



Weekly Briefing

**Bosnia-Herzegovina political briefing:
The elections ended, winners expected**
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Summary

The parties that can be satisfied with the number of seats which their representatives will have in legislative bodies are the Croatian Democratic Union and the Party of Democratic Action, although their candidates for the BiH Presidency, Borjana Krišto and Bakir Izetbegović, lost in the race. The Democratic Front can be satisfied with the overall results, and not only because their party president Željko Komšić won a new mandate in the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a member from the Croatian people. The Social Democratic Party of BiH can be relatively satisfied with the results mainly because their candidate Denis Bećirović entered the Presidency of BiH as a member from the Bosniak people and they won slightly more seats than in previous mandate. The Alliance of Independent Social Democrats can be satisfied with the election victory of Željka Cvijanović, who became a member of the BiH Presidency from among the Serbian people, they can also be satisfied with the election results at other levels, but not with the accusations of electoral theft that come from the opposition in the Republika Srpska entity. While waiting for the final and official results, other political subjects have no much reason to celebrate.

Introduction

On over 90,2 percent of the counted ballots, it is clear what was already known on election night, from Sunday to Monday (October 2 and 3): The new members of the BiH Presidency are representatives of three nominally left-center parties: Denis Bećirović from the Social Democratic Party of BiH (*Socijal-demokratska partija* - SDP BiH), whose candidacy was supported by eleven opposition parties; Željko Komšić, president of the Democratic Front (*Demokratska fronta* - DF), whose candidacy was also supported by the Party for BiH (*Stranka za BiH* - SBiH), and Željka Cvijanović, a high-ranking official of the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (*Savez nezavisnih socijaldemokrata* - SNSD), former President and Prime Minister of the Republika Srpska (RS), the right hand of the Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik. We say "nominally", because the SNSD was expelled from the Socialist International ten years ago due to "nationalism and extremism", and their president Dodik has recently maintained international relations mainly with nationalist oriented politicians and Russian President Vladimir Putin. Also, many criticize the other two center-left parties, SDP and DF, for their

alleged nationalist views and moves¹.

Bosniak member

Bećirović received more than 55% of the votes, close to 300 thousand votes, while his competitor Izetbegović got less than 200 thousand or about 38%. The third candidate, whom we previously labeled as an outsider, Mirsad Hadžikadić, received a modest 5 percent or about 25,000 votes². SDA President Izetbegović was a member of the BiH Presidency for two terms, 2010-2014 and 2014-2018. As the Constitution of BiH states that it is impossible to run for three consecutive mandates³, Izetbegović choose Šefik Džaferović as his replacement, candidate of the SDA and lexperienced politician from the Parliament of BiH. Izetbegović now wanted to return to the seat of a representative of the Bosniaks in BiH Presidency, just as his former colleague from the BiH Presidency Željko Komšić did, who after two mandates, 2006-2010. and 2010-2014, had a break of four years and a "comeback" in the mandate of 2018-2022. However, Izetbegović did not succeed what Komšić did. Komšić's former party mate in the SDP⁴, Mr. Bećirović, had the broad support of the coalition parties, the key of which was the support of the "Troika" parties, which is in power in the Sarajevo Canton, and which, in addition to the SDP, includes the liberal Our Party (*Naša stranka* - NS) and the conservative People and Justice (*Narod i Pravda* - NiP), which was created mainly by former senior members of the SDA dissatisfied with Izetbegović's party politics. There are several theories about what caused

¹ Citizens of the entity Federation of BiH can vote for a member of the Presidency from among the Croat and Bosniak people, while citizens of the entity Republika Srpska elect a Serbian member of the Presidency. This provision of the BiH Constitution was judged discriminatory by the Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg in four of its Decisions, which we have already written about here: Election Law Negotiations: Different Visions of the Future of the State.

<https://china-cee.eu/2022/02/23/bosnia-herzegovina-political-briefing-election-law-negotiations-different-visions-of-the-future-of-the-state/>

² General Election 2022 - Preliminary results, official website of Central Election Committee.

https://www.izbori.ba/Rezultati_izbora/?resId=32&langId=1#/1/1/0/0/701

³ The author of these lines is convinced that when the Dayton Constitution was written at the American Wright-Patterson military base, no one thought that after two used mandates in the Presidency of BiH, politicians would resort to such acrobatics, but that, like in the United States itself, they would withdraw from active politics.

⁴ As a reminder, Komšić won the first two mandates in the BiH Presidency as a candidate of the SDP, the party with which he clashed and which he left in 2012, when he formed his own party, the Democratic Front.

Izetbegović's results to be worse than his party's⁵. Some media analyze that part of the SDA voters voted for Komšić, while others claim that Izetbegović's candidacy, as well as his political career in the broadest sense, was negatively affected by the career of his wife Sebia⁶.

On the other hand, in his post-election speech, Bećirović also addressed the citizens of neighboring countries, Montenegro, Serbia and Croatia, reminding them that 32 years ago, Tito's Yugoslavia was ahead of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Bulgaria. He then said that the 1990's were devastating and called on all people in the region to get serious for the sake of the people, to cooperate honestly and equally because destabilization would return everything to the Middle Ages.

