide "a framework for making progress on a political dialogue, free trade, visa liberalisation and educational cooperation." Foreign minister of Slovenia, which holds the EU Presidency in the first half of 2008, Dimitri Rupel, described the deal as "sort of three-quarters of the way towards signing the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA)." The Netherlands and Belgium blocked EU attempts to sign the official SAA with Serbia because of its failure to hand over UN war crimes suspects to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague. Although the EU and Tadic might have seen the offered agreement as a signal of tightening relations between Serbia and the EU, the fact that the EU still refused to offer the SAA to Serbia was used by Nikolic to assert that the EU in fact does not really support Serbia. After the elections had taken place, the agreement would cause a political crisis in Serbia's leading coalition, which is split between those in favour of and opposed to signing it.

Moreover, prime minister Vojislav Kostunica (DSS) refused to endorse either of the presidential candidates in the second round. This has also led to tensions in Serbia's ruling coalition, of which Tadic's DS is a member.

However, the second round of the election itself was conducted in a peaceful and orderly fashion. In a statement on 4 February, election observers from the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the OSCE and of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) concluded that the elections were conducted "in line with the OSCE and Council of Europe commitments for democratic elections." Andreas Gross, head of the PACE delegation, said to be "impressed by the maturity shown by the people of Serbia," and "congratulate[d] both candidates for their commitment to democratic principles."

Turnout was high, with at 67.7 percent. Both candidates received considerable support, and the eventual outcome showed only a minimal difference in percentage of the vote. Eventually, the incumbent president Boris Tadic won the elections:

Candidate	% of votes
Boris Tadic	50.5
Tomislav Nikolic	47.7

Due to the opposing views of the two candidates on this topic, the ballot was widely seen as a referendum on Serbia's EU aspirations. After the preliminary results were announced, Tadic stated that he "would like to congratulate all citizens of Serbia who, by taking part in this election, showed that Serbia has a great democracy, a European democracy." EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana praised the results of the election, and said he hoped Belgrade would move "as rapidly as possible" to EU integration. On 15 February 2008, Boris Tadic was sworn in for his second term in office as president of Serbia. Meanwhile, the significance of the outcome of the vote is debated. Although many argue that Tadic is weakened by the big support for Nikolic, others argue that the high turnout of the elections give the president a strong mandate.

IMPORTANT POLITICAL ISSUES

Co-operation with ICTY

The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) was established in May 1993 and all UN members are obliged to co-operate fully with it. It has jurisdiction over individuals responsible for war crimes committed in the territory of the former Yugoslavia since 1991.

In the past, willingness to co-operate with the Tribunal has been far from accepted by the Serbian people and the government. This bad co-operation with the Tribunal has been blocking the Serbian European integration process for quite some time. However, the recent arrest, on 21 July, of Radovan Karadzic who is accused of war crimes has changed the situation dramatically. The arrest was welcomed greatly in US and the EU and the EU enlargement Commissioner argued that the arrest of Karadzic is "milestone in Serbia's co-operation with the Hague Tribunal". It



seem that the new Serbian government has decided to capture the suspects hiding in Serbia. The two remaining war crimes fugitives are Goran Hadzic and the former General of the Bosnian Serbs army Ratko Mladic. According to several sources, the Serbian secret police is closing the lines behind the two and their arrest can perhaps be expected on short notice. These positive developments will certainly help the country on its path towards the EU and can further stabilize the region.

Perhaps different than expected by some analyst, the arrest of Karadzic did not lead to a political crisis in Serbia. The demonstration in Belgrade, which was organized by the Serbian Radical Party and took place just hours before Karadzic was handed over to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in the Hague, was smaller than initially expected as only 15,000 people gathered to show their support to Karadzic. The protesters were singing nationalist songs and waving posters of their "Serbian Hero". Some of them, mainly young soccer hooligans and activists from the *Obraz* ultra-nationalist group started rioting.

Independence of Kosovo

In an extraordinary parliamentary session in Pristina on 17 February 2008, Kosovo unilaterally declared its independence from Serbia. Kosovo's prime minister Hashim Thaci read the declaration, which states that Kosovo is dedicated to "peace and stability" in the region, and is looking for a "good relationship" with its neighbours. The declaration furthermore states that Kosovo is created along the lines of the UN plan drawn up by special representative Martti Ahtisaari, and calls for Kosovo's supervised independence by an international presence. All 109 deputies present at the parliamentary session voted in favour with a show of hands. The remaining 11 deputies, including representatives from the ethnic Serb minority in Kosovo, were absent.

Serbia remains heavily opposed to Kosovo's independence. Serbian president Boris Tadic reacted with a statement, saying that Belgrade will react with all "peaceful, diplomatic, and legal" means to annul the declaration of independence. On 15 February, the Serbian government had already adopted a resolution calling any unilateral declaration of independence by Kosovo "invalid and illegal." Some Serbs reacted emotionally to Pristina's declaration of independence, taking to the streets to protest and attacking embassies in Belgrade of countries that recognised Kosovo's independence and several other buildings in the capital and posts along the new border. Serbian ambassadors stationed in countries which recognized Kosovo were called back, and president Tadic has argued in the UN Security Council that the unilateral declaration of independence of the province is a breach of international law, calling upon the Council to declare Pristina's actions as invalid.

