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Please cite this publication as follows:

Keil, S. and Perry, V. (2015) Back to square one? An analysis of the 2014 General Elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Electoral Studies*, 38. pp. 82-87. ISSN 0261-3794.

Link to official URL (if available):

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2015.02.014>

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Notes on recent elections

Back to square one?: An analysis of the 2014 general elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina[☆]

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[☆]This paper discusses the results of the recent elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina in October 2014. It does so by engaging with the results and what they mean for a number of selected policy areas in the country. The research is based on the statistics of the Electoral Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina and on the experience of Drs Keil and Perry, who have been working on Bosnia for many years, Dr Keil as an academic and Dr Perry as a practitioner, including for the OSCE and the International Law and Policy Group.

1 Introduction

The seventh post-war general elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina¹ were held on October 12, 2014. While it has been common for every election in Bosnia to be proclaimed as “pivotal” or otherwise consequential, reflecting both the dreams and dashed hopes of domestic and international observers alike, these elections were interesting for three main reasons. First, these elections were one of the dirtiest and most divisive campaigns in years, further polarizing an environment characterized not only by the lack of reform, but by stagnation and even regression since 2006. Second, brief but important civic protests took place in 2013 and 2014, demonstrating growing dissatisfaction with ‘politics as usual’, and the complete inability of the country’s officials to improve the quality of life for average people throughout the country. Third, devastating floods in May 2014 affected nearly 1/3 of the country, wiping out private and public properties and infrastructure, greatly affecting agricultural prospects in fertile flood plains, and convincing some that the inability to either prepare for or respond to the natural disaster answers the questions of whether the country is a failing or failed state.

This essay will first provide an overview of the general institutional structure in Bosnia, and its electoral and party system, before briefly reviewing the election results in 2014, with some comparison to the results in 2010. The primary focus will be the state (i.e. central) and entity levels. Some coalition issues and dynamics also will be explored. Next the outlook for several key elements of political reform will be discussed. Finally, the likely forecast for relations with the international community, Bosnia’s governing structure and the potential for reform in the next four years will be considered.

2 Governance and institutional structures in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina

After the war in Bosnia between 1992 and 1995, the current institutional set-up of the country was decided at the Dayton Peace Conference in Ohio, USA in November 1995.² Annex Four of this Agreement is the current Constitution of Bosnia. According to the peace agreement, Bosnia and Herzegovina was confirmed as a country consisting of three constituent peoples (Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats) (along with Others and citizens), and divided into two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH), which covers 51% of the territory, and the Republika Srpska (RS), which covers 49% of the territory. The FBiH is further divided into ten cantons, five with a Bosniak majority, three with a Croat majority and two mixed cantons (mainly a Bosniak–Croat mix). The RS is mainly inhabited by Serbs, and was proclaimed in January 1992³ and consolidated during the war in Bosnia as a result of massive population movements and displacement; hence the entity remains a source of contestation, especially by Bosniaks who claim that the RS was established illegally and as a result of ethnic cleansing and genocide. In 1999, the territory of Brčko in the north-east received the status of a district as a result of a series of international arbitration decisions (Perry, 2006). Hence, Bosnia consists of two entities (the FBiH and the RS), one of them (the FBiH) is further divided into ten cantons, and one autonomous district – Brčko.⁴

The state is extremely decentralized; indeed in 1995, only three ministries existed at the level of the central state (today there are nine). Most decision-making competences lie with the entities. In the case of the FBiH, decision-making powers have been further decentralized to the cantons, leaving the FBiH government with few competencies and powers. Below the cantons there are also municipalities whose responsibilities and financial resources are often very limited, making for a total of four levels of government. In the centralized RS, the entity government holds most decision-making and spending powers, with municipalities acting mainly as units for the administration and implementation of entity decisions. While there has been a process of incremental centralization and state-strengthening since 1998, the state government in Sarajevo remains weak, and is mainly responsible for foreign policy, defense policy, wider economic planning and policies that cross entity lines, such as cross-entity transportation and environmental concerns.⁵ It is therefore fair to say that the main formal governing bodies in Bosnia lie at the level of the cantons in the FBiH and the RS. The primary

decision-makers remain not the country's institutions, but the leading, and primarily nationalist-oriented, political parties that agree on political priorities and compromises.

