The Serbian parliamentary elections of 6th May 2012
as part of a great electoral marathon

The aim of the article is to analyse the most recent round of parliamentary elections in Serbia from the moment they were called, scrutinising the progress of the election campaign and the results of the voting and following through right up to the forming of the new government. The author points to several crucial changes introduced in the amendments to the electoral law in May 2011. She examines the strategies adopted by the vying parties, including the establishment of a broad, syncretic coalition, and examines the most important campaign topics, both present and absent, as well as looking at the fact that the multifaceted electoral rivalry and, in particular, the combining of the parliamentary and the presidential elections, resulted in the parties’ running typical leadership campaigns, brimming with populist rhetoric and mutual accusations.

Considerable space is also devoted to a discussion of the results of the electoral rivalry and their implications for the political and the party systems, as well as the process of forming a new cabinet. Just as Tomislav Nikolić’s ‘new’ Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), formed in 2008 as a result of a split in the Serbian Radical Party (SRS), was being counted on as the potential winner when the election was called, so did the likelihood of its becoming a part of the new government seem remote. What appeared more feasible was the continuation of the coalition created during the previous term of office around Boris Tadić’s Democratic Party (DS) and Ivica Dačić’s Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS). After lengthy negotiations, the SPS and the SNS finally established the nucleus of a new governing coalition. However, the prime minister’s portfolio was taken on by the leader of the socialists, in other words, the party which had come third in the electoral race.

The assumption of power by the progressives and the socialists is crucial inasmuch as the two parties ruled Serbia jointly during part of the extraordinarily turbulent decade of the 1990s. Given that they were returned to power as the result of free elections and that they are continuing the policies of the previous pro-democratic and pro-Europe cabinet, we can follow Samuel Huntington in speaking of a second peaceful transfer of power. In the author’s opinion, this is a vital indicator of the consolidation of a democratic regime. In the final section of her deliberations, she goes on to ponder what the coalition’s future achievements might be and what might hinder its rule.