Kosovo had long been a sensitive issue. The Serbian government has always maintained that Kosovo should be kept within the Serbian state, while most Albanian Kosovars, who for a majority in the former Serbian province, wished to gain independence. From 1999, the international community controlled Kosovo, and its final status remained unclear. Ever since the end of the Kosovo Crisis in June 1999 the relation between Belgrade and Pristina remained tense. While in this crisis Albanians were victims of war crimes, after the peace settlements Roma and Serbians became the persecuted. An estimated 200,000 people were driven from Kosovo. Pristina, which counted a Serbian population of 20,000 before the war, housed a Serbian population of about 700 at the beginning of 2000. In March 2004 interethnic violence, leaving 20 dead, further harmed the relation between Serbia and Kosovo. At least 800 mainly Serbian homes and several Serbian religious buildings were destroyed or damaged. The relation between the Albanian majority and the Serb minority in Kosovo has not improved much. The Serb community in Kosovo, like the Serbian government, is strongly opposed to Kosovo's independence, and many Kosovo Serbs have claimed not to feel safe and to feel treated as second-class citizens in their homeland, a feeling they fear to worsen now that the province has seceded from Serbia. Similarly, former Serbian prime minister Kostunica repeatedly stressed that an independent Kosovo is not acceptable, because "it would mean that violence, violations of human rights, ethnic cleansing, and cultural genocide pay".

On 24 October 2005, the UN Security Council endorsed the start of the negotiations on the future status of the province. The UN identified six key areas which need to be addressed: improved living conditions of Serbs and better assistance for Serbs who want to return home, reform of local government, establishment of transparent and non-political security apparatus, strengthening of Kosovo's institutions, restructuring UNMIK, and maintaining a safe environment. In March 2007, UN envoy Martti Ahtisaari came with his final plan for the status of Kosovo within



the region. Without mentioning the word “independence” in his final plan, Ahtisaari did support a form of conditional independence for Kosovo. Kosovo would get its own flag and anthem, and would be able to become a member of important international organisations.

Immediately after Ahtisaari had presented his plan, Serbia reacted by stating that the proposed status of Kosovo was “illegal” (Kostunica). The Serbian parliament rejected the plan by a large majority (255/270 seats). In a reaction parliamentarians condemned the plan as “illegally laying the foundations for the creations of an independent state on the territory of Serbia.” UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon, the EU Presidency and the US all accepted the proposal by Ahtisaari.

Consequently, the UN Security Council discussed the proposal. However, it has been unable to come up with any solution, as the members of the Security Council are themselves divided over the issue of Kosovo independence. The US has, over the past few years, consistently argued in favour of Kosovo’s independence, and was the first state to formally recognise the new state on 18 February 2008. On the contrary, Russia and China, both also permanent members of the UN Security Council, are strongly against independence of Kosovo. Similarly, the Contact Group Troika that was installed on 31 July 2007 to mediate negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina was unsuccessful, with members of the troika themselves divided between those in favour (US, Germany) and those against (Russia) Kosovo’s independence. In the end, the Troika failed to meet its deadline of 10 December 2007. As soon as this became clear, the different actors started speculating on what to do after this deadline. Prime minister Ceku of Kosovo stated that Kosovo would declare independence unilaterally if no agreement was reached. Serbia, in response, stated that it would by no chance recognise such a unilateral declaration of independence.

As expected, as it was an crucial development which eventually led to the break-up of the government, the declaration of independence played an important role in Serbia’s presidential and parliamentary elections of 2008. In the presidential elections in February of 2008 both candidates were against independence for the province, however, they attached different importance to this for Serbia’s relations with the EU. Tomislav Nikolic of the Radical Party argued against further EU integrations when the union would recognize Kosovo, whereas Boris Tadic argued that the two issues should be separated and that the Serbia should pursue EU integration regardless the union’s position on Kosovo.

The international community remains divided over Kosovo’s independence. Many countries were quick to recognise the new state, most noticeably the US, Albania, and a number of the bigger European member states such as France and Germany. Other countries, mainly those with restive national minorities of their own have declared that they will not recognize Kosovo as a new state. These countries include Russia, Spain, and a number of countries in the Balkan region. Until now (August 2008) 45 countries have recognized Kosovo as an independent state, Colombia and Belize being the latest ones. In the meanwhile the government in Kosovo has started issuing Kosovar passports. Twenty EU countries have announced to accept the Kosovo passport as an official document, whilst six EU countries, which do not recognize Kosovo as an independent state, have not yet made their position clear about the issue. Slovakia has announced not to allow entry. The new passport will replace the United Nation Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) passports which have been the official document since 1999 when UNMIK has been implemented.

The situation in Kosovo concerning the multi-ethnicity of the state remains worrying as it does not look like Serbians and Albanians are going to live with each other on short notice. Furthermore, the Serbian politicians in Kosovo are striving to establish parallel Serbian institution which certainly will not help the integration of Serbian community in the Kosovo society.

Serbia and Montenegro: the end of a state

The union between Serbia and Montenegro was often referred to as being an unhappy marriage. In February 2003, the name of the country changed from Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to “Serbia and Montenegro.” Under the new Constitutional Charter, most federal functions and authorities devolved to the republic level. As a result, both republics already enjoyed substantial autonomy and many, especially in Montenegro, were eager to see the largely ceremonial State Union to end. The State Union could be seen as a product from the pressure of the international community and the EU in particular. In the aftermath of the breaking up of the former Yugoslavia, fears for further



disintegration made keeping together the last pieces a priority.

On 21 May 2006 the referendum, closely followed by the international community, took place. Official results showed that 55,5% voted for independence and 44,5% against. This was just over the 55 percent threshold needed to approve the referendum under rules set by the European Union. Although some questions can be raised about the campaign for the referendum, most democratic commitments for a referendum were met and the results were widely recognised. EU's foreign policy chief, Javier Solana, congratulated Montenegro on a "successful referendum" and said the turnout of over 86 percent "confirms the legitimacy of the process."

With Montenegro independent, Serbia was forced to declare independence as well. This happened on 5 June at a low-key ceremony, which neither president Boris Tadic nor prime minister Vojislav Kostunica attended. Reportedly, Serbia and Montenegro began their process of separation with a reshuffle of the army and a pull-out of soldiers. In October 2006, the Serbian population by referendum approved a new constitution for their 'newly independent state', replacing the 1990 constitution approved during the reign of Milosevic.