All institutions in the country, including at the entity and cantonal levels, apply strict power-sharing rules, usually between Bosniak, Serb and Croat parties (in some cases "Others" are represented as well, mainly at entity and cantonal level and often to a lesser degree than the guarantees enjoyed by the three constituent peoples). For example, the state level has a collective presidency consisting of one Bosniak, one Croat and one Serb, with the Chairmanship of the Presidency rotating among the three members. It is mainly responsible for the appointment of ambassadors and the government, and also plays an important role in foreign policy. The central government at the state level usually consists of a coalition of Bosniak, Croat and Serb parties. The same can be found in the entities and cantons, although ethnic dominance in territorial units means that often one party dominates the government at these lower levels. However, some non-nationalist, social democratic or civic parties have played roles in some cases,⁶ upsetting the precarious balance sought by the nationalist parties. This phenomenon (triggered by SDP's ((Social Democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina) success)) in part accounted for the difficulty in forming a government following the 2010 general elections. Decisions usually need approval from a number of groups, and veto-rights (by both peoples and the entities) are extensive, particularly at the state level (Bahtić-Kunrath, 2011). This means that decision-making is often slow and based on complex negotiations.

3 Bosnia's electoral system

Elections in Bosnia for all state institutions (including the collective three-person presidency, and the House of Representatives), as well as for the entity and cantonal parliaments and presidents take place every four years. The first post-war elections took place in 1996, and were won by a coalition of nationalist parties representing the three constituent peoples: Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs.

The electoral rules are very complex and differ between central state institutions, entities and cantons. The collective presidency at the state level is elected as follows: The Bosniak and Croat members of the collective presidency are elected by simple majority vote in the FBiH, while the Serb member is elected by simple majority vote in the RS.⁷ Elections for the Bosnian House of Representatives use proportional representation, with open lists in 2014. Two-thirds of the 42-members of the House of Representatives at central level are elected from the FBiH, with the other one-third elected from the RS.

The president of the RS is directly elected by simple majority voting in the entity, while the president of the FBiH is elected indirectly by the FBiH parliament.⁸ Each entity has one president, with two vice-presidents from the other ethnic groups. The House of Representatives in the FBiH and the RS Assembly are elected via proportional representation, using open lists. The central state and the entities each have second chambers, referred to as the "House of Peoples" ("Council of Peoples" in the RS) – which are not directly elected, but are appointed by various parliaments. For example, the members of the House of Peoples at central state level are appointed by the RS Assembly and the FBiH House of Peoples.

4 The party system

Rather than talking about one party system in Bosnia, it is conceptually more useful to distinguish among three separate party systems.⁹ As described above, with the exception of two cantons and Brčko District, all territorial units in the country have a clear dominant ethnic population, creating conditions for nationalist parties to dominate in these units, particularly in a system characterized by often weak civic options and a robust environment of ethnically-driven fear and patronage. In Bosnia's first multi-party-elections in 1990,¹⁰ the vast majority of votes from Bosniaks were won by the SDA (Party of Democratic Action), Croats voted mainly for the HDZ BiH (Croatian Democratic Union) and Serbs supported strongly the SDS (Serb Democratic Party). Together, these parties won more than 75% in the general elections of 1990; these same parties dominated in the post-war elections in 1996. It is important to highlight that these parties do not compete with each other, as they align themselves solely with one of the three major groups in Bosnia and gain their votes from that group (in the respected territory where the group is a majority). This follows very closely the consociational power-sharing model¹¹ and can be observed in other countries as well, for example in Belgium and in regards to the Parti Québécois in Canada. There are no electoral incentives to promote cross-group campaigning or voting, and few incentives to adopt or promote a moderate, non-nationalist focused platform.

