

Volkova EKATERINA, Ural State University,
Ekaterinburg, Russia.
PhD in Political Studies,
pro-dean of the International Relations Faculty.

The European Union Strategy towards the South European states: the Case of Political Transformation in Serbia

Serbia, as a part of SFRY, at the end of 80th of the XX century was a leader of integration processes; but in a result of its collapse and civil wars, also out of the long-lasting process of confrontation with the Milosevic's regime, these advantages were lost and the process of institutional reforms was retarded.

The failure of the EU peaceful initiatives during the Yugoslavian conflict settlement in 90th led to the development and implementation fundamentally new strategy of stabilization – SAP – economic and political stabilization of the whole region in time.

The democratic opposition in Serbia took the course on integration into the EU from the very beginning (2000) but during long time it wasn't able to implement the radical reforms.

In such conditions the EU' tactics of categorical demands to admit new status of Kosovo and cooperate with Hague in aggregate with economic and financial support of institutional reforms and speeding up the process of the SAP signing, afforded. Such cynical "stick and carrot policy" from the side of EU fortunately was crowned with success.

Key Words: Serbia, European Union, political transformation, European integration

The region of central and southern Europe has always played a special role in the course of global development. In many ways geopolitical problem of Serbia's position in European transformational processes has a long and extremely ambiguous history; just remember the word of St Sava's "The East thought that we were West, while the West considered us to be East". Serbia, always remaining a European state, both territorially and geographically, but has never actually been in Europe Union.

As in the past, today the issue of European integration is connected with the complexity and uncertainty of "Serbian question" which has a 200 year history: how to combine the process of modernization and unification of "Serbism". In 2008, after the self-declaration of independence of Kosovo this dilemma transformed into the equally urgent problem - the problem of preservation of state integrity and national identity of the Serbs. A long period of crisis and dissolution of SFRY, complicated by a

civil war, turned Serbia from a leader of European integration of the end of the 80s into an outsider. An extended period of time of democratic revolution to a larger extent retarded institutional reforms as well as the essential transformation of social structure and political system of the country.

Transformation of internal politics in Serbia in 1990-2000.

At the end of the 1980s under the conditions of acute political crisis in Yugoslavia, the process of establishing of multi-party system began: new parties were organized in Slovenia and then in the other republics. However only in Serbia, (as opposed to any other former Yugoslav republics and the majority of Eastern European countries), communists managed to preserve their exclusive domain in power in the multi party system for quite a long period of time - right until the beginning of the 21st century. This very specificity gives us an opportunity to regard the political processes in Serbia as phenomenon of extended in time known as the "velvet revolution". For a decade from the introduction of multi party system and to the "small October revolution" there was Slobodan Milosevic's personal rule regime with elements of a parliamentary system. Whereas in the countries of central and Eastern Europe the democratic opposition managed to come to power using national doctrines, S. Milosevic in Serbia under the slogan of "anti-bureaucratic revolution" managed to do so that the "old regime" played a role of a new one and created a paradoxical situation from a political point of view: the party, ruling for 40 years, managed to become a power and an opposition at one time by means of new, as it was called "refined" leadership. New Serbian administration leadership deprived the opposition of its ideological identity by proclaiming the protection of "serbism" its first objective.

The most important event in the political live of Serbia of that period was the formation of the united opposition party - Democratic Party in 1990. DP leaders represented various political trends: from convinced liberals and supporters of western model of modernization of Yugoslavia (D. Micunovic and Z. Djindjic) and democrats -traditionalists (V. Kostunica, K. Cavoski, N. Milosevic) to radical nationalists (V. Sesel). This very heterogeneity determined contradictions in administration and constant organizational changes. Centrist and ideologically heterogeneous DP turned to be subjected to rifts; problems of national policy and uniting into broader coalitions turned out to be the reason why both leftists and rightists separated from it. As a result three trends were formed in the Serbian political arena: socialist (the Socialist Party of Serbia, the Yugoslav Left - IYUL (July)), liberal-democratic (the Democratic Party of Serbia, Serbian Renewal movement) and nationalistic (the Serbian Radical Party).

