

ELECTIONWATCH

BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA



Bosnia and Herzegovina Post-Election Watch: October 2010 General Elections

Results from Bosnia and Herzegovina's (BiH) October 3 general elections suggested some incremental progress in placing the country on a track toward greater Euro-Atlantic integration and becoming a more stable, prosperous nation. There are reasons for optimism as moderate, issue-oriented parties experienced success in their campaigns at both the state and entity level. However, there are also reasons for concern as nationalist parties in the Serb-dominated Republika Srpska (RS) maintained power at the entity level and sowed discontent at the state level with rhetoric advocating for the country's dissolution. BiH's complex electoral structure was designed to create stability and ensure the fair representation of BiH's three constituent peoples - Bosniaks (or Muslims), Croats and Serbs. The current structure, developed as part of the Dayton Agreements that ended the civil war, has maintained peace over the past 15 years; it has also discouraged national unity.

Overview of the Structure of National and Entity Government

Government in BiH

The 1995 Dayton Agreement established a complex system of government for BiH. The constitution guarantees political representation for each of the three constituent peoples (ethnic Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs). In addition to executive, legislative and judicial structures, Dayton also established the Office of the High Representative (OHR), a representative of the international community who holds certain executive powers. While the OHR continues to possess significant authority, it has been exercised less frequently in recent years. BiH is divided into two entities with specified powers: The Federation of BiH (made-up of mainly ethnic Bosniaks and Croats) and RS (mainly ethnic Serbs).

National Government

The national executive branch is a three-member presidency. Each of the three constituent peoples directly elects a president to a four-year term. The three presidents serve simultaneously and the chairmanship rotates among them every eight months.

The national level parliament consists of two chambers. The House of Peoples is a 15-member body, whose members are chosen by the two entity parliaments. The RS National Assembly names five ethnic Serbian members and the Federation Parliament selects five ethnic Bosniaks and five ethnic Croats. The House of Representatives has 42 directly-elected members: Voters in the federation elect 28 parliamentarians and voters in the RS elect 14 to serve four-year terms.

Federation Government

The Federation Parliament has two chambers. The House of Representatives has 98 directly

elected members. The Federation House of Peoples is made-up of members appointed by the 10 cantons, regional governments that are roughly akin to counties. The Federation presidency consists of a president and two vice presidents, chosen by the Federation Parliament.

Republika Srpska Government

The RS has an 83-member, directly elected, unicameral parliament called the National Assembly. Executive power in the RS is held by the presidency, consisting of an elected president and two vice presidents. There are no cantons in the RS.

Results

Bosniaks turned out in great numbers to support the multi-ethnic Social Democratic Party (SDP), and also voted for the moderate Party for Democratic Action (SDA) candidate Bakir Izetbegovic for the Bosniak member of the rotating BiH Presidency. Bakir is the son of SDA founder and wartime president Alija Izetbegovic. Bakir Izetbegovic's campaign emphasized that compromise between BiH's three constituent peoples is the only way to push the country forward. The defeat of incumbent Haris Silajdzic, leader of the Party for BiH and well-known hardliner, could be interpreted as a sign that public support is shifting away from charismatic leaders who use ethnic tensions to attract votes.

However, the potential shift in the mentality of Bosniak voters was not reciprocated by the country's other two constituent peoples, Serbs and Croats, as both remained loyal to nationalist parties. In the RS, the ruling Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD) and its allies swept the RS elections, securing another four-year term in the RS National Assembly. RS Prime Minister Milorad Dodik, who has repeatedly called for the RS to secede from BiH, was elected as the new President of the RS, beating his main opposition rival - Serbian Democratic Party candidate Ognjen Tadic. The other opposition hopeful, Party for Democratic Progress leader Mladen Ivanic, lost a close race to SNSD's Nebojsa Radmanovic for the Serb member of the BiH presidency.

Ethnic nationalists also dominated in BiH's predominately Croatian *cantons* where the Croatian Democratic Union of BiH (HDZ BiH) defeated their biggest opponents, the coalition of HDZ 1990 and the Croatian Party of Rights. The biggest issue for all of the major Croatian parties actually proved to be the election of SDP incumbent candidate Zeljko Komsic to another four-year term as the Croatian member of the BiH Presidency. His victory was disputed by Croatian nationalists who attempted to tarnish the victory by claiming he relied on Bosniak support for the win. Citizens in the Federation of BiH are permitted to vote only once for president, but can choose to support a candidate from either a list of Bosniaks or Croats.

The elections were generally held in line with democratic standards without any significant problems reported at the polling stations, although some parties complained about the number of invalid votes. Voter turnout for the election was approximately 56 percent, the highest since 2002.

Complete Results (source: BiH Central Election Commission)

BiH Presidency, Bosniak seat (candidates with more than two percent)

| Candidate | Number of Votes | Percentage |
|---|------------------------|-------------------|
| Izetbegovic Bakir, Party of Democratic Action | 162,797 | 34.87 |
| Radoncic Fahrudin, Alliance for Better Future | 142,359 | 30.49 |
| Silajdzic Haris, Party for BiH | 117,168 | 25.10 |
| Dedovic Ibrahim, Democratic People's Union | 13,366 | 2.86 |

BiH Presidency, Croat seat (candidates with more than two percent)

| Candidate | Number Of Votes | Percentage |
|---|------------------------|-------------------|
| Komsic Zeljko, Social Democratic Party | 336,961 | 60.61 |
| Kristo Borjana, Croatian Democratic Union of BiH | 109,714 | 19.74 |
| Raguz Martin, Croatian Democratic Union 1990 and Croatian Party of Rights | 60,234 | 10.84 |
| Ivankovic-Lijanovic Jerko, People's Party Work for Betterment | 45,382 | 8.16 |