Since 2000 the party systems have become more diversified. This, however, has not resulted in strong state-wide (i.e. civic, non-nationalist) parties emerging, but can be explained by growing intra-group competition between different parties. For example, there are now at least four major parties fighting for the Bosniak vote, two major parties fighting for the Croat vote and two major parties fighting for the Serb vote (more on this below). One reason for this diversification can be seen in the fact that voters increasingly make different choices depending on the level of government they are voting for. For example, a voter in Sarajevo canton might support a smaller non-nationalist party in cantonal elections, because they are more likely to get into the cantonal assembly due to low thresholds. Yet, in the vote for the FBiH parliament the same voter might not choose the same party, fearing they will not get into the FBiH parliament. When it comes to elections for the state-level House of Representatives, the same voter might again choose to vote for a different party, keeping in mind that the only parties represented there are those which gain sufficient votes from throughout the entity. Hence, in practice this means that in some cantons in the FBiH a large number of smaller parties have been successful in gaining recognizable support, while a smaller number of parties play a key role at the entity and state levels. However, even here the number of parties has increased since 1996, which can be explained by popular dissatisfaction with the three parties mentioned above, as well as the rise of new alternatives. The number of parties that promote a civic and non-national agenda remains small and their electoral success remains limited; even new alternatives must operate within the old system shaped by Dayton.

5 The results of the 2014 Elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The impact of the elections can best be appreciated by looking at the entity results, together with the results for the House of Representatives and the presidency at the state level. Bosnia's election results remain strongly influenced by the country's structure — one state, two entities, three constituent peoples — and the power-sharing features in its institutions, which were introduced as part of the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995.

5.1 The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH)

The Bosniak vote was squarely captured by the SDA (Party of Democratic Action), a party that has sought to establish itself as the protector of Bosniaks in war and in peace. SDA won convincingly in Bosniak majority cantons, in the FBiH (with over 200,000 votes)¹² and in securing the Bosniak seat on the BiH presidency. They will be the strongest party in the FBiH parliament and also in the Bosnian House of Representatives (at state level). Their success in the Tuzla canton — home of the 2014 protests and an SDP stronghold, is particularly notable. Other Bosniak-minded parties and candidates (SBB (Union for a Better Future), SBiH (Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina), etc.) secured various levels of support in various races that could allow some (particularly SBB) to emerge as interesting potential coalition partners. The SDP was the biggest loser in the FBiH. In 2010 it received over 265,000 votes in the FBiH; in 2014 these were more than halved and the party received just above 90,000 votes.

The Croat vote was secured by Dragan Čović's HDZ BiH (Croatian Democratic Union), also a party with heavy pre-war and wartime symbolism,¹³ which was victorious both in Croat majority cantons as well as securing the Croat seat on the Bosnian presidency. There had been some hope that Martin Raguž's HDZ 1990 might lead to some (albeit minor) change in Croat politics, and reflect frustration with constant allegations of corruption against Čović. While the trend of intra-group plurality has continued, Čović's HDZ has managed to establish itself as a dominant party in Bosnian politics, and particularly in Croat-majority territories (the party gained more than 90,000 votes throughout Bosnia over its performance in 2010), and will not only be the strongest party in the three Croat cantons in the FBiH, but will play a major role in the House of Representatives of the FBiH and at the state level, as a coalition partner and because of Čović's membership in the collective state presidency.

At the level of the FBiH there are many coalition options, including one that could leave out SDA, the biggest party in the FBiH; this outcome is not, however, likely as the nationalist parties have a track record of supporting each other's interests over other non-ethnic political options. Much will depend on Croat parties and also the DF (Democratic Front), the second strongest party in the FBiH (with a share of over 150,000 votes). The DF is a non-nationalist centrist party, created by disgruntled social democrats who had left the SDP, and others seeking a different option and attracted by Željko Komšić's persona. While their electoral performance and the prospect of the party participating in government has raised some hope for policy progress and an end to years of institutional gridlock, the party remains highly focused on the unique position of its leader, as it still lacks a clearly articulated plan and vision for the country as a whole. Therefore it stands in the shadows of the much larger and more institutionally established nationalist options.

