

In the Wake of the Elections: Political Crisis and Social Unrest in Serbia

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It appears that Serbia's presidential and parliamentary elections on May 6 were tainted with massive vote fraud, Chicago-style. What made the returns suspicious from the start is that parties aligned with the unpopular government were awarded an overwhelming 75% victory, while many opposition parties either failed to reach the parliamentary threshold altogether or just barely made it over the top with reduced representation. Another telltale sign was the bloated voting list which contained just 250,000 fewer names than the total population of Serbia, leading to the obvious conclusion that by the government's reckoning everybody above kindergarten age was deemed fit to vote in this election.

No sooner did the polls close than reports of brazen irregularities began to pour in. For several days government spokesmen and State Electoral Commission officials tried to stonewall the issue. Serbian law gives dissatisfied parties a very short period, just three days after results are announced, to investigate irregularities and file their complaints. When activists of the mostly youthful anti-globalist movement *Dveri* (which according to official results remained just half a percentage point short of the minimum necessary to enter parliament) rushed to exercise their legal right to check voting materials, they were shocked. In numerous locations, voting protocols and ballots were clearly mismatched, ballots for *Dveri* and other opposition groups were invalidated although they had no apparent defects, and dead voters were massively backing government parties.

While the dimensions of the fraud are a very pertinent issue, it is more important to consider who is slated to be the beneficiary of the growing unrest in Serbia which is being provoked by the blatant dishonesty of the election process.

Vote theft might have been the primary issue if the elections had been structurally honest, which was not the case. There was no "equality of arms" between the slick and well funded government campaign and the opposition's pathetic attempts to be heard, the media were almost entirely monopolized by the government, large sections of the voting public were brainwashed by pro-EU and NATO propaganda for years before these elections, and there was no focused public debate on any significant issue. Even if the votes had been counted honestly, morally and politically the election would have been a farce.

Both main contenders in the election, President Boris Tadic and Serbian Progressive Party leader Tomislav Nikolic, and their parties, are deeply beholden to Western interests. Tadic is under the wing of the current US ambassador to Serbia, Mary Warlick, while Nikolic's chief mentor and political adviser is the former US ambassador, William Montgomery. There is little doubt that both Serbian politicians under the guidance of ultimately the same policy centre from abroad.

So the fundamental question is: what is the foreign sponsors' basic interest in Serbia at this moment?

It is, first of all, to ensure the continuity of the present system which guarantees them the exercise of full political, economic, and strategic domination over the country. Next, when necessary, it has an interest in proactively eliminating threats to the stability of the system. Finally, it aims to prevent unanticipated and uncontrolled changes and to that end it always maintains at least one reserve team capable of taking over in an emergency.

Given current catastrophic social and economic conditions in Serbia, and negative trends all around, the situation is highly problematic. The next couple of years promise to be highly turbulent and the capacity of the current team around Tadic to hang on to the end of their next mandate is very dubious. The inevitable deterioration of internal conditions on all fronts and growing tensions which will accompany it could lead not just to the downfall of the regime (which is a minor point) but to the collapse of the system (which is major). The prospect of uncontrolled internal commotion could result in a fundamental shift in Serbia's political orientation, which is unacceptable. That is why it is necessary to act pro-actively, and as quickly as possible. These elections are as good an occasion for that as any.

The two key components of that pro-active agenda are: manufacturing the illusion of change that could lead to tangible improvement in people's lives, and the installation of an alternative loyal team tasked with nurturing that illusion while it continues to toe the line. It is desirable that this team be untainted with the excesses of the soon to be former regime. Among its main missions is to inject the appearance of integrity and a dose of optimism which could help to prolong the life of the system.

It was probably a correct assessment that Tadic has no remaining tricks in his bag to successfully keep the system going. That is why the choice apparently fell on his rival Tomislav Nikolic, until a few years ago an ardent nationalist and leader of imprisoned Vojislav Seselj's Serbian Radical Party who broke with Seselj in 2009 under unexplained circumstances to form his own party and steadily move it into the EU/NATO globalist orbit. The now cooperative Nikolic has been integrated into the "mainstream" political process under the careful tutorship of his new Western mentors.

Although clear evidence at this point is lacking, the hypothesis should not be excluded that during election preparations Tadic and his team were led into a political trap similar to the one that set the stage for the first Gulf war. There is little doubt that in their desperate straits they would have found it difficult to resist the temptation of organizing election fraud. But the apparent brazenness and scope of the abuses discovered so far goes far beyond normal expectations. Did Tadic receive a green light to engage in fraud *va banc* because he received assurances that the guardians of democracy and the "rule of law" would overlook his indiscretions and not call him to account? Indeed, two days after the announcement of election results Tadic received warm congratulations on his "victory" from the head of the foreign diplomatic mission in Belgrade from which he is the most eager to take his instructions.

But just as these reassuring maneuvers were taking place, things were rapidly unraveling for the regime on the vote fraud investigation front. Spearheaded by Dveri, the protest movement was gradually reinforced over the rest of the post-election week not just by other opposition parties and regime critics but - significantly - by a number of political groups and

individuals who would normally be regarded as Tadic's allies and who draw their political sustenance from close strategic ties to the regime's Western sponsors. By the weekend, there was an unmistakable impression of a rising tide of popular indignation and rebellion over the fraudulent elections in Serbia which put Tadic and his government's spin doctors clearly on the defensive.

As the controversy was gathering momentum, Tadic's principal rival, Tomislav Nikolic, kept his distance from the fray. It was almost a week after the elections when he and his party finally joined the election rebellion. On parliament steps, they dramatically showed a sack full of what they claimed were stuffed ballots and threatened to suspend their participation in the second round on May 20 unless fraud allegations were clarified. In the meantime, they promised mass public demonstrations as a form of pressure on the regime to cancel the official election results.

It is unlikely that Belgrade's main square will come to resemble Cairo's Tahrir because so far the attitude of the Serbian public has been marked by an extraordinary degree of docility and apathy. But there is little doubt that a commotion may be triggered sufficient to facilitate change in the ruling cadres. A significant indicator of the background and future course of this "Serbian election rebellion" will be the behavior of "Otpor", the Western-trained regime change outfit that was instrumental in the overthrow of Slobodan Milosevic and whose political condottieri are now subcontracting their services "color" revolutionaries worldwide. If they join the unrest in Serbia and assume a prominent role in directing it, that will help to connect many dots.

Another telltale sign will be if, when the protest movement expands and assumes a more "professional" character, Dveri and other politically unsophisticated forces are swept aside. Indications abound already that although they gave the initial impetus, they are now increasingly marginalized. It is to be expected that, like in Egypt, in the first phase all discontents will be unleashed and given maximum facilities to push the figure slated for political oblivion off the stage. In the following phase, as unrest grows, foreign sponsors will scold their domestic protégés for their errors and increasingly distance themselves from their politically isolated and discredited erstwhile allies. At the same time, deftly maneuvering its way, the newly anointed and equally loyal team will neutralize its no longer useful tactical partners from the dilettantish opposition. As the reserve leader is installed in the position vacated by his predecessor, the system is stabilized and it temporarily overcomes the crisis.

What awaits Serbia is cosmetic change with the subservient semi-colonial system remaining intact and the credulous masses receiving another dose of anesthetic.

As they say in America: *the fix is in.*

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