"To Montenegro and Podgorica: You have sincere friends. To Serbia and Belgrade: It's time to build a better future. It is time to resolve the open issues and not to exwe have new open questions. Croatia and Zagreb: The two countries are dependent on each other. We have 1,000 kilometers of land border. Let's stop fighting and cooperate," said Bećirović⁷.

Croatian member

When it comes to the elections for a member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina from among the Croatian people, Mr. Komšić won nearly 200 thousand votes, or 54%, on over 92% of the counted votes, while Borjana Krišto, a prominent member of the center-right national party, the Croatian Democratic Union of Bosnia and Herzegovina (HDZ), won around 166,000 votes, or 45%. As we have already written⁸, the HDZ opposes Komšić's election as a member of the Presidency from among the Croatian people because, they claim, Bosniaks and

⁵ Where Bećirović beat Izetbegović: SDA voters voted for the party and for Komšić.

<https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/gdje-je-becirovic-pobijedio-izetbegovica-biraci-sda-glasali-za-stranku-i-za-komsica/221003065>

⁶ Sebia's spectacle and Bakir's debacle. <https://www.oslobodjenje.ba/dosjei/kolumne/sebijin-spektakl-i-bakirov-debakl-797795>

⁷ Bećirović told the politicians: We can only celebrate when the majority celebrates that their life is better. <https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/becirovic-porucio-politicarima-mozemo-slaviti-tek-kada-vecina-bude-slavila-sto-im-je-zivot-bolji/221002137>

⁸ Election campaign officially started: Who are the favorites?

<https://china-cee.eu/2022/09/12/bosnia-herzegovina-political-briefing-election-campaign-officially-started-who-are-the-favorites/>

not Croats vote for him. Thus, in her address after the election, Ms. Krišto practically ignored Komšić's candidacy and the result, and "declared victory as the only candidate." She said "that the Croatian people showed political responsibility at a historic moment gathered around one candidate from among the Croatian people"⁹.

On the other hand, Komšić congratulated Mrs. Krišto on the good result, and added that he hopes that with all the mutual differences that exist, everyone will be a little wiser and look at "what image we leave of ourselves", but also hopes that with Željka Cvijanović, he will have better cooperation than with Dodik¹⁰.

Serbian Member

There were the least sparks in connection with the election of a member of the BiH Presidency from among the Serbian people. Opposition candidate Mirko Šarović already admitted defeat on Sunday night¹¹, while Cvijanović, guesting on Radio and Television of RS accompanied by Mr. Dodik, said that SNSD's policy is action and that they were always with the people and among them¹².

However, the elections for the President of the RS, that is, what happened during the election night, produce some doubts on the regularity of the elections. The opposition, led by its candidate, young economist Ms. Jelena Trivić, declared victory over Dodik during the night and even organized a celebration on the streets of Banja Luka. However, the results of the Central Election Commission and the SNSD showed that Dodik still has an advantage¹³.

⁹ Krišto ignores the existence of Komšić: I was the only candidate and I won.

<https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/kristo-ignorise-postojanje-komsica-ja-sam-bila-jedina-kandidatkinja-i-pobijedila-sam/221002136>

¹⁰ Željko Komšić sent a message to Borjana Krišto after the election.

<https://direktno.hr/eu-i-svijet/zeljko-komsic-nakon-izbora-poslao-poruku-borjani-kristo-290262/>

¹¹ Šarović admitted defeat: The difference is serious and very difficult to achieve.

<https://ba.n1info.com/vijesti/sarovic-priznao-poraz-razlika-je-zrazivna-i-vrlo-tesko-dostizna/>

¹² ELECTIONS IN BiH and RS – Dodik and Cvijanović were guests at RTRS; CEC: 90.04% of votes counted, Dodik leads. <https://vecernjenovosti.ba/104171/izbori-2022/snsd-tvrdi-da-je-dodik-osvojio-31-000-glasova-vise/>

¹³ Different versions of the election results: Trivić declared victory, Dodik claims that he is ahead

<https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/trivic-tvrdi-kako-je-pobijedila-dodika-razlika-je-na-ovom-postotku-glasova-nedostizna-1622114>

Days after the election, the opposition said that they do not recognize the stolen votes, and they submitted a request for a new vote count, and their goal is to repeat the election in at least a few major cities in the RS¹⁴.

BiH Parliament

In addition to the members of the BiH Presidency, the citizens also elected the 42 members of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH (PA BiH). Although due to the complicated election process and multi-member constituencies from which representatives from both BiH and entities are elected, it is obvious that SNSD, SDA, HDZ, SDS and SDP received the most votes. These parties will also have the biggest party clubs¹⁵. According to the first preliminary results, the representatives in the House of Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH (Out of total 42, 28 are from the Federation and 14 from the RS entity) will also have parties that have passed the census: DF, NiP, People's European Union (*Narodni evropski savez* - NES), NS and HDZ 1990 from the Federation, and Party of Democratic Progress (PDP), Nebojša Vukanović list, Democratic Union - DEMOS, Socialist Party of RS (SRS), United Srpska (US) and Democratic Peoples Union (*Demokratski narodni savez* - DNS) from RS entity . However, until the announcement of the official results, the deadline for which is a month from the election – that is, the second of November, things can still change in certain segments¹⁶.