The relationship between Montenegro and Serbia nowadays can be characterize as quite good. However, Montenegro's recognition of Kosovo that seems to be on its way could worsen the relationship between the two countries.

The death of Slobodan Milosevic

Former Serbian and Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic died on 12 March 2006 aged 64 in his cell at the Hague-based ICTY. He had spent more than four years in The Hague on trial for 66 charges that included genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity committed during the wars in Croatia (1990-1995), Bosnia-Herzegovina (1992-1995), and Kosovo (1998-1999).

The ICTY, which was already not very trusted among a large part of the Serbian population, became the target of severe criticism after Milosevic's death as there were rumours about ill treatment. Milosevic wrote a letter the day before his death saying that doctors were giving him the wrong drugs in an attempt to silence him. Research showed that Milosevic took drugs that worsened his health before his death. He was denied treatment in Moscow as this was seen by many as a one-way ticket to freedom.

Following his death there were days of discussion about the place where the former President should be buried. Belgrade refused to hold a state funeral and refused to allow Milosevic to be buried in the "Avenue of Heroes" in the capital's main cemetery. Slobodan Milosevic was buried in his hometown of Pozarevac following a memorial ceremony in Belgrade. Approximately 80,000 people attended the service in which Milosevic's coffin was set on a stage in front of the federal parliament building. The actual burial was attended by a small group of loyalists, without his relatives. Though the authorities said they would not arrest Milosevic's widow, Mirjana Markovic, who according to many was the brains behind Milosevic's master plans, she did not attend the funeral. Milosevic's widow and son are both sought after with international arrest warrants, but both have been granted asylum in Russian and are currently living in Moscow.

The international community reacted generally in line with the opinion of ICTY's chief war crimes prosecutor at that time, Carla Del Ponte, who said that with Milosevic's death it is even more urgent to arrest the Bosnian Serb war crime accused Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic. "It deprives the victims of the justice they need and deserve," Del Ponte said, referring to the fact that Milosevic's death prevented a verdict being handed down in his trial. On 14 March 2006 the UN war crimes court at The Hague formally closed the trial of Slobodan Milosevic.

Economy and employment

The conflicts and mismanagement during the Milosevic's years, led to economic decline and a sharp increase in unemployment and poverty in Serbia in the 1990s. On top of this came NATO's bombing which destroyed a significant part of Serbia's infrastructure and industry. High-level of corruption further troubles improvement of the socio-economic situation.



According to official figures and estimates of the CIA World Factbook unemployment is high at around 30 per cent. Especially young people are facing problems of unemployment. Compared to other Balkan countries, only Bosnia (45,5%, 2004 est.) and Macedonia (36%, 2006 est.) have a higher unemployment rate than Serbia. The other Balkan countries, especially the new EU member-states Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania, all have lower unemployment rates than Serbia.

Economic reforms with support of international financial institutions such as IMF and the World Bank as well as international donors, though delayed due to the political instability of the former government, have had some effect. Inflation has declined and the real GDP has recovered from a decline of about 16% in 1999, growing by 5.5% in 2001 and around 4 percent in 2002. In 2003, growth performance in the country worsened with a reported 1.5% increase of real GDP, whilst in 2005 and 2006 the GDP growth was respectively 3.5 and 3.8%. It is expected that the independence of Kosovo will have a positive influence on the economic figures of Serbia, as Kosovo was one of the poorest regions of Serbia. However, it has to be awaited how Serbian economy will react on the increase in oil and food prices and the global economic decline. In June and July the prices of food have increased tremendously in Serbia and the whole region.

According to Harald Hirschhofer, Resident Representative of the International Monetary Fund in Serbia, to turn the tides the focus should be on private sector development, fight against inflation and high food prices and review the social assistance programs.

The improvement of the co-operation with the Hague Tribunal will also have a positive effect on economic development as foreign aid is largely dependent on compliance of Serbia to co-operation with the ICTY. For example, U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in June 2006 decided to withhold from Serbia-Montenegro million in assistance because of Belgrade's continuing lack of cooperation with the Tribunal in The Hague.

European integration

European integration has been an important element of the political debate. One of the first outstanding statements on the partnership between the EU and Serbia and Montenegro came after the assassination of Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic. Commissioner Patten and High Representative /Secretary General Solana gave a strong message to the country that the EU regards Serbia and Montenegro as an important partner and that it strongly cares about its stability and democratic development.

The European Union is however already longer engaged in stimulating peace and democracy in Serbia and Montenegro. A major step in this respect was the foundation of the Stability Pact on 10 June 1999, at the EU's initiative. The Kosovo crisis acted as a catalyst in strengthening international political will for undertaking action in the region. The EU has a leading role and the Stabilisation and Association Process, which includes the possibility of full membership when compliance is made to the Copenhagen criteria. At the Thessaloniki Summit (21 June 2003), the EU again sent a strong message that the Western Balkans is a crucial priority for Europe. The summit delivered an agenda for the integration of the Western Balkans into the EU, and set out a clear plan to fulfill all the related criteria and conditions of accession.

The European Union and its member states are collectively the most important donors in Serbia. Local opinion polls show that around 70% of the public is in favour of joining the EU. However, popularity of joining shows a sharp drop when conditions are mentioned, co-operation with the tribunal in the Hague being the most controversial. Moreover, the recent declaration of independence of Kosovo and the EU's decision to send a mission to the territory has angered many Serbs.

Talks on a Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) started on 10 October 2005. The European Commission's annual report on Serbia-Montenegro released on 9 November 2005, noted the country's economic progress. The report urged further improvements in co-operation with the ICTY, implementation of judicial and public administration reforms and strengthened democratic control over the military. The EC also called on political leaders to take a constructive approach with regard to Kosovo.

