



Serbia

Last update:	30 May 2011
Author:	
Population:	7,344,847
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 (full member), Social Democratic Party (observer)



On 26 May one of the world's most wanted war crimes suspects Ratko Mladic, indicted by the ICTY on charges of genocide and other war crimes committed during the 1992–95 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), was arrested in Serbia. Serbia had been under international pressure to arrest him and finally due to arrest of Mladic, Serbia makes further progress in negotiations over the country's EU membership.

INTRODUCTION

In a short period of time Serbia experienced some very important and rather tumultuous political developments that were closely, and with great concern, followed by the EU and the international community. In 2008, Serbia held crucial presidential and parliamentary elections, signed the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU, Kosovo unilaterally declared its independence, and, under the new elected pro-European government, Serbia finally succeed in improving the cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia (ICTY) as it delivered Radovan Karadzic to The Hague. In the second round of the presidential election in 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), which was a great and somewhat unexpected delight as in the run towards the elections the predictions suggested otherwise. The parliamentary elections in May 2008 that were very important for the future of Serbia were won by the pro-European coalition 'For a European Serbia' (ZES). The coalition formed a new government with the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS). Even though the fight against the polarisation of society is still a challenge, the Serbian Radical Party (SRS) has been significantly weakened and radical forces are less united □ after the presidential candidate Tomislav Nikolic left SRS and established the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) □ placing Serbia firmly in the Pro-European camp.

Serbia submitted its application for EU candidate status in December 2009. The country is winning praise for its ambitious programme to join the EU and for possessing the administrative capacity to make "substantial progress towards the EU", as it is argued in the European Commission Progress Report 2009. Furthermore, Serbia has made progress in meeting the political criteria and addressing key European Partnership priorities. Further reforms are needed to ensure that the new constitutional framework is implemented in line with European standards, particularly in the area of the judiciary. Kosovo will remain a major issue. Although the EU has decided not to



connect the Kosovo issue with the European integration process, sooner or later Serbia will have to tackle the Kosovo issue. The EU is now pushing Belgrade and Pristina to launch direct talks that would steer clear of controversial issues such as Kosovo's future status and focus on practical cooperation on issues such as energy provisions, infrastructure, and economic development.

The recent arrest of Ratko Mladic on 26 May 2011 further improved Serbia's cooperation with the ICTY and brings Serbia closer to EU accession.

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 2008 that would have halted Serbian efforts to join the EU until Brussels stopped supporting Kosovo's independence.

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.

Generally speaking the election campaign could be described as fair, complying with democratic standards. The signing of the conditional Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) on 29 April increased the tension in the run to the elections. The signers of the agreement, President Boris Tadic and Deputy Prime Minister Bozidar Djelic, were labelled as traitors and enemies of the state on posters in the streets of Belgrade and received several death threats. 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. The campaign focused on three main issues: Kosovo, EU integration and the work of the dissolved government.. 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	% Votes	Seats
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



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.

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. Apart from the SPS-led coalition, the Democratic Party (DS)-led coalition also supported her, as did ethnic minority parties. 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. Two years after the elections, the ruling coalition is still standing, although it is facing serious pressure from the opposition because of it failed to revoke Kosovo's independence. But even though the Kosovo case is still in a deadlock situation, and EU membership is not going to be likely in the very near future, the government has proven itself able to cope with big challenges such as the global recession and the independence of Kosovo. Moreover, Serbia successfully applied for EU membership in December 2009.

Participation of women

Although there are no legal impediments to the participation of women in Serbian politics, women are still underrepresented in parliament. 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. 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 in elections, as they are unregistered and therefore are not registered as voters either. The state is taking positive steps by launching programmes to enhance the cultural and informational capacities of the Roma community. But in spite of this leap



forward, more is being done for the Roma people by activists from the civil sector. Political parties are not doing enough when it comes to reaching out to Roma or to any other minority group. Furthermore, the Kosovo Albanians have, over the past years, continuously refused to take part in Serbian elections.

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 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.

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.

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. The turnout for the second round 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.

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. Former Serbian and Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic 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 Balkan wars in the 1990s. He died on 12 March 2006 aged 64 in his cell at the Hague-based ICTY. 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.

