

THE “YOUNG, HANDSOME, AND SMART”: MONTENEGRIN POLITICAL ELITE IN THE PERIOD OF POST-COMMUNIST TRANSITION

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ABSTRACT: THE ARTICLE CONSIDERS THE PROBLEM OF MONTENEGRIN POLITICAL ELITE FORMATION IN THE 1990S IN THE CONTEXT OF COMPARISON AND ANALYSIS OF ITS IMAGE AND ACTIVITIES. SPECIAL ATTENTION IS PAID TO THE POLITICAL FIGURE OF MILO DJUKANOVIĆ AND THE PECULIARITIES OF HIS POLITICAL ACTIVITY. THE AUTHOR MAKES A CONCLUSION ABOUT THE FACTORS CONDITIONING THE POLITICAL VIABILITY OF MONTENEGRIN LEADER.

KEY WORDS: MONTENEGRIN POLITICAL ELITE, MILO DJUKANOVIĆ, MOMIR BULATOVIĆ, PUBLIC INTELLECTUAL, DISINTEGRATION OF YUGOSLAVIA, MONTENEGRIN INDEPENDENCE

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“Mi znamo kako!” (We know how!) – was the slogan of a political group which came to power in Montenegro in the 1990s and has been remaining in power for the last twenty years. During these years Montenegro has proceeded along a winding path from one of the Yugoslav republics, through the State Union with Serbia, to a new independent state in the Balkans. In the general processes of the Yugoslav decline during the 1990s Montenegro was initially a dependent unit on the wave of republican nationalisms which was compelled to find its own way and to decide on its strategy of future development in a very short period of time.

THE role of intellectuals in the collapse of Yugoslavia is indisputable; in every republic there were the ideologists of nationalism (so as the defenders of the Yugoslav ideas). Initially Montenegro stood out against this background being the least nationally oriented among the Yugoslav republics [1,269]. Although, the ideologists of separation of a unique Montenegrin nation (including the ideas of a radical rejection of their close relationship with Serbs) also existed here (e.g., Savo Brković, Špiro Kulišić, Jevrem Brković). Obviously, the political processes in Yugoslavia in the 1990s to some extent originated from the activation of the republican intellectuals’ work aimed at the revision of their nation’s history. Though the political processes in Montenegro according to some parameters didn’t fit into the general situation of the Yugoslav collapse. In many respects the peculiarity of a Montenegrin “transition” – from the Yugoslav republic to the independent state and (to some extent) from authoritarianism to democracy – is connected with the activities of the abovementioned political elite.

MONTENEGRO faced the collapse of Yugoslavia with neither a strategy of future development nor political elite capable of generating such a strategy. The formation of political life and political elite in terms of the common state with Serbia was one of the main peculiarities of establishment and development of Montenegrin political system in comparison with other post-Yugoslav states. "Montenegro has largely experienced political change through splits within the ruling elite, rather than through the mechanism of democratic elections" [2, 26]. At the same time, Montenegrin political elite, coming from the communist bureaucracy, had formed by the late 1990s and have de facto remained at power till the first quarter of the XXI century almost without any significant changes. Unlike Slovenia and Croatia, Montenegro hadn't received any guarantees from the Western countries about its future joining the EU, and it was deprived of the opportunity to use the beaten way of Europeanization in the 1990s. Preserving the state union with Serbia, Montenegro significantly lagged behind its western post-Yugoslav neighbors in this process. Finally, the preservation of the common state and legal institutions with Serbia didn't further the creation of a sovereign state.

THE pro-independent Montenegrin elite stems from the period of socialist Yugoslavia. Under the influence of the events of the late 1988 – 1988 the communist republican government resigned in January 1989 and was changed by young politicians from the ranks of the Communist Party – Momir Bulatović, Svetozar Marović and Milo Djukanović.

IN the media they were called "young, handsome, and smart" [3], and these epithets got into the modern Montenegrin political discourse and to some extent defined the image of the future Montenegrin leadership. And the characteristic "smart" has a key place in this image and illustrates the main instrument of the political tactics of their leader, Milo Djukanović, – efficient usage of image factors of knowledge, intellect and professionalism to gain public support.