5.2 The Republika Srpska (RS)

The situation in the RS is interesting in different respects. The close race between Milorad Dodik's SNSD (Independent Social Democrats) and the opposition coalition has been pronounced in both the fight for the Serb seat on the central state presidency, as well as positions in the RS National Assembly (RSNA). The SNSD-DNS-SP¹⁴ gained the 44 votes needed to form a government in the 83-member RSNA. Consequently, the party and its allies formed a government in the RS in January 2015. The SDS won a total of 24 seats for the RSNA, and has expressed its plans to be an opposition party against SNSD and any of its partners. The RS sends 14 MPs to the Bosnian (state) House of Representatives, and the distribution of these seats will be 6 held by the SNSD, 5 by the SDS, and 1 each by the PDP-NDP, DNS-NS-SRS and SDA.

For the Serb seat on the state presidency, PDP's (Party for Democratic Progress) Mladen Ivanić won a narrow victory against SNSD's Željka Cvijanović (317,799 votes compared to 310,867 votes or 48.69% compared to 47.63%; CvijnaovićCvijanović was ultimately appointed as RS Prime Minister), while Milorad Dodik of the SNSD held onto his seat as RS president. While this intra-Serb tension between the SNSD and SDS-led coalitions could lead to some interesting entity dynamics in the next two years as the various parties prepare for 2016 municipal elections, it is unlikely that this would be allowed to spill-over to more moderate policies towards Bosnia in general. Both parties promote a nationalist agenda aimed at strengthening RS autonomy from Bosnia, and minimizing the role of the state, which they will very likely maintain.

The close split shows growing dissatisfaction with Dodik's SNSD — something already evident in the 2012 municipal election in which he lost more than two dozen municipalities. It is uncertain whether Dodik will continue to rule the roost in terms of both RS and state-level political discussion in spite of his losses, something he was able to do in spite of his party's losses in 2012, whether Ivanić will position himself as the elder statesman of the Serbs, or whether some other options could emerge.

5.3 General analysis

In the wake of the complete battering of the SDP, which was the strongest party in the Bosnian (state) House of Representatives after 2010, there was much talk about the need for new leadership in the party. Zlatko Lagumdžija, the current long-term leader of the SDP (since 1997), saw his credibility on a downward slide for years, most strikingly since his "deal" with SNSD was revealed in late 2012, based on a highly questionable set of reforms that would have both weakened central state institutions in favour of the entities and also raised serious concerns about their impact on Bosnia's still fragile democracy. However, an extraordinary party congress in early December saw insider Nermin Nikšić, former Secretary General of the party, elected as party chair, suggesting that the sweeping changes wanted by many (including much of the party's youth branch) may not materialize. SDP has been in a Lagumdžija straitjacket for many years, leading to many dissatisfied splinter parties (most recently, Željko Komšić's DF (Democratic Front)), that it is interesting to ponder the potential for a revived SDP, particularly as Komšić's DF harbors its own ambitions for 2016 and 2018. Such continued fragmentation among non-nationalist, nominally civic social democrats could maintain the dominance of the big three party machines. It also demonstrates that Bosnian politics remains dominated by elite-centred parties, which often have little if any ideological profile.