A serious blow to the process of European integration came after Belgrade missed the deadline for handing over war



crimes suspect Ratko Mladic to the ICTY. As a result, on 3 May 2006 Brussels suspended negotiations with Serbia and Montenegro. Enlargement commissioner Olli Rehn reiterated his belief that one reason why Mladic is not in The Hague is that the former Bosnian Serb military commander is being protected by the army. In response to the announcements in Brussels, Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica said his government has "done absolutely everything in its power" to capture Mladic and extradite him to the ICTY.

As Montenegro declared independence after the May referendum, Brussels is working on separate SAA packages for Podgorica and Belgrade. However, it is expected that Montenegro is able to move faster forward as it is not burdened with the criticisms of lack of co-operation with the ICTY.

After the establishment of the new government in May 2007, European Commissioner Olli Rehn stated that the EU could restart the negotiations with Serbia on accession to the EU "very soon". This prospect became reality on 7 June 2007, when José Manuel Barroso invited Serbia to resume talks on the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. However, a number of member states within the EU remain sceptical of Serbia's European integration, alleging that the country is in fact not really willing to cooperate with the ICTY.

On 28 January 2008, the EU offered Serbia a political cooperation deal in a bid to support pro-European incumbent Tadic's bid for the presidency. According to the text, the deal would provide "a framework for making progress on a political dialogue, free trade, visa liberalisation and educational cooperation." Foreign minister of Slovenia, which holds the chair of the EU in the first half year of 2008, said that "we have adopted a very interesting text which opens the door to Serbia's entry into the EU", and described the deal as "sort of three-quarters of the way towards signing the Stabilisation and Association Agreement." However, despite the enthusiastic rhetoric, the reason why the SAA was not offered was that the Netherlands and Belgium had blocked the EU attempts to sign a finalized and official SAA with Serbia because of its failure to hand over UN war crimes suspects, most notably former Bosnian Serb military chief Ratko Mladic.

Moreover, largely due to bad timing the EU proposal to sign a cooperation agreement has led to a severe crisis in the Serbian government. On 4 February, the same day the EU sent the text of the agreement to the Serbian government, it also decided to approve plans for a EU Kosovo mission that Belgrade opposes as illegal. The planned police mission, which will be 'tasked to stabilize the province after it proclaims independence from Serbia', will include 1.800 law enforcement officers from several European countries. According to prime minister Vojislav Kostunica, head of the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS), this renders the signing of the proposed agreement unacceptable as "the EU's proposal to sign a political agreement with Serbia, while simultaneously sending a mission to tear our country apart, is a deception aimed at having Serbia actually signing its consent to the independence of Kosovo, thus becoming the first state to indirectly recognise that independence." President Tadic, head of the Democratic Party (DS), however, remains that the agreement can still be signed as it "makes no mention of Kosovo." The EU approved of the mission, dubbed EULEX, on 15 February. Meanwhile, Kostunica refused to call a planned meeting of the cabinet, in which his ministers hold a minority, on 7 February, claiming that the issue of concern was touching upon Serbia's sovereignty and should therefore be dealt with in the parliament, where parliamentarians supporting his view (DSS, the Serbian Radical Party and the Socialist Party of Serbia) are in the majority. This has effectively blocked the process, as without the cabinet's approval, deputy prime minister Bozidar Djelic (DS) will not be able to travel to Brussels and sign the agreement. Moreover, speaker of parliament Oliver Djelic (DS) declared that he intended to wait for the government to take a stance on the issue before initiating a parliament session on the political agreement, thus creating a vicious cycle. Tadic repeatedly urged Kostunica to call a cabinet meeting on the political agreement, stating that "the Serbian parliament cannot substitute the government." However, in the run to the parliamentary elections in May 2008— which were a result of the dissolution of the parliament by the Serbian President Boris Tadic on 13 March as no consensus could be found between DS and DSS concerning the further EU integration— the EU decided to offer Serbia a conditional Stabilization and Association Agreement SAA, conditional as its full implementation depends on the cooperation of Serbian authorities with the Hague Tribunal. The SAA was signed on 29 April twelve days before the elections. The signers of the agreement, President Boris Tadic and Deputy Prime Minister Bozidar Djelic, have been labelled as traitors and enemies of the state on posters in the streets of Belgrade and received several death threats. It was argued by the nationalist parties that they have exchanged Kosovo for possible EU membership.

The arrest of Karadzic, and with that, the improved cooperation between the Serbian government and the Hague Tribunal have certainly improved the relations between EU and Serbia. Although the new pro-European government



will surely face some difficult challenges on their path towards EU integration, the political situation has created an environment in which the EU–Serbian relations can flourish as never before.

Organised crime and corruption

The Milosevic years not only lacked economic reforms, moreover a system of cronies and criminals who plundered the country's hard currency reserves and much of the country's material wealth, was established. Though commitments are made against organised crime, still mafia has influence in nowadays Serbia.

A major impetus to cleaning up the system from corrupted criminals associated with Slobodan Milosevic's regime was operation Sabre. Following the murder on prime minister Djindjic, this comprehensive action led to dismantling of key organised crime channels and in resolving previously unsolved high profile cases, including murders, abductions and political assassinations. More than 4,000 people were arrested.

Despite the fact that special legislation has been adopted in 2002 and a special prosecutor for the fight against crime was appointed in 2003, the practical implementation is problematic. The main problem is a lack of resources and limited staff. In December 2005 the Serbian Parliament adopted its first anticorruption strategy. According to this strategy an action plan will be drafted which includes deadlines to be met in the fight of corruption. An independent panel will be established to supervise implementation of the strategy.

It seems that the plans to fight organised crime and corruption started to pay off in 2006. In January a major action was taken to uncover corruption in the National Bank. The vice–governor and former vice governor were arrested. Both men are also top figures from the Socialist Party, until recently the party of Milosevic.