BiH Presidency, Serb seat

| Candidate | Number Of Votes | Percentage |
|--|------------------------|-------------------|
| Radmanovic Nebojsa, Alliance of Independent Social Democrats | 295,624 | 48.92 |
| Ivanic Mladen, Coalition Together for Srpska | 285,927 | 47.31 |
| Papovic Rajko, Alliance for Democratic Srpska | 22,778 | 3.77 |

President of the RS (candidates with more than two percent)

| Candidate | Number Of Votes | Percentage |
|---|------------------------|-------------------|
| Dodik Milorad, Alliance of Independent Social Democrats | 319,615 | 50.52 |
| Tadic Ognjen, Coalition Together for Srpska | 227,239 | 35.92 |
| Suljkanović Enes, Social Democratic Party | 15,419 | 2.44 |

State Parliament House of Representatives (42 seats)

| Party | Seats |
|---|--------------|
| Social Democratic Party | 8 |
| Alliance of Independent Social Democrats | 8 |
| Party of Democratic Action | 7 |
| Alliance for Better Future | 4 |
| Croatian Democratic Union of BiH | 3 |
| Serbian Democratic Party | 4 |
| Party for BiH | 2 |
| People's Party Work for Betterment | 1 |
| Croatian Democratic Union 1990 and Croatian Party of Rights | 2 |
| Democratic People's Alliance | 1 |
| Party of Democratic Progress | 1 |
| Democratic People's Union | 1 |

Federation Parliament House of Representatives (98 seats)

| Party | Seats |
|---|--------------|
| Social Democratic Party | 28 |
| Party of Democratic Action | 23 |
| Alliance for Better Future | 13 |
| Croatian Democratic Union of BiH | 12 |
| Party for BiH | 9 |
| Croatian Democratic Union 1990 and Croatian Party of Rights | 5 |
| People's Party Work for Betterment | 5 |

| | |
|--|---|
| Democratic People's Union | 1 |
| Party of Democratic Activity | 1 |
| Alliance of Independent Social Democrats | 1 |

RS Assembly (83 seats)

| Party | Seats |
|--|--------------|
| Alliance of Independent Social Democrats | 37 |
| Serbian Democratic Party | 18 |
| Party Of Democratic Progress | 7 |
| Democratic People's Alliance | 6 |
| Socialist Party | 4 |
| Democratic Party | 3 |
| Social Democratic Party | 3 |
| People's Democratic Party | 1 |
| Serbian Radical Party of RS | 1 |
| Party of Democratic Action | 2 |

Prospects for a New Government

The biggest questions following the elections involve prospects for forming a new government at the state level. It will be challenging to overcome the current hostilities between the big election winners from the RS and Federation of BiH, SNSD and SDP respectively. Dodik, the newly elected President of the RS and SNSD leader, reinforced his stance following the elections that he has no interest in forming a coalition government with SDP. However, Dodik discussed his openness to talks with other parties and touted his partnership with HDZ BiH as one example; HDZ BiH leader Dragan Covic has become increasingly vocal about the position of Croats within the Federation. SDP leader Zlatko Lagumdžija has done little to diffuse the situation, stating that any attempt by Dodik to secede from BiH should be dealt with "force from state authorities."

The second strongest party in the Federation of BiH, SDA, is attempting to mediate the situation through compromise and inter-party dialogue. At the moment, it seems highly unlikely that any agreement on a new government will be reached before the end of the year. The situation is clearer when it comes to the formation of governments at the entity level. This is especially true in the RS, where the ruling SNSD maintained its majority in the RS National Assembly with the help of its coalition partners the Socialist Party and the Democratic People's Alliance. In the Federation of BiH, the most likely scenario, as indicated by party officials, is a coalition between the two strongest parties, SDP and SDA.

There are several conclusions that can be drawn from the current political environment at both the state and entity level. Milorad Dodik will strengthen his position in the RS, and with his influence over the media and the security and civil sectors, he will remain one of the most powerful players in the RS and BiH a whole. Using his strategic partnership with the strongest Croatian party, HDZ BiH, Dodik will be able to maintain a great deal of autonomy and dampen calls for greater centralization of national power from Sarajevo and the international community.

Some analysts believe that Bosniaks are beginning to accept this fact, and may support decentralization efforts as a way to ease ethnic tensions. The increasingly moderate stance of the Bosniak SDA on such initiatives adds credence to this theory.

In any case, BiH faces serious challenges in the near future. In order to move the country closer towards European Union accession, elected officials will need to find ways to strengthen public administration and bring the judicial system in line with European norms. They will also need to tackle problems such as crime and corruption, while spearheading initiatives that jump-start the country's lagging economy.

IRI in Europe

In Europe, IRI focuses on helping political parties become more issue-oriented and responsive to voters' concerns. IRI's training helps parties create more coherent platforms, better strategic communications, more effective grassroots organizations, and stable party foundations or institutes that can provide necessary training and analytical support. IRI is also active in expanding political participation among women, youth and minorities. By working with governments and civil society to concentrate more on policy, IRI seeks to make the region's democracies more responsive and sustainable.

IRI's current program in BiH is funded through the United States Agency for International Development and focuses on strengthening the capacities of parties, including candidate and political activist skills training.



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