Optimists will seek to demonstrate that the strong showing of parties such as DF and *Nasa Stranka* (Our Party) (particularly in Sarajevo) is a sign that people *do* want progress, and in some cases did vote for change. Some have written that at the level of the FBiH, when one adds up the votes won by DF, SDP and SBB (*Naša Stranka* is not noted but would presumably be counted as well), there is in fact a strong constituency for change (Mujanovic, 2014). Whether or not Fahrudin Radončić's party (SBB) represents moderate reform, let alone a civic vision based on good governance, is a matter of debate. While nominally, then, there are signs for stronger support of non-nationalist parties like the DF, which promote a less ethnically-based system and a focus on reforms to achieve progress in the EU integration process, overall it not yet certain whether these parties will be able to work together, and if they will be able to put their proposals on the agenda. The performance of the SDP in governance in the FBiH and at the state level since 2010 suggests otherwise. Hence, non-nationalist and civic initiatives, while present, remain marginalized as nationalist parties continue to dominate the policy agenda.

The *Domovina* coalition did well considering its youth and the challenges involved. However, their one seat among the RS representatives to the Bosnian (central state) House of Representatives is far from the five needed to block the RS use of the entity veto against state-legislation – the ultimate goal of the effort. Having said this, they will likely seek to use this momentum to lay the groundwork for the next two election cycles; whether or not their vision for Bosnia includes policies that might strengthen civic options at the expense of constituent peoples' options remains to be seen. The performance of DF relied heavily on Komšić's own popular support and personality, and growing disgust with SDP. It will be interesting to see whether Komšić uses his position and reputation to try to change the debate in Bosnia, reaching out more beyond typical strongholds like Sarajevo, Tuzla and Brčko, and into Croat-majority cantons, or the RS.

Changes in the composition of the caucuses in the Council of Peoples in the RS, and the House of Peoples in the FBiH, could result in significant new dynamics from these second chambers of the entity governments, and unforeseen policy implications.¹⁵

Optimists cling to the potential for spill-over into other parts of the country, and other higher layers of government. For example, could a Sarajevo canton coalition of DF, SBB and *Naša Stranka* lead to a new dialogue at the FBiH level, or more broadly throughout the country? It is possible but unlikely. Hulseley has shown how electoral dynamics create incentives for splinter parties that result not in new policy options, but reinforce the dominance of large established parties through the mushrooming of various often personality driven spinoffs (Hulseley, forthcoming).

Very briefly, voter turnout was a low 54.14%, which was even two percent lower than in 2010. While some place the blame for the outcome squarely on the citizens who chose not to vote, others are sympathetic to the question, "but who do I vote for if I want to vote for change?" There was a high rate of spoiled ballots (over 122,000 or nearly 9%), which likely reflects a combination of intentional spoilage protest votes, post-vote fraud and tampering, and poor voter education in a very complicated and convoluted system. International observers noted concerns about irregularities, with a surprisingly harsh assessment by the ODIHR observation mission, with irregularities noted in 25% of observed polling stations (OSCE, 2014).

6 Major upcoming political challenges

Bosnia is facing a laundry list of challenges, reform priorities and problems to be solved. This section will focus on two issues related to constitutional reform: the essentially defunct search for a remedy to the Sejdić–Finci case, and the ongoing notion of the need to "solve the Croat problem." To the chagrin of many, these issues have become tightly intertwined, for reasons that will be explained below.

6.1 Sejdić–Finci

It is difficult to imagine that the Sejdić–Finci case will ever return to a focus on its original intent – to ensure that national minorities can participate in the Bosnian presidency and the central House of Peoples.¹⁶ In the past years since the 2009 European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ruling, the effort has been embraced by all political parties as a challenge focused on ensuring the maintenance of functional discrimination, while erasing the obvious structural discrimination embedded in the Dayton Constitution.¹⁷ The leaders of the three constituent peoples quite frankly do not want to disrupt the three pillar system; a fourth voice would complicate potential coalition dynamics, and send the message that individuals can choose to be citizens first and foremost rather than align with a certain "people". It is therefore likely that a lowest common denominator "solution" acceptable to the parties and the Council of Europe will be found, to both take the issue off the table and eventually allow Bosnia to be able to submit an application for EU candidacy status. The fact that the EU itself has "re-sequenced" its reform interests as of autumn 2014 to allow for the parties to put off agreement on a Sejdić–Finci to the future suggests it will be a priority of few (Bassuener et al., 2014).

