

The International Institute for Middle-East and Balkan Studies (**IFIMES**) in Ljubljana, Slovenia, regularly analyses events in the Middle East and the Balkans. IFIMES has analysed the current situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina in view of the upcoming general election which is to take place on 12 October 2014. The most interesting sections from the analysis entitled “**Bosnia and Herzegovina: The most unpredictable election since the end of the war**” are published below.

Bosnia and Herzegovina:

The most unpredictable election since the end of the war

The Central Election Commission (CEC) of Bosnia and Herzegovina has validated 113 political entities (65 political parties, 24 coalitions and 24 independent candidates) to run at the general election scheduled for 12 October 2014. After the verification procedure it endorsed altogether 732 candidate lists and 7743 candidates including independent candidates. CEC has verified 80 candidate lists for the allocation of compensation mandates with altogether 952 candidates. There are in total 3,278,908 registered voters in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It will be most interesting to observe the election of Members of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially the Bosniak Member of the Presidency with as much as 10 candidates running for this office.

1

DODIK'S OPPOSITION IS TRYING TO CATCH THE LAST TRAIN

All the major parties are facing great uncertainty, including the Social-Democratic Party of BiH (SDP BiH), Alliance of Independent Social Democrats of BiH (SNSD), the Party of Democratic Action (SDA), Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) as well as Croatian Democratic Union of BiH (HDZ BiH) which managed to carry out a unique process of “criminalisation of the Croatian nation” under **Dragan Čović's** long-term leadership. In the Republika Srpska (RS) the opposition will have an exceptional opportunity to defeat **Milorad Dodik** and his SNSD provided the turnout in this entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina is higher than it was at previous general and local elections. Vice-President of Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) and Dodik's competitor for the office of President of Republika Srpska **Ognjen Tadić** competed with Dodik already at last election but lost with 9,2379 votes difference. Chronic disorganisation of the political opposition in Republika Srpska accompanied by long years of personal dissents and clashing interests go in favour of Milorad Dodik. The long-term opposition leaders **Mladen Bosić** and **Mladen Ivanić** are trying to “catch the last train”, being aware that their parties will most probably disintegrate if they fail at the forthcoming election. Besides high turnout Ognjen Tadić may also benefit from internal unity in SDS that has been significantly undermined due to ambiguous and calculating political manoeuvres taken by SDS President Malden Bosić. He

unreasonably joined the coalition with Dodik's SNSD at the national level thus discrediting the status of SDS as a formally opposition party on Republika Srpska, only to leave that coalition later on. Nevertheless, the repercussions of that manoeuvre may result in the defeat of SDS at the forthcoming election. Mladen Ivanić who is running as the opposition candidate for the Serbian member of BH Presidency stands a better chance than Ognjen Tadić – at the last election Ivanić lost the seat in BH Presidency to **Nebojša Radmanović** with only 9,678 votes difference. The only advantage of SNSD member and incumbent Prime Minister of Republika Srpska **Željka Cvijanović** who is also running as candidate for the Serbian member of BH Presidency is the fact that she is a woman which is a new aspect in the competition between major political parties in Republika Srpska. It would be a great surprise if Ivanić doesn't win against Cvijanović at forthcoming election. Another important aspect of election in Republika Srpska is the official promise given by Serbia's Prime Minister **Aleksandar Vučić** not to interfere in the election in Republika Srpska and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which further aggravates the position of Milorad Dodik and his SNSD. Vučić's statement actually represent the official position of the Federal Republic of Germany and its allies as well as the personal decision taken by Aleksandar Vučić and Serbia's President **Tomislav Nikolić** after Dodik expressed support to Serbia's former President **Boris Tadić** at 2012 election in Serbia. Tadić's defeat in Serbia in 2012 was a sign or announcement of Dodik's defeat in Republika Srpska at this year's election. Although SDS achieved good results at previous local election, general election is something completely different – here the voters decide how to cast their votes among other on the basis of the politics led by current authorities towards the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina and their aspirations to strengthen the power of Republika Srpska in relation to Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this field Milorad Dodik and SNSD enjoy great advantage in comparison with SDS and its allies, having shown much more “efficiency” in undermining the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina during their term of office than their predecessor SDS.

2

IS DF-ŽELJKO KOMŠIĆ A SATELLITE PARTY OF FAHRUDIN RADONČIĆ?

In the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) the Democratic Front-Željko Komšić (DF-Željko Komšić) proposed **Zora Terzić-Šeremet** as its candidate for Croatian member of BH Presidency (who was then replaced by a pensioner from Livanj **Anto Popović**) and **Emir Suljagić** as the candidate for the Bosniak Member of BH Presidency. Komšić had rejected the proposal made by HDZ 1990 President **Martin Raguž** to support Raguž as candidate for Croatian Member of BH Presidency. It was expected that **Željko Komšić** would propose a renowned candidate for the Croatian representative or to support Raguž, bearing in mind that he had represented the interests of Croats in BH Presidency for 8 years and that DF was established in the office of the Croatian Member of BH Presidency. Allegedly an agreement has been made between Željko Komšić, HDZ BiH President Dragan Čović

and President of the Union for a Better Future (SBB) **Fahrudin Radončić** to form the government after the election in which Radončić would chair the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, since this office has to be occupied by a Bosniak national in the next four-year period. An increasing public perception is that Željko Komšić and his DF are turning into a political satellite and hostage to Fahrudin Radončić. Nevertheless, they seem to ignore the fact that in line with the democratic principles the new Chair of the Council of Ministers should be selected from among the election winners and not from a minor political party such as Radončić's SBB.