In the past, willingness to co-operate with the Tribunal had been far from accepted by the Serbian people and the government. This bad co-operation with the Tribunal was blocking the Serbian European integration process for quite some time. However, the arrest on 21 July 2008 of Radovan Karadzic, who is accused of war crimes, changed the situation dramatically. The arrest was welcomed greatly in US and the EU. The Serbian government was determined to capture the remaining suspects hiding in Serbia. Among these, the most important war crimes fugitives to be arrested were Goran Hadzic and Ratko Mladic.

Ratko Mladic

Serbia's failure to arrest one of the world's most wanted war crimes suspects Ratko Mladic had been the single biggest obstacle to closer ties between the country and the European Union. UN war crimes tribunal Chief Prosecutor Serge Brammertz criticised the Serbian government for not engaging itself enough in trying to capture Mladic. He called the Serbian efforts "far from perfect".

However, on 26 May 2011 Ratko Mladic was arrested in Lazarevo, a village in the northern province of Serbia. Mladic had been using the pseudonym Milorad Komadić while in hiding. His arrest was carried out by two dozen Serbian special police officers and Security Information Agency and War Crimes Prosecutor's Office agents. "It is the result of full cooperation with the ICTY and Serbia has closed one chapter of our recent history that will bring us to reconciliation in the region," Serbian President Boris Tadic said in a press statement. He also stated that there would be an investigation to determine why Mladic was not arrested earlier, and to see if anyone in past and current governments had been involved in keeping him from justice. The arrest of Mladic was also welcomed by the EU and the international community. The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton called on Serbia to lose no time in extraditing Mladic. Ashton welcomed Mladic's arrest as an important step forward for Serbia and international justice.

On 27 May the ICTY appointed the trial chamber, consisting of three judges, for the case against Mladic. The chamber is presided over by Christoph Flügge (Germany). The assisting judges are Alphons Orie (The Netherlands) and Bakone Justice Moloto (South Africa). However, there is also a lot of resistance. At least 7,000 supporters of Ratko Mladic rallied in central Belgrade on 29 May to hear speeches from nationalist politicians and decry Mladic's arrest. "Co-operation with The Hague tribunal represents treason, this is a protest against the shameful arrest of the Serbian hero," said Lidija Vukicevic of the Serbian Radical Party. The demonstrators denounced Serbia's pro-Western President Boris Tadic.

The process of his extradition to the ICTY in The Hague has started, but Mladic is to file an appeal against his extradition to the UN war crimes tribunal. Nevertheless, the extradition of Mladic is to be expected within one or two days.

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. 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 emotional 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. President Tadic 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. 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.

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). 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 other hand, Russia and China, both also permanent members of the UN Security Council, are strongly against independence of Kosovo. 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.

Serbia filed the Kosovo case with the International Court Of Justice (ICJ) in 2009, saying that the declaration by Kosovo's ethnic Albanian leadership was a "flagrant violation" of Serbia's territorial integrity. However, in July 2010 the International Court of Justice decided that Kosovo's 2008 declaration of independence did not violate international law (the decision is non-binding). The decision was rejected by Serbia and Russia, but it does not keep experts from believing that it will lead more countries -- in the European Union and elsewhere in the world -- to recognize Kosovo's independence.

Even though Serbia continues to say that it will not recognize Kosovo, it has dropped initial plans to seek outright UN condemnation of the 2008 declaration of independence of its erstwhile province – a move which would have put Serbia on a collision course with most of the EU's larger powers and the United States. The initial resolution stating that unilateral secession is not an acceptable means to solve territorial disputes was withdrawn after diplomatic pressure by the EU. However, Serbia did submit a UN resolution acknowledging the advisory opinion of the UN's International Court of Justice on Kosovo's declaration of Independence, which passed by the UN General Assembly on September 9. The resolution welcomes the EU as the main body to facilitate dialogue between officials from Kosovo and Serbia. The EU is now pushing Belgrade and Pristina to launch direct talks. EU officials say possible talks between Belgrade and Pristina would steer clear of controversial issues such as Kosovo's future status and focus on practical cooperation on issues such as energy provisions, infrastructure, and economic development.

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 in the Kosovo state. Serbian politicians in Kosovo have partly established parallel Serbian institution which certainly will not help the integration of Serbian community in the Kosovo society. Many Kosovo Albanians view them as a threat to the state of Kosovo, even though they are willing to accept the Serbs as part of the state.