In February 2006 Serbian police issued a warrant for Bogoljub Karic, after he failed to appear in court for questioning. The Karic family is infamous for using political connections to grow enormously rich. Bogoljub Karic, a friend and business partner of former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, heads the Power of Serbia Movement and used to be the owner of the telecommunications company Mobtel. Karic and his brothers are searched to face charges of tax evasion, mismanagement of millions of dollars and money laundering. Karic accused Prime Minister Kostunica of prosecuting him for political reasons, because of the popularity of his party. The Serbian Strength Movement ranked third in opinion polls and was ahead of Kostunica's party. This was also one of the reasons for the small Social Democratic Party to sign a co–operation agreement with Karic, in October 2005. Currently he is hiding abroad, rumours say in Russia, and ever since his party dropped in the polls. At the January 2007 elections, the party did not gain any seats in parliament.

In April 2006 according to Serbian former Finance Minister Mladjan Dinkic the strongest blow to organised economic crime and corruption in Serbia since the fall of former President Slobodan Milosevic took place as Serbian police have detained nine people, including two judges, as part of an investigation into government corruption and organized crime.

In June 2006 the Serbian government came under strong criticism over the killing of a protected witness in the Zoran Djindjic assassination trial. Interior Minister Dragan Jovic, claimed that the witness's death was a "showdown within a criminal gang". He also suggested that the witness was to blame for his own death by refusing to be included in a witness protection programme. However, Serbia's opposition Democratic Party (DS) said Jovic has failed to deal with organised crime in the country, and demanded his resignation.

In recent years Serbia has made further commitments in fight against organized crime.

In close cooperation with OSCE the Serbian government has dedicated itself to strengthen its legislative framework and the capacity of judges and prosecutors. This is very important in order to fight organized crime effectively. In addition, close relations have been developed between prosecutors in Serbia and Italy's anti–mafia Directorate. Miljko Radisavljevic has been appointed as special prosecutor for organized crime.

The level of corruption is measured by the Corruption Perception of Transparency International, an international NGO that fights corruption globally. In 2007 Serbia scored a 3,4 (on a scale from 1–10, with 1 means highly corrupt)



on this index. This is not a great score, however, compared to the region and the past scores this is not bad. To give an indication: Bulgaria and Croatia score better (4,1 both), whilst Albania scores 2,9 and Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia 3,3. According to Transparency International, Serbia is making progress in fighting corruption: in 2002 the country scored only 2,3 and was therefore the most corrupt country in the Balkan region. In 2007 Serbia has improved its position, both in absolute score as in the relative position compared to the other countries in the region.

SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTIES

Social Democratic Party of Serbia (SDP)

The SDP was founded in April 2002 when the Social Democratic Union and Social Democracy (SD) merged. The party was in government as part of the broad anti-Milosevic DOS coalition. After the withdrawal of the support to DOS of the SDS, the government lost majority and the parliament was dissolved. The party left the government with the explanation that they could accept being pragmatic for a period during the turbulence and the state of emergency after the murder of Djindjic, but it was time to move on. Especially the dominance of the Democratic Party in the coalition was a reason to step out of it. As a result, early elections were called.

On the second congress of the party in May 2003 Slobodan Orlic was elected as the leader of the SDP. Meanwhile, Zarko Korac and Branko Pavlovic did not get enough support from the branches and left SDP and (re)founded the Social Democratic Union respectively Initiative for a Normal Serbia. In addition, several members left to the Democratic Party. The split in the SDS harmed the social-democratic movement at large and SDP in particular. For example, the departure of Zarko Korac meant that the post of Deputy Prime Minister was no longer in hands of SDP, but occupied by a member of SDU, which was re-established by Zarko Korac.

Despite the fact that not all members left, the SDP was rightly expected to be too small to gain enough votes on their own in the latest elections, which made them decide to participate on the list of the liberal party G17 Plus. Despite of the basic ideological differences between these two parties, SDP regarded such a coalition to be justified by referring to G17 Plus as being aware of the necessity to take care of socially vulnerable groups in society. As a result of the co-operation SDP and G17 Plus before the elections agreed upon distributing five seats to SDP. However, due to a scandal two candidates were not allowed on the election list anymore, because they voted for the governor of the national bank (their names were on the voting list) while in the same time they were participating in a debate on television. G17 Plus did not allow two other SDP candidates.

Since 12 September 2004 Nebojsa Covic is leading the party. He used to be mayor of Belgrade during the Milosevic years. Media speculated about Nebojsa Covic entering negotiations with Slobodan Milosevic's Socialist Party of Serbia to form a leftist party. The main obstacle for the SDS is said to be the hardliners in SPP.

The SDP became part of the government of Serbia with one minister – Slobodan Lalovic who is Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Policy, two deputy ministers and five assistant ministers. In August 2005 the Social Democratic Party left the government over a conflict about the proposal of privatization of the state-run Oil Industry of Serbia. The social democratic Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Affairs refused to give up his post and as a consequence left the party.

In October 2005 the party signed a co-operation agreement with the party of Bogoljub Karic. Bogoljub Karic, a friend and business partner of former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, is searched to face charges of tax evasion, mismanagement of millions of dollars and money laundering.

The party has is a full member in the Socialist International, since July 2008.

Party-leader: Nebojsa Covic

Website: www.sdp.org.yu



Democratic Party (DS)

The DS was the first opposition party to be established in Serbia. The party split twice in the first years: first a Liberal Party was formed, after that the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) was founded. In 1996 the party entered into the Zajedno-coalition with the Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO) and the Civic Alliance. During the Bosnian war the party was not pacifist and was in favour of Serbian intervention in Bosnia to help the secessionist Bosnian-Serbs. However, DS called for reforms and the removal of Milosevic. The climax of oppositional activities was the 1996 winter demonstrations against Milosevic's refusal to accept the local election results. After that, disagreements between SPO-leader Draskovic and DS-leader Djindjic became impossible to overcome and as a result the opposition disintegrated. The DS was the largest party in the Democratic Alliance (DOS) that was formed in 2000 with the objective to remove Slobodan Milosevic's from power. The party was headed by Zoran Djindjic, Prime Minister from 2000 onwards, until his assassination in March 2003, which shocked the world and meant a backlash to Serbia's democratisation.