If supported by DF-Željko Komšić, Martin Raguž would be an equal competitor to Dragan Čović for Croatian Member of BH Presidency. Analysts have pointed out that it is politically distasteful that Komšić and DF concentrated all their activities on Suljagić while forgetting about Popović, which only confirms allegations about the political agreement concluded between Komšić and HDZ BiH leader Dragan Čović. According to reliable information from the international sources it is expected that in the final period of the election campaign Radončić will use his power to support Suljagić. Komšić, Radončić and Čović plan to select the Bosniak and Croatian Members of BH Presidency may be undermined by SDP BiH candidate **Bakir Hadžiomerović**, who could also prevent an agreement between other candidates for the Croatian Member of BH Presidency to jointly support one candidate at the end of the campaign. The above plans may also be spoilt by an agreement concluded between **Bakir Izetbegović** and **Mustafa Cerić** if alliance is formed between centre-right political parties and individuals.

3

SAVING LAGUMDŽIJA

Proposing Hadžiomerović as his candidate, SDP BiH President **Zlatko Lagumdžija** is actually trying to save himself and his party. Counting on the image of Hadžiomerović, Lagumdžija hopes that SDP will repeat the result of previous general election, as the voters would forget all his mistakes and disastrous politics as well as the retreat of SDP's favourite Željko Komšić.

Analysts expect that at SDP congress taking place after the election Lagumdžija would install his own person (not Hadžiomerović) as SDP leader, while Hadžiomerović would follow Komšić's path unless he continues to serve Lagumdžija's interests. Bearing in mind all the previous polls and analyses, SDP members are expected to plebiscitarily elect Hadžiomerović as the Bosniak Member of BH Presidency, thus casting their votes also for the new SDP president and leader. It is estimated that SDP members will largely vote against Lagumdžija in order to remove him from SDP. Certain individuals from SDP management have already offered him to withdraw honourably from the leading position. SDP voters will either vote mostly for Željko Komšić's DF or decide for other candidates from lists. Lagumdžija's opponents within SDP will cast their votes for Hadžiomerović who they perceive as a possible future president and leader of SDP. There is also a strong fraction in SDP

which is trying to get rid of Lagumdžija, being aware that his further presence would ruin SDP completely.

A voice for SDP at the forthcoming election will represent a voice for Zlatko Lagumdžija, while a voice for Hadžiomerović will be a voice for the new SDP president. Should Hadžiomerović become SDP president, this would open the possibilities for cooperation with DF-Željko Komšić, since there are strong personal ties between Komšić and Hadžiomerović. However, this scenario may be prevented by Zlatko Lagumdžija, who has already managed to deal with numerous political figures such as **Nijaz Duraković** and Željko Komšić. It is even possible that Lagumdžija starts negotiations with DF for the purposes of post-election coalition formation as an attempt to protect himself from the inevitable coup in his party.

There are indications that other Croatian candidates, including the incumbent President of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina Živko Budimir, with the support from Lijanović (Work for Prosperity), may agree on appointing one candidate among themselves with the aim to prevent the agreement between Dragan Čović, the Bosniak parties and Željko Komšić. Budimir would probably be the key figure, as he has done a lot for the supporters of Croatian Defence Council (HVO) during his term of office and he may also count on a part of Bosniak voters.

BOSNIAKS ARE CONFUSED

It is largely unpredictable what election results would be achieved by individual candidates for the Bosniak Member of BH Presidency. Even if Bakir Izetbegović repeats the result from previous election (around 162,000 votes) he would not make it without some additional new votes. Izetbegović is threatened by his competitor Cerić who may take away the deciding votes. Former Reisu-l-Ulema of Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina (IZ BiH) Mustafa Cerić hopes to get the votes from a part of electorate from IZ BiH that will not vote for SDA, a part of electorate from Bakir Izetbegović, and a part of electorate from altogether 110.000 voters that supported **Haris Silajdžić** at previous election, which would put him on equal terms with Izetbegović. If an agreement is reached between Izetbegović and Cerić, one of them would definitely become (or remain) Member of BH Presidency. This would put an end to internal clashes within SDA and possible splitting of IZ BiH. With Izetbegović-Cerić agreement or alliance between the parties and individuals from centre-right, SDA would become the only strong winner of the general election. However, if not elected as Member of BH Presidency, Izetbegović would undoubtedly put SDA into political oblivion. Obviously SDA and Izetbegović have no partner, and some political parties from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina would even prevent SDA from remaining in power. Izetbegović and SDA are to decide whether they will strengthen the centre-right wing and enter into agreement with Cerić. Although SDA achieved good results at previous local election and enjoys substantial support from Turkey while Izetbegović has control over SDA and is incumbent

Member of BH Presidency, all these advantages do not guarantee good results at forthcoming election for SDA and Izetbegović. Even if they repeat the results of local election, SDA is not sure whether it will be part of the new government. It may expect long years of political isolation and abstinence, bearing in mind the aspirations of the Komšić-Radončić pair to control the political scene in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and eliminate SDA as the leading political party.