IN some respect Djukanović fits into the role of a public intellectual: "first of all, he is concerned about, firstly, nomination and, secondly, promotion of his ideas, <...> he doesn't join dogmatically any political party, <...> he has to react to the situation immediately" [4, 14-15], with the difference that his intellectual activity was not aimed at promotion or development of culture, but at the achievement and maintenance of power. The young politicians' accession to power practically happened under anti-Albanian slogans, being supported by S. Milošević, whose political campaign was based on protection of the interests of Serbs (and Montenegrins as the integral part of the Serbian nation) from Albanian aggression in Kosovo. The new Montenegrin elite had begun its activity from the negation of the uniqueness of the Montenegrin nation, and came to power partly because of their pro-Yugoslavian, practically pro-Serbian, rhetoric and Milošević support (though this fact was later denied by them) [5, 86].

UNDER the slogan "We know how!" Djukanović, Bulatović and Marović practically performed "a palace coup" [6, 434], though the change of political elite in Montenegro had in fact been a reproduction of its new, "intellectual" generation and didn't cause any changes of the political system. "Young, handsome, and smart" themselves were the integral part of the system, and the social claims supported by them came only to the personal changes of the ruling top and "elite reproduction" [2, 27]. The image of the new leaders had been formed by contrast with the previous authorities and met the anticipation of democratic changes inspired

by the developments in other countries. These anticipations were supported by the political discourse formed by the young politicians.

BULATOVIĆ, Djukanović and Marović got higher education (Djukanović and Bulatović – economic, Marović – legal). They started their political career rather early, in the ranks of the League of Communists. They “wore jumpers” (in contrast with wearing grey suits old party functionaries) and emphasized their knowledge of the right way of development of the country, which their predecessors were alleged not to have had. But the only person of “intellectual work” among them was Marović, who continued his work at the economic faculty of the university and got the master’s degree in economics. And it was Bulatović who became the first public figure of the “young, handsome and smart” as the first Montenegrin president after multiparty elections in 1990.

BUT it was Milo Djukanović who managed to remain in power, and has been the key political person in Montenegro for more than 20 years. He brought Montenegro to independence though it was contrary to his initial political slogans. Perhaps, the abovementioned features of a “public intellectual”, the ability to define “which way the wind was blowing” [2, 31], and the important (in Montenegrin reality, probably, the key) factors of support by the national security service, the alleged links with the illegal business and the Western support (though not the permanent one) played a significant role in his political viability.

THE first multiparty elections in Montenegro were organized in 1990 under the influence of democratic changes in the Eastern European countries and the internal developments. Milo Djukanović participated as a leader of the League of Communists of Montenegro. Having started their political career in the LC, Djukanović, Bulatović and Marović decided not to hasten with the change of their political sign, though in other countries of the region communists were losing their positions. In our opinion, that had been one of the first “smart” steps of Djukanović which led him to his further success and the creation of the image of the intellectual in power. In his interview to *NIN* [7] before the first multiparty elections Djukanović noted that during two years they had been carrying out “consolidation and democratic renewal of the party”, “created the basis for the League of Communists functioning as a modern political party of leftist orientation following the example of European socialist parties”. Djukanović reported that during the last 25 days of the election campaign the party had obtained more than 1000 new members and supporters. He emphasized the fact of “rejuvenation” of the party as a guarantee for the beginning of its new life. The decision not to change the name of the party was also justified – the change could have had negative consequences for the party’s results in the elections.

IN his analysis of economic situation and the perspectives of Montenegrin development Djukanović assured that the renewed party *had known* how to use the opportunities and chances of the country to help it out of the existed catastrophic situation, thereby supporting his image of a person, understanding the situation and having a clear strategy of further actions. This feature has been typical for many of his public speeches and articles during his political career [8].

BY his political activities Milo Djukanović demonstrated his ability to manoeuvre, to adapt to the existing political and economic situation, to use all available resources. After the elections he created a new political party on the base of the “renewed” League of Communists – the Democratic Party of Socialists, and later on he changed its policy in proper time. In the early 1990s Montenegrin “independists” and liberals had been led by the Liberal Union of

Montenegro and its leader, a Montenegrin intellectual, Slavko Perović. But by the end of the 1990s the DPS, which initially hadn't supported the idea of Montenegrin independence, practically supplanted the Liberal Union in this sphere. Under the leadership of Djukanović Montenegro had been gradually distancing from Serbia which was under the political and economic pressure, but at the same time this distancing was not that radical or swift to cause the protests of the Serbian population in Montenegro.