Likewise, 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, but also Balkan states such as Croatia, Macedonia and Montenegro. 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 Bosnia-Herzegovina. Until now (September 2010) 70 countries have recognized Kosovo as an independent state, Honduras and Somalia being the latest ones. Meanwhile, the government in Kosovo has started issuing Kosovar passports. Twenty-one EU countries that recognise Kosovo implicitly recognise the Kosovar passport as a valid document, whilst two countries, Greece and Slovakia, recognise



the Kosovar passport but not Kosovo as a country. The Kosovar passport replaced the United Nation Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) passport which had been the official document since 1999.

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 the two independent states Montenegro and Serbia started off quite good, until Montenegro's recognition of Kosovo aggravated the relationship between the two countries. Serbia expelled the ambassador of Montenegro in October 2008, following the Montenegrin recognition of the independence of Kosovo. Montenegro decided not to reciprocate as regards ambassador of Serbia to Montenegro, nor to take any other measures that could further deteriorate relations between the two countries. One year later Montenegro proposed Igor Jovic as the new ambassador. Serbia accepted him as an ambassador. But when Montenegro and Kosovo established diplomatic relations in November 2009, Belgrade withdrew its ambassador to Montenegro. In February 2009 the Serbian ambassador returned to his office in Podgorica. The bilateral relations between Serbia and Montenegro have not been fully normalized since then. In July 2010 Boris Tadic made his first visit to Montenegro. In talks with the Montenegrin President, Filip Vujanovic, some key points were raised, including the issue of normalization of relations, combating organized crime activities between the two countries, and the question of Serbs living in Montenegro. Boris Tadic has told that both countries should work on the improvement of their relationship.

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. Economic reforms with support of international financial institutions such as IMF and the World Bank as well as international donors, had some effect on the Serbian economy. Inflation declined and the real GDP recovered from a decline of about 16% in 1999 with an average growth rate of 3.5% between 2001 and 2006. The independence of Kosovo also had a positive influence on the economic figures of Serbia, as Kosovo was one of the poorest regions of Serbia.

The positive story ended abruptly in 2008, as Eastern Europe's economies were hardest hit by the global recession that got about that year, and few countries are worse off than Serbia, with a super deficit and struggling due to crisis-linked capital flight. Serbia slid into recession in the first quarter of 2009 when its economy shrank with 4%. Serbia's GDP saw a 3% drop in 2009, compared to 2008.



On May 15 2009 the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a stand-by credit arrangement to Serbia with 2.6 billion special drawing rights, which currently totals 3.14 billion euros. Serbia has so far drawn about 1.3 billion euros from the loan, designed to boost foreign currency reserves. The arrangement is set to last until April 2011. Following the loan, Serbia decided to cut wages and raise taxes (which raised a lot of protest among Serbians). The IMF has praised Serbia's government counter-crisis response, but urges a greater commitment to fiscal reform. Critics say that instead of fixing the causes of the crisis by implementing long-needed reforms, Serbia's fragile coalition government borrowed money merely to keep voters happy.

Moreover, Serbia's export is too low, namely 20 per cent of the GDP and 50 per cent of the import. The large gap between the import and export is partly covered by remittances from abroad. Many Serbs have problems making ends meet as the average monthly salary in the country is some 33,000 dinars (402 dollars), while a family of four is expected to need about 500 dollars a month to cover its basic needs. Furthermore, wages and pensions have been frozen. The pensions are a big problem as they constitute one third of the Serbian budget, and people paying taxes decreased from 2 million to 1.8 million.

According to the IMF, Serbia's foreign debt reaches its maximum in 2010 and will account for 77.5 percent of GDP. The level of Serbia's foreign debt against GDP will start to decline as of 2011, provided gradual economic growth continues and the current payment deficit stabilizes.

Serbia officially emerged from recession in the first quarter of 2010. The IMF projects that Serbia's economy will grow by 1.5% in 2010 as recovery takes hold in Western Europe.

European integration

In December 2009 Serbia officially applied for EU membership. European integration had been an important element of the political debate for several years. The EU and its member states are collectively the most important donors in Serbia. Local opinion polls (July 2010) show that around 65% 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 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. 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, in May 2006 Brussels suspended negotiations with Serbia and Montenegro. 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 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". However the SAA was not offered because 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 suspect Ratko Mladic.