CONTROVERSIAL RADONČIĆ

The controversial politician Fahrudin Radončić has focused his campaign on political positioning and sinecuring. Radončić's agreement with Komšić has politically discredited Željko Komšić who has thus allied with the "Greater Serbia" project. The public is still not familiar with the political (financial) background of the tie between Radončić and Komšić. Radončić's candidacy for Member of BH Presidency actually represents his attempt to control the votes he received at previous election and prevent their leak over to other candidates. This would enable him to direct his electorate to vote for a certain candidate at the end of the election campaign – most probably for Emir Suljagić. After Suljagić and Hadžiomerović submitted their candidacies and following serious charges in the Kelmendi case before the Court in Priština, Radončić has obviously lost hope that he may defeat Izetbegović and gain any profit from Mustafa Cerić's candidacy. Moreover, the unification of centre-right parties and Izetbegović-Cerić agreement would practically erase Radončić and his SBB from the political scene in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The phenomenon and curiosity of 2010 election was the fact that Komšić, Izetbegović, Silajdžić and other Bosniak candidates had both formally and factually the same territorial electorate, i.e. they had the same constituencies with predominantly Bosniak population. In those constituencies the Bosniaks cast twice as much votes for Komšić than for Izetbegović. Komšić won in 88,5% of constituencies while Izetbegović only won in 6 constituencies (Pale, Teočak, Sapna, Čelić, Bužim and Banovići) or 10,5%. Silajdžić won in Trnovo and **Ibrahim Djedović** received most votes in Velika Kladuša, which represents only 1% of constituencies with predominantly Bosniak population. Other Croatian candidates won in constituencies with predominantly Croatian population - in none of them Željko Komšić received most (or a significant number of) votes. He received almost all votes (around 333,000) from the Bosniak voters, i.e. in constituencies with predominantly Bosniak population. Presenting himself as a Bosniak Zlatko Lagumdžija inaugurated Željko Komšić as a Croat in all constituencies with predominantly Bosniak population, while at the forthcoming election Croatian Member of BH Presidency Željko Komšić will try to inaugurate Suljagić as a Bosniak Member of BH Presidency. Komšić would thus be directly or indirectly involved in the work of Croatian and Bosnian Members of BH Presidency for at least 12 years.

THE NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES STILL HAVE CERTAIN ASPIRATIONS TOWARDS BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Understandably the international community and the regional political circles are interested in the pre- and post-election political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina . The position of both Serbia and Croatia is the same as it was 20 years ago. Croatia is leading **Franjo Tuđman's** policy towards Bosnia and Herzegovina and promoting the third entity, while Vučić and Nikolić are, like their predecessors, held hostage to the politics of Republika Srpska and the Serbian Orthodox Church which supports the separatism of Republika Srpska and disintegration of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Both Serbia and Croatia are supporting the agreement between Dodik and Čović who have been blocking the progress of Bosnia and Herzegovina towards Euro-Atlantic integration during the past four years. Through Germany the international community will try to initiate changes in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Turkey's role can be decisive and constructive, mostly as regards the unification of Bosniak parties and individuals which is a precondition for changes in the country. Turkey has already made a misjudgement when it stopped Izetbegović from visiting Turkey in 2010. The aim of that visit was to gain support from **Recep Tayyip Erdoğan**. At that time Turkey's political structures were convinced that Silajdžić would win the election for Member of BH Presidency. This year a more constructive role is expected from Turkey. The constitutional changes in the so called "April Package" failed due to disagreements and clashes on the Bosniak side rather than due to Serbian and Croatian politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Turkey can significantly contribute to the unification of political parties and individuals of the centre-right wing as well as all other pro-Bosniak forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina.


6

Analysts believe that due to the current economic and political situation and calculating political manoeuvres carried out by political parties and individual politicians the forthcoming general election in Bosnia and Herzegovina will be the most unpredictable election since the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement. None of the political parties or politicians can be certain about their election result nor about the result of post-election coalition formation. At the moment the strongest informal union/coalition in Bosnia and Herzegovina can be observed between DF - Željko Komšić, SBB-Fahrudin Radončić and HDZ-Dragan Čović. The coming days and the launch of the election campaign will provide certain answers regarding the future coalitions as well as some clues regarding the influence of international factors, notably certain NGOs. The IFIMES International Institute will therefore continue to observe the situation during and after the election campaign.

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7