6.2 The Croat question

Strongly linked to the discussion about constitutional reform in light of Sejdić–Finci is the so-called Croat question. The main Croat parties have been arguing for years that they are discriminated in Bosnia, since they are the smallest of the three groups and are dominated by Bosniaks within the FBiH. While there is little evidence of actual discrimination of Croats in Bosnia (Wölkner and Ademovic, 2014), the "hijacking" of the Croat-seat on the Bosnian presidency by the non-nationalist, social-democratic and self-declared Croat Komšić,¹⁸ has enabled the two HDZs to very successfully put this issue on the agenda as part of any discussion on constitutional reform. In fact, it is fair to say that constitutional reform discussions have become mainly about how to better protect the Croats in Bosnia, rather than how to implement the Sejdić–Finci ruling of the ECtHR.

Depending on the outcome of coalition negotiations both in the FBiH and for the state government, it can be expected that any agreement on constitutional reform will include the "Croat Question" in one way or another. Following his party's victory, Čović has made many public comments to this effect. While it is unlikely that there will be a fundamentally new territorial re-organization (as demanded by many Croat elites, namely the creation of a third – a Croat – entity), new Croat majority electoral units, or other special provisions to ensure that only "true" Croat representatives can be elected by the Croats in Bosnia (to avoid future Komšić scenarios) have been suggested as possible ways forward. This will heavily depend on the relationship between Bosniak and Croat

parties in government, as Serb elites have been sympathetic to the Croat cause for their own purposes, but have mainly abstained from direct intervention into this important policy issue. A deal is only likely if there is a substantial incentive for Bosniak elites, most notably the SDA.

7 Concluding thoughts

Many have noted their disappointment at the return of nationalist parties and the dominance of certain politicians and party machines that have existed since Yugoslavia began to dissolve, and evolved throughout and after the war. However, as a consociational, highly decentralized state structure, with fragmented and largely ethnically homogenous electoral units, the system worked as intended. There are few incentives for politicians to create moderate, civic-oriented parties, and little incentive for voters to make non-traditional risky voting choices in an environment dominated by fear and patronage. Those individuals or groups seeking a stronger “fourth voice” – of national minorities and citizens of people who opt not to accept an ethnic label – do not have a place in the country’s electoral or constitutional structure. While there is some possibility for shifting power among various constituent groups (for example, the close race between the Serb SNSD and SDS), broader voter flux is unlikely or de facto prohibited. There is little to no left-right political ideology in the country, and parties like the SDP, which have sought to reach a broader selection of citizens, have been hamstrung both by systemic bias toward the three ethnic groups and their party machines, and the impact on seeking to build coalitions with such groups when in government, leading to voter disgust for the dereliction of the principles that secured their votes in the first place. It remains to be seen whether citizen frustration with government inaction on many important social, political and economic issues will catalyze into firmer and more specific demands for change, or remain inchoate and leaderless.¹⁹ The only thing that is certain is that 2015 will be difficult for everyone in the country, whether or not renewed protests, floods or other unexpected events fundamentally upset the status quo.

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Footnotes

¹Following the general use of term, the short form “Bosnia” will be used throughout this text. This always refers to the whole country.

²For information on the war in Bosnia see Burg and Shoup (1999).

³The RS was first established as an autonomous area of Serb territories in Bosnia. It later proclaimed its independence from Bosnia.

⁴For more detail on federalism and decentralisation in Bosnia, see Keil (2013).

⁵For a more detailed discussion on democratization in Bosnia, see Perry (2006).

⁶This refers to the participation of numerous non-nationalist parties in cantonal, FBiH and central Bosnian governments. However, this participation has had little impact on the major political wrangling over control and access to resources between elites of the nationalist parties.

⁷The composition of the Presidency and the House of Peoples at central level is important, as it has been declared “illegal” by the European Court of Human Rights in 2009 in the famous Sejdić-Finci case.