Moreover, largely due to bad timing the EU proposal to sign a cooperation agreement has led to a crisis in the Serbian government. On 4 February 2008, 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 is 'tasked to stabilize the province after it proclaims independence from Serbia', includes 1,800 law enforcement officers from several European countries. According to prime minister Vojislav Kostunica, head of the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS), it rendered 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, argues that the agreement can still be signed as it “makes no mention of Kosovo”. However, in the run to the 2008 parliamentary elections 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. It was argued by the nationalist parties that the signers of the agreement, President Boris Tadic and Deputy Prime Minister Bozidar Djelic, exchanged Kosovo for possible EU membership.

In December 2009 Serbia formally submitted its application to join the EU. On 14 June 2010 the country came a step closer in its way toward EU membership, following a decision by the EU Ministers of Foreign Affairs to start the ratification process of the SAA. The decision came after ICTY Chief Prosecutor Brammertz delivered a positive report on Serbia's cooperation with the ICTY, saying "Serbia has maintained its cooperation with the Tribunal, with a view to deliver positive results". Prime Minister Delic called the decision a "big step and important moment for the country". The SAA must be ratified by all 27 EU member states in order to come into force. Yet until so far, the Netherlands has been blocking Serbia's further EU progress over its full cooperation with the ICTY. On 25 October 2010 during a meeting of EU Ministers of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands changed its stance and agreed with the other 26 EU member states in granting Serbia further progress on its way to EU membership. The European Commission can now officially start working on Serbia's membership application. Another big step in Serbia's Euro-aspirations is visa free travel. On 19 December 2009 citizens of Serbia were granted the right to travel without visa to the Schengen area. This does not apply to people living in Kosovo.

Serbia's inability to find Mladic had been a key stumbling block in negotiations over the country's EU membership. The arrest of Ratko Mladic on 26 May 2011 has demonstrated clear moral credibility and removed the biggest obstacle in the process of its European integration. Serbia showed that it is committed to justice and respect for the rule of law, and therefore Serbia is one big step closer to EU accession. One day after the arrest of Mladic, President Tadic said that Serbia wants to speed up its bid to join the European Union and wants to focus on arresting the last war crime fugitive, Goran Hadzic.

Organised crime and corruption

The EU has often stressed the need for implementing reforms and combating organised crime and corruption. It one of the primary tasks in the process on the way to Serbia's full EU membership. 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.

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. It seems that the plans started to pay off in 2006. In January a major action was taken to uncover corruption in the National Bank. 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 detained nine people, including two judges, as part of an investigation into government corruption and organized crime.

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 January 2009 Serbian Interior Minister Ivica Dacic estimated that some 30 to 40 serious organized crime groups are operating in Serbia. The figure does not include smaller size criminal groups but more organized, involved in drug trafficking and arms trafficking, human trafficking, murder and larger robberies.

Current President Boris Tadic has fully committed itself to the fight against organised crime, even causing him to receive death threats from criminal circles. Tadic vowed an all-out war on the Serbian mafia, in particular drug trafficking that is considered the biggest threat in society. The Serbian parliament implemented a law in March 2009 which makes it easy for the government to confiscate property of individuals linked to organized crime. In October



31, 2009, Serbian police arrested over 500 people in the biggest anti-drug bust ever in Serbia. At the end of the year, Interior Minister Ivica Dacic submitted the work report for 2009; the police had uncovered 7 organised crime groups and arrested 86 people. He said that by the end of 2009 there were 27 identified organised crime groups active, with each group having more than 200 members

Serbia is also making progress in fighting corruption. The current level of corruption is measured by the Corruption Perception of Transparency International, an international NGO mapping global corruption. In 2009 Serbia scored a 3,5 (on a scale from 1–10, with 1 meaning highly corrupt), up from 2,3 in 2003. Essential in the fight against corruption is the control on party funds, but the current law on party funding is very inadequate. A new law is needed to regulate the transparency of party funding. In September 2010 Serbian Interior Minister Ivica Dacic signed an agreement on establishing an International Anti-Corruption Academy, along with representatives of 35 other countries.

SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTIES

Social Democratic Party of Serbia (SDPS)

In October of 2009 the newly established Social Democratic Party of Serbia was presented to the media. The main aim of the party is Serbia's accession to the European Union, the preservation of territorial integrity of the country, regionalization of Serbia and the reduction of state administration. Furthermore, it is of crucial importance to increase the living standards of the people. The main slogan of SDP is "only the people". On 12 December of 2009 the statutes of the party were adopted by the first Party Congress which welcomed leaders of social democratic parties from the region. Rasim Ljajic was elected as the leader of the party. According to Ljajic, the first strategic partner of the party is the Democratic Party of Serbian president Boris Tadic, followed by the Socialist Party of Serbia of Ivica Dacic. The party wants to establish close relations with the S&D Group and other social democratic parties in the region. Even though it is still in a development phase and the party structures have to be strengthened further, SDPS has managed to get 6.5 % of the votes at recent the local elections in some smaller Serbian municipalities.

SDP holds no seats in the Serbian parliament and has no status in Socialist International.

Party leader: Rasim Ljajic

Website: www.sdpsrbije.org.rs

Social Democratic Party of Serbia (SDP)

The SDP was founded in April 2002 when the Social Democratic Union and Social Democracy (SD) merged, and ceased to exist in 2009. The party was in government from 2002 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. 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.

Due to a split within the party, the SDP had become very small and decided to participate on the list of the liberal party G17 Plus in the 2003 parliamentary elections. The SDP became part of the government of Serbia with one, 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. Meanwhile, From 12 September 2004 Nebojsa Covic led the party. Previously, he was the mayor of Belgrade during the Milosevic years.

The SDP ran on the 21 January 2007 parliamentary election together with the Party of United Pensioners of Serbia of Jovan Krkobabic. The PUPS-SDP coalition also included the Socialist People's Party. This coalition received 3.11% of the total votes, thus failing to pass the threshold of 5% to enter the National Assembly of Serbia. In 2008 the party did not get enough votes to enter parliament either. Despite these disappointing turnouts, the party became a full member of the Socialist International in July 2008.



In 2009 the party failed to pre-register and with that ended to exist. Oliver Ivanovic, one of the prominent officials of the party and current State Secretary of Kosovo and Metohija blamed leader Covic for this. According to Ivanovic, Covic did not try to bring together the main board and the presidency of the party in order to bring the party back to life after SDP failed to enter the parliament. Covic said that the members of the presidency did not have time for party work.

Former party-leader: Nebojsa Covic

Democratic Party (DS)

The DS' party leader, Boris Tadic, is the President of Serbia. He was re-elected in February for a second term. The DS was the first opposition party to be established in Serbia. In the 2003 parliamentary elections DS became the third largest party in the Serbian parliament with 37 of 250 seats. The party stayed out of the government, but its role in opposition was an essential one, counterforcing against the dominant extreme nationalist forces of SPS and SRS and providing for necessary majorities on reform proposals. The DS is a firm supporter of Serbia's integration into the European Union and co-operation with the ICTY. Concerning Kosovo, they stress the importance of the standards before the status. 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. In the parliamentary elections in 2008, 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.rs

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 respect of human and civil rights for all ethnic groups. These standings are highly controversial in Serbia, making the party's position marginal. On 20 April 2002 the SDU and Social democracy (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. 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.rs



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 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.

The LSV strives for an autonomous, multi-ethnic, and democratic Vojvodina, to be reached through decentralization and 'denationalization' of Serbia. 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. However, the party is strong on the regional and local level in Vojvodina. In the 2003 parliamentary elections LSV formed together with multi-ethnic or ethnic minority parties a coalition named "Together for Tolerance". The coalition was formed in an effort to overcome the 5% barrier, however the coalition just reached 4%. In the 2007 the elections the party was part of a coalition together with the Liberal Democratic Party and the Social Democratic Union. Next, in 2008, LSV formed a pre-election coalition with the DS, G17 Plus and some minority parties. LSV currently has 5 seats in the Serbian Parliament.

The LSV has no status in the Socialist International.

Party leader: Nenad Canak

Website: www.lsv.org.rs

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. 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. 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.

On 8 September 2008, Tomislav Nikolic resigned from the party, after disagreements with Seselj. The main disagreement was on the topic of Serbia's accession to the European Union, which is supported by Nikolic but not by Seselj. That same day, Nikolic formed a new parliamentary group called "Forward Serbia", which was joined by a number of other Radical Party members. This was condemned by Vojislav Seselj a few days later. On 12 September 2008 Nikolic and his group were officially expelled from the Radical Party. In response, Nikolic announced he would form his own party. On 14 September Aleksandar Vucic, secretary-general of SRS and a very popular figure among party supporters, resigned from Serbian Radical Party. The splinters led by Nikolic and Vucic launched the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS). The Serbian Radical Party lost 21 parliamentary seats to the SNS due to the split, keeping only 56 seats. Dragan Todorovic replaced Nikolic as the new SRS leader.