The DOS alliance has disintegrated since 2000, and the defeat of its candidate in the third run of Presidential elections in November 2003 was a great blow to the remains of the alliance. In the latest parliamentary elections DS ran in a coalition with the Civic Alliance of Serbia, the Democratic Center and the Social Democratic Union. DS became the third largest party in the Serbian parliament with 37 of 250 seats. Since co-operation with the DSS is impossible because of the struggle between Djindjic and Kostunica resulting in the break up of DOS, and DSS refusal to co-operate with DS, the party stayed out of the government. The role of the DS in opposition is an essential one, since they can form a counterforce against the dominant extreme nationalist forces of SPS and SRS and provide for necessary majorities on reform proposals. The party has 45 mayors out of 167 municipalities, in 100 of them the DS is part of the governing coalition. The Prime Minister of Vojvodina is from the DS. The party leader, Boris Tadic, is the President of Serbia, and was in February 2008 re-elected for a second term.

In the end of 2005 a part of DS, among them Cedomir Jovanovic, founded the Liberal Democratic Party.

The DS is a firm supporter of Serbia's integration into the European Union and co-operation with the ICTY. For Kosovo they stress the importance of the standards before the status. Within the DS a liberal and a social democratic wing can be distinguished. For some time it was unclear in what direction the party would head, but now the party adopted a social democratic orientation, seeking contact with parties of the social democratic family all over Europe and officially confirming it on the party congress.

After Serbian President Boris Tadic was re-elected leader of DS at the party congress on 18 February 2006 in Belgrade, he presented his ideas for establishing a civil forum within DS, and urged party members to sharpen their political skills. He also said the DS would place a priority on fighting corruption in local administration. A centre for education linked to the party and named Ljuba Davidovic was established. Projects of the foundation include seminars on democratisation and development of the political culture in Serbia and improvement of human rights.

In the parliamentary elections in May 2007, DS formed a pre-election coalition with G 17 Plus named For a European Serbia (ZES). The coalition won the elections by getting 38.4% of votes. Currently, the DS is the biggest party in the ruling coalition whilst Mirko Cvetkovic of DS is Prime Minister of Serbia.

The party has is a full member in the Socialist International, since July 2008. Party leader: Boris Tadic
Website: www.ds.org.yu

Social Democratic Union (SDU)

The SDU was formed in May 1998 after a split in the Civic Alliance. The party became one of the most progressive anti-nationalist parties and adopted a social democratic orientation. The lack of personal involvement in the war of the SDU leaders gave credibility abroad among western social democrats, but the pro-Western attitude of the SDU simultaneously guaranteed it a place on the margin of everyday politics in Serbia. The SDU took a firm stance



against nationalism and the war politics of the Serbian and Yugoslav governments. The SDU struggles for a democratic Serbia and Montenegro, respect of human and civil rights for all ethnic groups and the inclusion of Serbia and Montenegro into all international institutions, and full co-operation with the International Tribunal for War Crimes. These standings are highly controversial in Serbia, and make that the party's position is marginal. The party was confronted with a violent robbery of the party-office by skinheads when the party pledged for introduction of same-sex marriage in Serbia. SDU held good relations with social-democratic parties from other countries in the former Yugoslavia, already shortly after the wars, which is exceptional.

On 20 April 2002 the SDU and Socialdemocracy (SD) merged into the Social Democratic Party of Serbia (SDS.) On the second congress in May 2003 of this new party Slobodan Orlic was elected as the leader of the SDS. Meanwhile, Zarko Korac and Branko Pavlovic did not get enough support from the branches and left SDS. As a result of internal and personal differences, former leader of SDU, Zarko Korac re-established SDU. The fact that SDU became a member of DOS again and that Korac remained Deputy Prime Minister in the previous government guaranteed SDU of the necessary power, to re-establish the party. However, analysts now see that the party's position is weak.

The party has friendly relations particularly with the newly founded Liberal Democratic Party, Civic Alliance and the League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina.

The SDU has no status in the Socialist International.

Party-leader: Zarko Korac

Website: www.sdu.org.yu

League of Social Democrats in Vojvodina (LSV)

The LSV is a multi-ethnic, anti-nationalist, anti-war, social democratic party in Vojvodina. Since the founding of the party, the LSV has opposed all war efforts of the Serbian and Yugoslav government, has opposed discrimination on ethnic or any other ground. In fact, the LSV, and the SDU, are the only parties in Yugoslavia who over the years have openly criticized Serbian nationalism and the regime of Milosevic since its foundation. By using modern methods of communication, and original means of organizing events, the LSV was able to attract crowds of young people. The LSV was very active in organizing anti-war campaigns throughout 1998, anti Milosevic rallies in 1999 and the actions against the regime in October 2000.

The LSV strives for an autonomous, multi-ethnic, and democratic Vojvodina, to be reached through decentralization and 'denationalization' of Serbia. The party headquarters of the LSV are in Novi Sad, the biggest "opposition" city of Serbia during the Milosevic years. Nowadays the city is governed by a mayor from the Radical Party. The party is absent outside Vojvodina, which is the cause for their absence in the parliament. They are not able to overcome the 5 per cent threshold.

The party is strong on the regional and local level in Vojvodina. Since October 2004 League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina Secretary General Bojan Kostres, who is 30, was elected parliamentary speaker. Kostres replaced Nenad Canak, who is the party's chairman and temporarily moved to the US to write a Phd.

In the 2003 parliamentary elections LSV formed together with multi-ethnic or ethnic minority parties a coalition named "Together for Tolerance". Other parties in the coalition are the Union of Vojvodina Hungarians, the Sandzak Democratic Party, and the League for Sumadia. The coalition campaigned on issues concerning preservation and protection of the multiethnic civil society in Serbia, as well as safeguarding the social democratic principles and the fight against nationalism, xenophobia and fascism. Also co-operation with EU countries is an important issue. The coalition was formed in an effort to overcome the 5% barrier, however the coalition just reached 4%.