At the same time the conflict between two leading democratic parties DP and

DPS was escalating: more and more they disagreed on the strategy of political transformation of the society and the national question. Not least important was the personal rivalry for leadership in a democratic camp between two leaders - V.Kostunica and Z. Djindjic.

During the war all the parties except DP and DSP took up extremely nationalistic positions, blaming Milosevic for treason and insisting on "unification of all Serbian lands". However the same national and patriotic program was proposed by the leading SPS. In that way Serbian pluralism was a dilemma of communist and anticommunist nationalism.

The 78-day war of NATO against Yugoslavia turned out to be the determinant - the turning point in confrontation of S. Milosevic's regime with democratic opposition. The attempt of the regime to represent itself as a "winner" in the war made it unpopular with all levels of Serbian society. At the same time the opposition forces united and a new coalition called "The Democratic opposition of Serbia" was created. The cause for consolidation of all oppositional forces and their unification with mass non-partisan protest was the preparation for 2000 elections.

In reality Z. Djindjic was a creator and a manager of the election campaign DOS which resulted in S.Milosevic's overthrow. The mass youth nongovernmental organization "Repulse" became an important ally of the coalition in the election campaign. Not less important reason of the triumph of opposition were blunders of the ruling regime. The Parliament of Yugoslavia made a number of amendments to the Constitution of the FR of Yugoslavia on the 6th July, 2000. Outwardly democratic changes, per se, purposed other objects. By means of these changes the Parliament actually cleared S. Milosevic the way to (absolute) power.

It was Z. Djindjic who saw a chance for Serbian opposition in this decision made by his opponent. At the same time he managed to preserve the unity of opposition. It turned to be possible by Z. Djindjic's tactical ploy. He understood that his own candidature was unacceptable and proposed an uncompromising figure of the DPS leader V.Kostunica as a candidate for the FR of Yugoslavia Presidency. All this predetermined the success of DOS in Presidential and Parliamentary elections of the 24th September 2000 and gave an opportunity to head the mass protest movement on the 5th October, 2000, which, as a result of the so-called "October revolution", led to the overthrow of S.Milosevic regime. However, becoming the leading coalition in the country, the Democratic opposition of Serbia was a priori doomed to the renewal of ideological and personal disagreements which characterized the inter-party relations in the late 1990's. Moreover, they only intensified at the beginning of the 21st century, when integration into the global society became a necessity.

Political in-fighting in Serbia and its relationship with the EU in 2000- 2006 rr.

Straight after V. Kostunica was pronounced the winner in presidential elections, the EU rescinded most of the sanctions imposed on Yugoslavia and decided to extend the measures for liberalization of trade for Serbia. The EU also set a course for Serbia's progressive integration into its organization. For the first time in the last 10 years representatives of Belgrade took part in a summit of the heads of state and government of the region held in October 2000, in Skopje (Macedonia) and this became a legitimization of new "democratic" Yugoslavia. During the conference the FR of Yugoslavia officially acceded to the Stability Pact for the countries of South Eastern Europe.

Within the terms of regional cooperation between Serbia and Montenegro in April 2003, Serbia and Montenegro joined the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, in August – the international Danube Commission and the Regional Transportation and Energy System. Direct working contacts between the EU working bodies and the FR of Yugoslavia were made in June 2001. During the period between July 2002 and January 2005 about 10 meetings between the representatives of the European Commission and the administration of the FR of Yugoslavia (from February 2003 – Serbia and Montenegro) were held, in the course of which the fields subjected to reformation were marked.

The Thessaloniki Summit was a powerful impetus to the development of the regional cooperation. Despite the acute situation in domestic policy in Serbia and contradictions between different groups of democrats, the course to euro integration became the long-term guiding line in the policy of Z. Zhivkovic's transitional government (2003) as well as of V. Kostunica's coalition government (2004-2007).

According to the decisions made at the Thessaloniki Summit, the government of the Republic of Serbia adopted a Plan of actions for bringing the national legal system in balance with the acts of the EU in July 2003. "The Office of the Government of Serbia for the joining the EU", formed on the 8th March, 2004 became the main administrative body for coordination of work in the course of joining the EU.