Party leader: Vojislav Seselj

Interim party leader: Dragan Todorovic

Website: www.srpskaradikalnastranka.org.rs

Serbian Progressive Party (SNS)

The SNS was formed as a group of breakaway MPs in the parliament from the Serbian Radical Party (SRS). The party was registered on 10 October 2008. The SNS is a center-right, conservative party. Deputy leader Aleksandar Vucic



told Serbian media that the new party's goal will be to "fight for a higher standard of living, combat against crime and corruption, and beat the regime of Boris Tadic and Ivica Dacic". Preserving the country's territorial integrity, according to him, will also be one of the SNS goals, while the party will have "a clear opposition stance". Even though it has yet to participate in its first election, the SNS has 21 seats in the Serbian parliament, all of them formerly belonging to the SRS before the split. Victories in recent local elections indicate the growing popularity of the SNS, as do recent national polls.

Party leader: Tomislav Nikolic

Website: <http://sns.org.rs>

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. 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 21 seats in the parliament.

Party leader: Vojislav Kostunica

Website: www.dss.org.rs

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. Economic and institutional reforms, a better life for the citizens of Serbia and integration into the European Union are its 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.

At a party congress in September 2006, Mladjan Dinkic was elected G17 Plus' new leader.

In the 2007 and 2008 elections, G17 formed a pre-election coalition with DS. G17 currently has 21 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.

G17 plus merged into a new party, founded on 16 May 2010, called "Party of Regions" (URS). The new party is made up of Together for Sumadija, I Live for Krajina, the National Party, the Vojvodina Party and G17 Plus. The leader of the new party is former G17 plus leader Mladan Dinkic.

Party leader: Mladjan Dinkic

Website: www.g17plus.org.rs

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. According to the SPO's programme the party is a nationalist party with a liberal, civic and democratic orientation. It would like to introduce a constitutional parliamentary monarchy in Serbia and emphasises the importance of keeping together the state, including. 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.

In the parliamentary elections of 11 May 2008 the SPO constituted part of coalition For European Serbia, under the President Boris Tadic. The SPO took four seats (out of the coalition's 102) and its vice president Srdan Sreckovic occupied the ministry of Diaspora.

In the same election, NS formed a coalition with the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) and won 9 seats.

Party leaders: Vuk Draskovic and Velimir Ilic

Website: www.spo.org.rs and www.nova-srbija.org.rs

Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS)

The SPS was founded in 1990 by Slobodan Milosevic and is the successor to the League of Communists. 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 trail 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.

In parliamentary election of 2008 the SPS and the Party of United Pensioners of Serbia (PUPS) strengthened their links by forming a coalition, on which United Serbia and Movement of Veterans of Serbia were present. The coalition won 20 seats with 7.58% of the votes. SPS and its coalition partners entered post-election coalition with For a European Serbia and formed the current government. The leader of the SPS, Ivica Dacic, is deputy of the Prime Minister and Minister of internal affairs. By entering a pro-European coalition with DS, SPS saved the country from a right wing radical coalition.

The SPS wants to join the Socialist International. However there is still some opposition within Socialist International to inviting the SPS, notably from the Social Democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Party leader: Ivica Dacic

Website: www.sps.org.rs

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." In the parliamentary elections of May 2008 the LDP got 5.2 % of the votes and 13 seats. Party leader Jovanovic repeatedly offered Tadic a hand in forming a new government after the 2008 elections, providing the DS change its policy on Kosovo, in recognising Kosovo as an independent state. However, the DS did not change its policy and the LDP has been an opposition party ever since.