In 2008, LSV formed a pre-election coalition with the DS, G17 Plus and some minority parties. LSV has 5 seats in the Serbian Parliament.

The LSV has no status in the Socialist International.

Party leader: Nenad Canak



Website: www.lsv.org.yu

OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES

The Serbian Radical Party (SRS)

The SRS was founded in 1991 by Vojislav Seselj and Tomislav Nikolic. The current leader, Vojislav Seselj, is awaiting trial at the war crimes tribunal on charges of crimes against humanity in Croatia and Bosnia in the 1990s. The party is extreme nationalist and it supports the idea of a Greater Serbia, stretching out from Istria to Thessaloniki. In the early 1990's Seselj's party was the mainstay of Milosevic's government. A rift became apparent when Milosevic, following an SPS election victory, could operate without Seselj's support. Seselj fell out of grace, but during the Kosovo crisis a rapprochement between the SPS and the SRS occurred and the SRS returned to the Serbian and Federal governments. In the latest elections of May 2008 the party got 29,5 % of the votes and is the biggest opposition party with 77 seats in the National Assembly. Its electoral success, although not as big as in the elections in 2007, can be explained by growing nationalist sentiments in Serbia, their promise to engage in economic reforms and votes of people who formerly supported the Socialist Party of Serbia. The party's interim leader, Tomislav Nikolic, dedicated their victory "to Vojislav Seselj and other Serb inmates in The Hague". Due to its extremist orientation, the party stayed out of government. However since a minority government was formed and other parties are also quite nationalist, the SRS has major political influence and their proposals have significant chance to be adopted, as was shown by the approval of the bill that supports indicted war criminals, in March 2004.

Party leader: Vojislav Seselj

Interim party leader: Tomislav Nikolic

Website: www.srs.org.yu

Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS)

The DSS was founded in 2001 as a breakaway party from the Democratic Coalition (DOS) led by Zoran Djindjic. After the split, the party shifted to the right in its political orientation, to become a conservative party advocating liberal economic ideas. Party leader Kostunica is known as an anti-Western, anti-US democratic nationalist and supporter of the idea of a Greater Serbia. He is, however, famous for his political integrity and favours a democratic Serbia. In the 2000 September elections, after the removal of Milosevic, Kostunica was elected president in the first round. The Western countries hurried to congratulate him and assure him of their support. Kostunica accepted their embraces, but was careful to keep his distance. He is highly critical of the co-operation with the war crimes tribunal in The Hague and favours Serbian nationalist plans like the canonization of Kosovo. In the latest elections, in May 2008 DSS formed a pre-election coalition with New Serbia (NS) and got 11,3% of the votes. Currently DSS is in the opposition holding 30 seats in the parliament.

Party leader: Vojislav Kostunica

Website: www.dss.org.yu

G17 Plus

G17 Plus was founded in December 2002 as a party that grew out of an non-governmental organisation pressing for economic reforms. The party has a liberal orientation, and is favoured by the international community for not being nationalist and its commitment to reforms. According to the party's program the mission of the party is "the creation of a strong economy and stable democracy in Serbia, which will become the leader in the Balkans, ready to adopt European standards and capable of preserving and protecting the best of its own tradition and culture." Economic and institutional reforms, a better life for the citizens of Serbia and integration into the European Union



are main goals. In addition, social protection of the poorest during the transition period is seen as a necessity. The party was one of the few parties in favour of ending the State Union with Montenegro.

In the elections of 2003, G17 Plus became the fourth party of Serbia and soon declared its willingness to participate in the new government, "because new parliamentary elections would be the worst solution for Serbia". The leader of the party, Miroljub Labus, was appointed deputy Prime Minister.

Labus resigned on 13 May 2006 from the post of party leader and dropped his function in the government after the EU suspended talks with Serbia after the deadline for handing over Mladic to the Tribunal in The Hague passed. The main board of G17 Plus decided that the government should hand over Ratko Mladic before 30 September 2006. If it failed, the party threatened to leave the governing coalition. This decision was an internal victory for then G17 Plus Vice President and incumbent Finance Minister Mladjan Dinkic, who favoured staying in the coalition. At a party congress on 9 September 2006, Dinkic was elected G17 Plus' new leader.

In the 2007 elections, G17 formed a pre-election coalition with DS and is has currently 20 seats in the parliament. The party is currently member of the ruling coalition and the leader of G 17 Plus, Mladjan Dinkic is Minister of economy and regional development.

Party leader: Mladjan Dinkic

Website: www.g17plus.org.yu

Serbian Renewal Movement – New Serbia (SPO–NS)

The SPO was founded in 1990 as a nationalist liberal party, and was throughout the 1990s together with the Democratic Party, the most influential opposition party. The party, like its leader Draskovic, has a history of changing political colour, sometimes almost overnight. According to the SPO's programme the party is a nationalist party with a liberal, civic and democratic orientation. The party would like to introduce a constitutional parliamentary monarchy in Serbia and emphasises the importance of keeping together the state, including Montenegro and Kosovo and the removal of international troops. After the outburst of violence in Kosovo, strong rhetoric was used on the website to condemn these "terrorist attacks" on Serbs. Like Kostunica, SPO favours a canonization of Kosovo. The party attributes much importance to Christian norms and sees the family the cornerstone of society. The party is in favour of becoming a member of the European Union as soon as possible.

After loosing in the 2000 elections, an alliance was sought with New Serbia for participation in the 2003 elections. New Serbia, a nationalist party with communist roots, was founded in 1997 after the 1996/97 protests by a former member of the Serbian Renewal Movement, Velimir Ilic. Together, they gathered 7.8 percent of the votes and decided to take part in the minority government, for the reason that would be in the interest of the citizens of Serbia and the need to urgently start addressing accumulated problems.