IT'S remarkable that the first radical attempt to separate Montenegro from Serbia in the early 1990s was made by another member of the "Three", President Momir Bulatović. At the Hague Conference in 1991 he accepted the Carrington proposals which "envisaged a loose association of sovereign or independent republics" [6, 441]. This decision caused aggravation of contradictions between the "independists" and the supporters of the union or the state association with Serbia. These contradictions split both political elite and society of Montenegro, but the referendum of 1992 resulted in the preservation of Yugoslavia.

BUT five years later the group Bulatović-Djukanović-Marović split, and its members found themselves in different sectors of the political spectrum. The parliamentary elections of November 1996 again brought a victory to the DPS, and it was the proof of its dominance on the political arena of the country. But in 1997 against the background of the elections in Serbia the relations inside the DPS became so tense that on the Congress in March 1997 Bulatović openly supported Milošević and demanded to exclude Djukanović's supporters from the government. This demand was supported by the majority of the party members, and Djukanović resigned from his position of the vice-president of the DPS. The party conflict was gaining a public character; it was joined by non-party actors (student associations, intellectuals). This time Bulatović supported the preservation of the union with Serbia, while Djukanović and Marović, under the circumstances of the crisis and the increasing dissatisfaction of the population both in Serbia and Montenegro, "saw an opportunity to exploit Milošević's weakness" [2, 31] and to change the policy of the country.

IN 1997 the DPS split, and presented actually two candidates for the presidential elections of October 1997 – Djukanović and Bulatović. According to Morrison, "The campaign was about personality as much as political orientation. Bulatović sought to portray himself as an "ordinary guy" who would appeal to middle and lower-ranking members of the DPS and to older generations<...> Djukanović, on the other hand, sought to portray himself as a modern, progressive, European style reformer" [2, 35]. Consequently, "the Djukanović wing of the DPS controlled 16 municipalities, while Bulatović controlled only five" [9, 31]. Djukanović proposed economic and political reforms and closer ties with the West, but didn't advocate Montenegrin independence and supported the reforming of relations with Serbia and "a higher degree of autonomous decision-making in Montenegro" [9, 31]. Djukanović won the elections, and the party finally split. In March 1998 its part under the leadership of Bulatović established the Socialist People's Party. The government was headed by a Djukanović companion, a lawyer, Filip Vujanovic.

SOON afterwards Montenegro finally took the road of acquisition of sovereignty, though initially it had to go through an artificial state union with Serbia. With the support from the West (which slackened after the fall of Milošević regime in Serbia), using the successful experience of political campaigning and the support of ethnic minorities, Djukanović led the republic to independence having once again justified the title of a "wise and farseeing politician" [10]. But in the course of time his image has changed; while he is still an imposing figure, and his age is still young for a politician, the trait of his "intellectuality" is not that

positive as it used to be. "The smartest man in the Balkans" [11] is often called like that not for the achievements in politics, but rather for his unique ability to remain in power. Being an indisputably talented political tactician, Djukanović has been brave enough to change his political position and adapt to the political milieu using not only legal methods. Neither the accusations of his participation in cigarette smuggling and ties with organized crime, nor the attacks against independent journalists or the involvement of the national security service in the political process in Montenegro – the main blames expressed both by the political opponents and the analysts – could prevent him from organizing the referendum on independence, or discussing Montenegrin membership with the European Union.

At the same time, another former member of the "Three", Momir Bulatović, is sure that Serbia and Montenegro will never join the EU, because the EU is in a crisis and on the verge of collapse [12].

Using the image of young professionals, relying on the tactics of political maneuvering, and radically changing their political guidelines, the "young, handsome and smart" managed to find their niches in the political life of the country and to influence its development, either personally, or via close companions. "The smartest man in the Balkans" Milo Djukanović, who has been in power in Montenegro directly or indirectly, still has the reputation of an adaptable and wise politician, making the best use of his opportunities, experience and intellect for the achievement of his goals.

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