Party leader: Cedomir Jovanovic

Website: www.cedajovanovic.com



BIOGRAPHIES

Boris Tadic
President of Serbia and leader of the Democratic Party (DS)

Boris Tadic was born on 15 January 1958 in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovian. He graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Belgrade with a degree in social psychology. Tadic was a member of the anti-communist dissident movement in Yugoslavia in the 1980s and was arrested and imprisoned several times by the communist authorities. Tadic worked as a teacher of psychology and as a military clinical psychologist. In 1997 he founded the Centre for the Development of Democracy and Political Skills, which he directed until 2002. This NGO focuses on political and civil education, and the development of the political culture and dialogue. At the same time, until 2003, he was also a lecturer of political advertising at the Faculty of Drama at the University of Belgrade

Boris Tadic has been a member of the Democratic Party since 1990, and served as its deputy leader, before he was elected as the party leader in 2004 and re-elected in 2006. In 2000, in the months following the overthrowing of the Milosevic regime, he served as Minister of Telecommunications in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. From March 2003 to April 2004 he was the Minister of Defence of Serbia and Montenegro, instituting democratic reforms and transforming the military to be NATO compliant. Boris Tadic was elected as President of Serbia for a five-year term in June 2004.

Since becoming president Tadic has consolidated Serbia's democracy. He has the image of a pragmatist who is popular especially among young and professional Serbs. He supports a democratic, pro-European, free-market course for Serbia and has played an essential role in bringing Serbia closer toward EU membership. Tadic also a peaceful solution for the Kosovo issue and EU Accession as soon as possible.

Boris Tadic is married and has two daughters.

Mirko Cvetkovic
Prime Minister of Serbia

Mirko Cvetkovic was born on 16 August 1950 in Zajecar, Serbia. He studied Economics at the University of Belgrade. Cvetkovic worked at a Mining Institute for ten years and at the Economics Institute for six years. In the 1980s Cvetkovic served as an external consultant for the World Bank on a number of projects in Pakistan, India and Turkey, and worked on the UN Development Programme in Somalia. From 1998 until 2008 he was consultant and advisor for several companies and institutions. From January 2001 he served as Deputy Minister of Economy and Privatisation. After that he became the director of the Privatisation Agency between 2003 and 2004. Cvetkovic was Minister of Finance in Kostunica's second government in 2007.

Cvetkovic became prime minister in July 2008, heading a coalition of the Democratic Party and the Socialist Party. He was seen as a candidate no one could object to and a man of compromise. He has made clear that he pushes for Serbia's accession into the European Union and the fight against corruption. The improvement of Serbia's economy is one of his key focuses as well.

Mirko Cvetkovic is married and has two children.

Ivica Dacic
Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Internal Affairs

Ivica Dacic was born in Prizren, Serbia on 1 January 1966. He graduated from the Faculty of Political Sciences in Belgrade. From 1992 he was a member of the Citizens' Council of the National Assembly of the Federal Republic of



Yugoslavia.

Dacic became a member of the Socialist Party of Serbia under Slobodan Milosevic. The party went into opposition with the ousting of Milosevic in 2000. Since then Dacic has invested in transforming the party. By choosing the pro-European coalition with the DS, he prevented the formation of a right wing radical coalition. Dacic favours younger party officials within his party and is the promoter of the so-called new socialism. From October 2000 until January 2001 he was Information Minister in the so-called transitional Serbian government. Dacic became a member of the Serbian Parliament in 2004 and was a candidate in the presidential elections that year. He came in fifth with 3.6 percent of the vote. In 2006 Dacic was elected leader of the Socialist Party of Serbia. The Socialists returned to government in 2008. Since then, Dacic serves as First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Internal Affairs in the government of Mirko Cvetkovic. Dacic has expressed his commitment to achieving EU membership. In December 2010 he was unanimously re-elected as chairman of the SPS. Previously, Dacic was also President of Partizan Belgrade basketball club, and Vice President of the Yugoslav Olympics Committee.

Ivica Dacic is married and has two children.

Zarko Korac
Leader of SDU

Zarko Korac was born on 9 March 1947 in Belgrade. He teaches psychology at the faculty of philosophy at the University of Belgrade. He was one of the founders of the Social Democratic Union. Between 2001 and 2003 Korac was Deputy Prime Minister, and briefly Prime Minister (on 17 and 18 March 2003), following the assassination of Zoran Dindic. Korac is currently a member of the Serbian parliament. He has taken a firm stance against nationalism and is pro-European.

Nenad Canak
Leader of LSV

Nenad Canak was born on 2 November 1959 in Pancevo, in the Serbian province of Vojvodina. Canak went to the high musical school in Novi Sad. After having graduated at the Faculty of Economics at the University of Novi Sad, Canak specialized in marketing and computer networks. He founded the League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina in 1990 and served as President of the Assembly of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina from 2000 until 2004. Since then he has been a member of parliament.