Entity Parliaments and Sarajevo Canton

The results in the entity parliaments generally follow the results at the state level, so the representatives in the House of Representatives of the Parliament of the Federation of BiH will have, in order of size, SDA, HDZ BiH, SDP BiH, DF, NIP, NS, NES, Party for BiH and HDZ 1990¹⁷, while in the NSRS the biggest clubs will be SNSD, SDS, PDP, SP, DEMOS, SDA, US,

¹⁴The opposition from RS submitted a request for a new vote count, their goal is to repeat the election.

<https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/opozicija-iz-rs-a-podnijela-zahtjev-za-novo-brojanje-glasova-cilj-im-je-ponavljanje-izbora/221005119>

¹⁵ First results for the BiH Parliament: SDA and SNSD won the most votes.

<https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/prvi-rezultati-za-parlament-bih-najvise-glasova-osvojili-sda-i-snsd/221003041>

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷The outlines of the future composition are visible: SDA has the most mandates, here are the deputies who should enter the FBiH Parliament. <https://www.oslobodjenje.ba/vijesti/bih/naziru-se-obrisi-buduceg-sastava-najvise-mandata-ima-sda-evo-ko-su-poslanici-koji-bi-trebali-uci-u-parlament-fbih-797812>

NPS and the list of Nebojša Vukanović¹⁸.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the "Troika" - SDP, NiP and NS could have a minimum majority to form the government in Sarajevo Canton (*Kanton Sarajevo* - KS), although the SDA recorded a relatively good result here as well, and with some old partners and with certain agreements under the table that imply buying certain deputies, even forming a government. At the same time, it has already begun to be speculated who will be the new representative for the composition of the KS Government, and therefore the future prime minister of the richest canton in Bosnia and Herzegovina¹⁹.

OHR measures

To all that has been said, it should be added that on election night, the High Representative of the international community made a decision imposing changes to the Election Law of BiH and the Constitution of the Federation of BiH, which relate to the post-election constitution of indirectly elected bodies, specifically the House of Peoples of the Federation of BiH²⁰. In the decision itself, Christian Schmidt says that the measures aim to improve the functionality of the FBiH and ensure the timely implementation of the results of the 2022 elections, but these decisions have already met with extremely conflicting reactions, not only because of the timing, but also because of the specific changes which, apparently, strengthen the rights of the constituent peoples in the territories where they are the majority. It is interesting to note that even the European Union had a different attitude than the United States and Great Britain regarding the imposition of this decision, so the former refrained from participating in its adoption while the latter welcomed it²¹.

¹⁸Which deputies enter the National Assembly of the Republic of Srpska.

https://www.glassrpske.com/lat/novosti/vijesti_dana/koji-poslanici-ulaze-u-narodnu-skupstinu-republike-srpske/437096

¹⁹Adnan Šteta answered the question of whether he will be the new prime minister of Canton Sarajevo.

<https://radiosarajevo.ba/vijesti/bosna-i-hercegovina/adnan-steta-odgovorio-na-pitanje-da-li-ce-bit-novi-premijer-kantona-sarajevo/471021>

²⁰ Measures to improve the functionality of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Official web-page of Office of High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina. <http://www.ohr.int/mjere-za-poboljsanje-funktionalnosti-federacije-bih-2/>

²¹ The High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina changed the method of post-election constitution of part of the government. <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/schmidt-zakon-izbori/32061969.html>

Conclusion

Even after the 2022 elections, the strongest political parties remain SDA, HDZ and SNSD. The SDA has a reduced coalition capacity, but it will be very difficult to bypass it in the formation of the government in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The SDA and the HDZ, as the strongest Bosniak and the strongest Croat parties in the FBiH, have a strained relationship, but their relationship in many issues is almost symbiotic. They cannot have significant personnel disputes and very easily share power among themselves, power that, admittedly, does not work afterwards, but that is another issue. The SNSD and its partners in the NSRS will have a comfortable majority for the formation of the government, and the opposition parties will either seriously reconsider their own actions or be further marginalized. In the Council of Ministers of BiH SDA, HDZ and SNSD together with their partners (DF, US, SPS, HDZ 1990...) will have a comfortable majority, and how it will function depends on many factors, including regional (developments in Serbia, Montenegro...) and global (Ukraine). Here remains the possibility that the SDA, due to the poor election result of their leader Bakir Izetbegović, will be replaced by a broader coalition of "Troika" parties with partners such as NES and SBiH, who would then try to come to an agreement with the HDZ. This scenario is already announced by some "Troika" leaders but it is hard to even anticipate is it possible before finishing process of choosing delegates in House of Parliament of FBiH.