In 2008 parliamentary elections, the party formed a pre-election coalition with DSS of Vojislav Kostunica and got 7 seats in the parliament.

Party leaders: Vuk Draskovic and Velimir Ilic

Websites: www.spo.org.yu and www.nova-srbija.org.yu

Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS)

The SPS was founded in 1990 by Slobodan Milosevic and is the successor to the League of Communists. Once Milosevic became President of Serbia, he succeeded in strengthening Serbia's position at the cost of the Federal institutions. He gained power by using a mixture of Serbian nationalist and communist rhetoric. When his term as president of Serbia expired, he was elected President of Yugoslavia. Milosevic subsequently appointed members of his clientele to important places in the Serbian government to secure his position. Under his rule the party controlled state property, police and media, and where the SPS lost power, the party of his wife Mira Markovic, Yugoslav Left (JUL) stepped in to fill the vacuum. In 2000 it was defeated by DOS and after massive street



demonstrations Milosevic had to step down.

Until his death on Slobodan Milosevic formally remained the leader of the party, while he was in The Hague, being on trial before the ICTY. Meanwhile, Ivica Dacic headed the steering committee and profiled himself as the most prominent leader. After the death of Milosevic analysts expects that a power struggle may further weaken the party. Rumours go that he party wants to get rid of Milosevic's heritage and that some persons want to transform the party into a modern leftist party. The party lost votes in the latest elections, however still has considerable political influence since the minority government is dependent on the support of SPS and there are other nationalist parties that share interests with SPS.

On 4 December 2006, deputy head Ivica Dacic beat his rival Milorad Vucelic in vote for the party's new leadership. Dacic pledged to "continue Milosevic's legacy, but also implement changes needed to win support of citizens," He also took a hard-line stance on Kosovo. "No one can say that there won't be war again" over Kosovo, Dacic said. "Kosovo must be defended with all means." The SPS also passed a resolution honouring Milosevic's "heroic efforts to defend the Serbian people" during the violent breakup of Yugoslavia.

In the 2008 parliamentary elections, the SPS got 7,6 % of the votes. The party is currently in the ruling coalition and its leader, Ivica Dacic, is deputy of the Prime Minister and Minister of internal affairs.

Party leader: Ivica Dacic

Website: www.sps.org.yu

Civic Alliance of Serbia (GSS)

Since its foundation in 1992 the GSS has profiled itself as a antiwar, anti-nationalistic and reform-oriented party. Although it was rather successful in gaining respect from other opposition parties, the GSS did not succeed in gaining much popular support, partly due to its intellectual orientation. The GSS split in the spring of 1996 over differences of opinion, incompatibility of personalities and irreconcilable ambitions of party leader Vesna Pesic and vice chair Zarko Korac. Korac then founded the Social Democratic Union. The Civic Alliance used to have a liberal and a social democratic wing, but the latter one left Civic Alliance with Korac. The Civic Alliance has since changed into a liberal party, but a small social-democratic group still exists within the party. During the Bosnian war party leader Vesna Pesic opposed Serbian intervention and rapprochement between Yugoslav and Republika Srpska authorities. The party has relations with the Liberal International. GSS has not participate in the latest elections.

Party leader: Goran Svilanovic

Website: www.gradjanskisavez.org.yu

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)

On 5 November 2005 Cedomir Jovanovic and several other former members of the Democratic Party with links to murdered Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic founded the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Jovanovic, who was elected chairman, called for a "radical break" with unspecified current political practices and for an "open confrontation with the past." Supporters of the LDP include Natasa Micic of the Citizens' Alliance of Serbia, Zarko Korac of the Social Democratic Union, Nenad Canak of the League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina, and some smaller parties and NGOs. The LDP is represented in the parliament of Serbia and Montenegro because one deputy belonging to the Democratic Party has already shifted his allegiance to the new group. Civic Alliance of Serbia and the Liberal Democratic Party heavily criticise the Serbian government for the failure to arrest war crimes suspect Ratko Mladic.

In the parliamentary elections of May 2008 the LDP got 5.2 % of the votes and 13 seats.

Party leader: Cedomir Jovanovic

Website: www.cedajovanovic.com



Power of Serbia Movement (PSS)

In 2005 Bogoljub Karic founded the Power of Serbia Movement, a party that supports the return to true Serbian values. The party ranked some time on the third place in the opinion polls, as the populist message of promising jobs to the people appeared a popular one. The Karic family is well known for it became rich during the Milosevic years. Bogoljub Karic owned for example the telecommunication company Mobtel.

Karic was a candidate in the Serbian presidential election in 2004. He finished third with 19.3% of the vote. In the second round he supported DS party leader Boris Tadic, who won.

At the beginning of 2006 Karic escaped the country as a Serbian court issued a warrant against him. Karic and his brothers are searched to face charges of tax evasion, mismanagement of millions of dollars and money laundering. Karic accused Prime Minister Kostunica of prosecuting him because of the popularity of his party. This was also one of the reasons for the small Social Democratic Party to sign a co-operation agreement with Karic, in October 2005. Rumours say he is hiding in Russia, and ever since his the popularity of the party dropped in the polls. In the 2008 elections, the PSS did not gain any seats in parliament.

Party leader: Bogoljub Karic

Democratic Centre (DC)

The Democratic Centre was formed in 1996 by the founder and former leader of the Democratic Party (DS), Dragoljub Micunovic, in order to "maintain the original spirit" of DS. It took part in the opposition coalition Zajedno, on the sidelines. The DC was a centrist party that rejects nationalism. Despite the fact that Democratic Centre was a minor player in Serbian politics it accorded 5 seats in the parliament by participating in elections on the list of the Democratic Party. On 22 January 2005 the Democratic Centre (DC) merged with the Democratic Party (DS), and so ceased to exist.