⁸The FBiH parliament consists of the FBiH House of Representatives and the FBiH House of Peoples.

⁹For a more detailed analysis of the electoral and party system, see Hulseley (forthcoming).

¹⁰These elections took place before the outbreak of violence in 1992 and when Bosnia was still a member of the Yugoslav federation.

¹¹Supporters of consociational democracy argue that by focusing on grand coalitions, proportional representation, veto rights and autonomy, different groups within a state will not only be included and recognized, but it will also encourage political participation and active engagement. For more information, see Lijphart 1977.

¹²All data are taken from the website of the Central Election Commission.

¹³The HDZ BiH was created following the example of the HDZ in Croatia. During the conflict in the early 1990s the party first supported the independence of Bosnia, before it engaged in a conflict to establish an independent Croat state on Bosnia's territory. This was unsuccessful and resulted in the establishment of the FBiH as part of the Washington Agreement in 1994.

¹⁴DNS = Democratic People's Alliance, SP = Socialist Parties. These two smaller parties formed an electoral coalition with the SNSD.

¹⁵So far the Croat Caucus in the RS was controlled by the SNSD and the Croat Caucus in the FBiH House of Peoples was controlled by the SDP, giving these parties veto rights on any changes in the entities. It remains to be seen what the final composition of these bodies will be once the final results are announced.

¹⁶This refers to the two institutions at central state level.

¹⁷According to the ECHR, the fact that only Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats can be elected to the presidency and are represented in the House of Peoples discriminates “Others” who do not identify with any of these groups. This assessment was upheld in the 2014 Zorlić case.

¹⁸In 2006, 2010, Željko Komšić was elected as the Croat member of the central state presidency in large part through support from Bosniaks in the FBiH.

¹⁹In addition, the role of international actors and their demands for reform in Bosnia should also be mentioned, in particular in light of Bosnia's ambition to join the EU. For the rather problematic role of international actors see Bassuener et al. (2014).

Highlights

- Elections in Bosnia ~~favour~~-favor nationalist parties that exclusively refer to one ethnic group in the country.
- The success of the SDA, SNSD and HDZ in the October's election will mean “more of the same” with little incentive for reform and progress towards EU integration.
- Some multi-ethnic parties had reasonable successes at regional level (DF, Nasa Stranka) but it remains to be seen if they can make a difference.
- Constitutional reform and the Croat question remain the most important issue, but there is little to suggest that any solution will be found on these issues even if the government will consist of different parties.
- The elections demonstrate the lack of democracy, with low voter turn-out, an atmosphere of heightened tensions and public protests.

Queries and Answers

Query: Please check the country name added in affiliations a and b is correct, and amend if necessary.

Answer: This is fine.

Query: Highlights should only consist of “125” characters per bullet point, including spaces. The highlights provided are too long; please edit them to meet the requirement.

Answer: • Elections in Bosnia favour favor nationalist parties that exclusively refer to one ethnic group in the country. • The success of the SDA, SNSD and HDZ in the October's election will mean “more of the same” with little incentive for reform. • Some multi-ethnic parties had reasonable successes at regional level (DF, Nasa Stranka). • Constitutional reform and the Croat question remain the most important issues. • The elections

demonstrate the lack of democracy.

Query: Please check the section “article footnote”, and correct if necessary.

Answer: All footnotes checked and they all seem alright.

Query: Please update the reference “Hulsey, forthcoming”.

Answer: I still do not have the exact proofs with page numbers to reference it properly. The book is forthcoming and will be released in June 2015, I am expecting the proofs in the coming weeks.

Query: Please confirm that given names and surnames have been identified correctly.

Answer: Yes, all okay.

Query: Your article is registered as a regular item and is being processed for inclusion in a regular issue of the journal. If this is NOT correct and your article belongs to a Special Issue/Collection please contact p.aravind@elsevier.com immediately prior to returning your corrections.

Answer: No, this is absolutely fine. Thank you.