The major achievement in the work of Serbian government and the parliament of Serbia for the joining was the development and adoption of the National strategy of Serbia for joining the EU by Serbia and Montenegro in May 2005. In spring 2005 the EU took a favorable view of institutional reforms in Serbia and Montenegro and was ready to start direct negotiations for signing the Stabilization and Association Agreement in autumn 2005. In the statement on the Stabilization and Association Agreement among other things it was marked that cooperation between Serbia and Montenegro and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia developed rapidly.

However, already in spring 2006 the situation in the relationship between Serbia and the EU changed drastically: in the agenda not so much the problems of institutional transformation came to the fore as the most important issues concerning home political stability: the problem of cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and the question of the status of the autonomous province of Kosovo and Metohija. It was in many respects connected with the situation in home policy of Serbia.

On the back of the fierce opposition of DP and DPS the active process of growth of the Serbian Radical Party took place. It can be explained by the fact that the Serbian Radical Party, gradually but quicker and smoother than the Socialist Party of Serbia, transformed from the extremist-radical party to the populist-conservative one and became the party of discontent and protest vote. To some extent the leaders of the Democratic Party are responsible for that as they thought there was an electoral community of the democratic bloc and the most important task is to redistribute these votes for its own benefit. As a result there was Kostunica's weakening as well as the extension of influence of the radicals.

The results of the elections in Serbia in December 2003 and then the formation of Kostunica's government in March 2004, supported by socialists, caused quite negative reaction of the West and laid foundation to the constant search for the variants of direct influence upon the political landscape in Serbia. From this moment on, V. Kostunica's coalition governments (2004-May 2008) became opponents to Brussels and a factor which hindered the process of integration of Serbia.

Strengthening of interparty resistance in spring 2006 led to a stalemate: Kostunica's Cabinet actually blocked the process of judicial reform and reform of force structures. In response DP leaders paralyzed the work of Parliament. It instigated the outside forces to take decisive actions: leaders of the EU placed their stake on the open pressure on Serbia. The Solicitor General of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia K. Del Ponte instigated an accusation of Serbia of the rejection to cooperate with ICTY in General Radko Mladic's search and extradition. At the beginning of May 2006 it caused the formal interruption in negotiations for signing the Stabilization and Association Agreement. Announcement about the interruption in negotiations between the EU and Serbia on the 3rd May 2006 let M. Djukanovic (the president of Montenegro) get nominal majority in 0,3 % in favour of separation. Having finished the process of the disintegration of Yugoslavia on its republican borders, the EU made it clear that it will go any length to the partition of Serbia. Separation of Montenegro and formal extinction of the FR of Yugoslavia brought legitimacy of Serbian sovereignty over Kosovo into a question as the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 provided that Kosovo was a sovereign part of a federal state.

It is obvious that one of the motives of the actions of the EU aimed at breakdown of talks with Serbia was striving for changing the home political landscape in the country. Brussels was persuaded to activate the pressure on the political elite of the country and to use the method of “carrot and sticks” for the reformation of the political arena of Serbia. It happened because of the single-line perception of political processes in Serbia by org-men of the EU and their confidence that center-right coalition headed by V. Kostunica turns the Euro integration process into the alternative of preserving the territorial integrity and national identity of the country by its policy.

Means and methods of the EU influence on political landscape in Serbia in 2006-2008.

Breakdown of negotiations for the signing of the Stabilization and Association Agreement at the beginning of May 2006 and the transition of the western partners to forced politics about R. Karadjic's extradition to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and about the status of Kosovo caused another political crisis in Serbia which lasted up to the spring of 2008.

During the run in the office the cabinets of the DP (2001-2003) and then during the run of power of V. Kostunica's coalition cabinet in 2004-beginning of 2006 the countries of the ES retarded the activity of the ICTY. They were afraid of destabilization of internal affairs in Serbia and the ultimate rupture of liberal-conservative coalition, which, in their opinion, opened the way to power for V. Kostunica's populist bloc and V. Sesel's radical bloc. However in spring 2006 when the rupture of unsteady coalition of V. Kostunica and Tadic's supporters turned out to be a reality and the process of reformation of judicial system and system of force structures stopped, the question of R. Mladic and R. Karadjic's extradition became the most effective and sophisticated means of pressure on Belgrade. The radical turn to cooperation with the ICTY, especially R. Karadjic's extradition to the Hague, happened only after the victory of democrats in the parliament elections and b. Tadic took control over the force structures and first of all over the key one – the Agency of Information and Security.

