VUCIC REMAINS ONLY BALKAN PRESIDENT HEADING PARTY

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03.04.2018

Balkan Insight (2 April 2018)

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic remains the only head of state in the Balkan region to lead a political party, having not followed the example of his predecessor, Tomislav Nikolic, who quit the Serbian Progressive Party to assume his new office.

The party is the foundation of authority, so if one was relieved of party leadership, they would not be able to hold the office of President," suggested political analyst Vladimir Goati, head of the Serbian branch of Transparency International.

Serbia's constitution says the President cannot hold another public function or professional activity".

However, according to Goati, some interpret this differently. Some say it means the head of state should not lead a political party, while others disagree.

Vucic won the April 2 presidential elections in 2017 with 55.08 percent of the vote. Critics alleged numerous abuses.

Some countries, like Croatia and Romania, have passed regulations explicitly saying that the President-elect must resign from their party, or at least suspend party membership.

Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic left the Croatian Democratic Union, HDZ, in 2015, before assuming the Croatian presidency.

Romanian President Klaus Iohannis left the National Liberal Party that he headed before assuming office in December 2014.

Montenegro does not require the President to resign from any party position, but its President since 2003, Filip Vujanovic, is not the head of the ruling Democratic Party of Socialists, DPS, so no conflict there has arisen.

Bulgarian President Rumen Radev won the 2017 elections with the support of Bulgarian Socialist Party – but ran officially as an independent candidate.

Albanias Ilir Meta left the Socialist Movement for Integration, LSI, the party he founded and led since 2004, two days after he was elected President on April 28, 2017.

However, he left the party in the hands of his wife, Monika Kryemadhi, who is a sitting MP in the Albanian parliament.

Kosovo President Hashim Thaci resigned as the leader of the Democratic Party of Kosovo, PDK, before assuming office in April 2016.

Macedonia's President since 2009, Gjorge Ivanov, belongs to but does not lead the VMRO-DPMNE party of the recently-ousted Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski. After his election defeat, Gruevski passed the party leadership to Hristijan Mickoski.

The situation is different in Bosnia, which does not have one President but a three-member presidency.

Its Croatian and Bosniak members, Dragan Covic and Bakir Izetbegovic, remain heads of their respective parties, the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia, HDZ BiH, and the Party of Democratic Action, SDA.

The Serbian member of the Bosnian Presidency, Mladen Ivanic, no longer leads his Party of Democratic Progress, though he did remain at its helm for a year while also holding office.

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