After the victory of “the october revolution” new democratic forces of Belgrade made every possible effort to implement the Kumanov Agreement and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 of 1999 could improve the constructive dialog with the representatives of the international forces in Kosovo and the Contact group and to launch the complicated process of quest for a compromise on the basis of the formula “at first-standards – then status”. By common effort they managed to localize the spread of the conflict in the southern parts of Serbia in March

2001, which by the Kumanov Agreement were turned to so-called "buffer zone" of Preshev valley.

However the deadlock in the process of Kosovo regulation contributed to the fact that by the end of 2002 Belgrade came to a conclusion that the battle for standards and creation of multiethnic Kosovo had failed and now it was essential to force onto the final defining of Kosovo's status in a direct dialog with Washington, Moscow and Brussels on the basis of its partition. The document called "the Strategy for Kosovo and Metohija" adopted by Serbian government at the end of December, 2002 presupposed constitutionalization of Serbian community in the administrative system of Kosovo and Metohija in the so-called "Dayton variant" by formula "more that autonomy, less than republic".

New correlation of forces in Belgrade formed after Z. Djindjic's assassination on the 12th of March 2003, immediately influenced the process of negotiations on the status of Kosovo. Internal fight for power in Serbia between the supporters of different Serbian parties in Serbian enclaves led to the full loss of initiative in the process of negotiations by Belgrade, which allowed the international community, first of all, the USA, the EU and the UN took the initiative in the final work on the status of Kosovo. Total failure of the policy "at first-standards – then status" afforded General Secretary of the UN K. Annan ground to make a decision about the beginning of direct negotiations about the future status of Kosovo. The further course of negotiations about the status of Kosovo under the aegis of M. Ahtisaari, which began in February 2006, became a preparation to the proclamation of independence of Kosovo, which was reflected in Ahtisaari plan, manifested in January 2007. Breakdown of negotiations about SPS, and the deadlock of negotiations about the status of Kosovo in autumn 2006 ignited another political crisis in Serbia.

Despite the fact that the new Constitution of Serbia was adopted in October 2006 which proclaimed the province of Kosovo and Metohija a constituent part of Serbian territory, the strain in relationship of Tadic's and Kostunica's supporters was at its height. Special [parliamentary elections held on the 20th January 2007 could not help to overcome the crisis: the process of formation of the government lasted 4 months and was finished on the 15th of May 2007 with formation of V.Kostunica's coalition cabinet with the Democratic Party, conservative-traditionalist bloc of the Democratic Party of Serbia, V. Ilic's «New serbia» and the party called «Group 17 plus».

Though the principle of work of coalition government was based on five agreements established during the negotiations – retaining of Kosovo as a part of Serbia, Euro integration, fighting against corruption and organized crime, intensification of social and economic policy and cooperation of Serbia with the ICTY – the crisis was not overcome: the final political landscape was formed as a result of the

parliament elections in January- the beginning of February 2008 as well as the result of snap parliament elections of the 11th of May, 2008 which took place against the backdrop of acute political crisis, caused by their declaration of Kosovo independence on the 17th February 2008.

In many respects the unexpected victory of the coalition “For European Serbia” in the parliament elections of the 11th May, 2008 and the following formation of coalition government of democrats with socialists and their electoral bloc partners was a result of principal changes of Serbian public sentiments towards the pro-European vote and of the competent tactics used by the Democratic Party. B.Tadic managed not only to sign the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the EU on the 28th April 2008, but also 2 days before the elections he managed to reach the approval of the Oil and Gas Agreement with Russia, signed by the government on the 25th January 2008. By doing this he managed to decrease the original clash of Serbian national consciousness – either with the West, or with Russia, by opposing this traditional choice to the formula – both with the West and with Russia.