



Bosnia and Herzegovina — Va-PoReg Country Report

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03/03/1878 Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [by Austria, Constitutional Monarchy]: In 1878, the Occupation by the Austrian-Hungarian Empire¹ began and until World War I the country was annexed into the Austro-Hungarian monarchy.² Since the rule was not temporary it classifies as a direct rule colonial regime rather than a Direct Rule Occupation Regime. The Congress of Berlin, that aimed for the reorganization of the Balkan Peninsula after the Russo-Turkish war³, approved the occupation of Bosnia Vilayet, a first-level administrative division of the Ottoman Empire, mostly comprising the territory of the present-day state of Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁴ By article 25 of the Treaty of Berlin (07/13/1878), Bosnia and Herzegovina remained under the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire, but Austria-Hungary was granted the authority to occupy the province of vilayet of Bosnia and Herzegovina indefinitely, taking on its military defense and civil administration. The campaign to establish Austro-Hungarian rule in Bosnia and Herzegovina lasted from 07/29/1878 to 10/20/1878 and resulted in Austro-Hungarian victory.⁵ On 02/20/1909 Austria-Hungary and the Ottomans came to an agreement concerning the annexation and the Ottomans accepted the takeover in exchange for a financial settlement. In 1910 the first constitution was proclaimed in Bosnia and Herzegovina, that led to relaxation of earlier laws, elections and the formation of a parliament.⁶ The Diet of Bosnia and Herzegovina was a representative assembly with competence over the Austro-Hungarian Condominium of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The parliament had certain legislative authority, but its resolutions were subject to approval by the Austro-Hungarian government.⁷

11/03/1918 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of Austria, Constitutional Monarchy]/Start Non-Electoral Transitional Regime: On this date, after the dissolution of Austria-Hungary and the resignation of the Austro-Hungarian Governor of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the first national government was established by the National Council of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs (SCS), which had been formed on October 5-6, 1918. As the supreme body of the new state, the council's declared aim was to unify all South-Slav peoples, establish the state on a democratic basis, and gain international diplomatic recognition.⁸ Consequently, Bosnia and Herzegovina became a part of the State of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs, which, together with the Kingdom of Serbia, one month later formed the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.⁹

12/01/1918 End Non-Electoral Transitional Regime/Start Part of Other Country [of Yugoslavia, Constitutional Monarchy]: On this date, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later Kingdom of Yugoslavia), with Bosnia and Herzegovina being a part of it, was declared, following negotiations between the representatives of the new government and regent Alexander Karađorđević.¹⁰ We code this regime change event as a negotiated transition.

04/04/1941 End Part of Other Country [of Yugoslavia, Constitutional Monarchy]/Start Direct Rule Occupation Regime [by Germany, Right-Wing (Fascist) Autocracy]: On this date, Yugoslavia was invaded by Germany's Hitler Regime.¹¹

03/07/1945 End Direct Rule Occupation Regime [by Germany, Right-Wing (Fascist) Autocracy]/Start Part of Other Country [of Yugoslavia, Communist Ideocracy]: On this date, and during the retreat of the German forces, a government dominated by Tito and the communists was established (Petrovich 1947: 508-9, Van Dyke 1947: 375). On 11/11/1945 the first elections after World War Two took place. Josef Broz Tito from the

People's Front got 85% of the votes. On 11/29/1945 the Federal Peoples Republic of Yugoslavia (later Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) was proclaimed. Bosnia and Herzegovina was one of its six republics.¹² On 09/14/1991 the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina voted in multi-party elections for the first time since 1990 (under universal suffrage). The governing coalition of Bosnia and Herzegovina collapsed after the parliament of the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo passed a 'memorandum on sovereignty' on 10/15/1991 that was opposed by Bosnian Serb members. After the walkout of Bosnian Serb representatives, the memorandum was adopted.¹³ A referendum on the independence at the beginning of 1992 followed. It was boycotted by many Serbs but ended with the majority of votes for independence. A conflict ensued, leading to Bosnian Serbs declaring the Republic of Srpska on 01/09/1992 within Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁴ The claim was only partially recognized by the Bosnian government. LIED and V-Dem only start to provide data for Bosnia since 1992.

03/03/1992 End Part of Other Country [Yugoslavia, Communist Ideocracy]/Start No Central Authority: On this date Bosnia-Hercegovina declared its independence. However, due to the outbreak of the civil war on 04/06/1992, no political regime was able to rule the whole country. Supported by Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic and his idea of creating a Great Serbia, Bosnian Serbs forces started to attack Non-Serbian villages and people, including killing, raping and destroying their property, including a four-year siege of the capital Sarajevo.¹⁵ According to our observations, no multiparty legislative and executive elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. Per FH, for this regime period, the country scores between 11 and 14 as not free, which we also interpret as not free. According to V-Dem's PCLI the presence of political liberties was ambiguous for this period. LIED classified them as absent in this period. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, and V-Dem's LCE is similarly interpreted as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also limited.

12/14/1995 End No Central Authority/Start Electoral Hybrid Regime [semi-sovereign, external affairs under Croatia and Serbia]: The Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) ended the 1992-95 Bosnian War. The war parties agreed on a highly decentralized parliamentary republic, therefore we code this regime change event as a negotiated transition. Bosnia and Herzegovina was divided into two autonomous zones. The two entities were the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Srpska. Special status was granted to the border region encompassing the town of Brčko, designating it as a distinct district. Although the various parts of the country are under a common central government, its authority is restricted to very limited powers.¹⁶ On 09/14/1996, the first general elections were held since 1990. However, the parties involved in the DPA (the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, along with its two constituent entities – the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska) had failed to establish the necessary prerequisites for elections. Consequently, given these challenges, the elections were destined to validate the actual ethnic-based division of the country, which indeed materialized.¹⁷ Moreover, the DPA made Bosnia and Herzegovina into an unacknowledged protectorate, characterized by elements of hegemony from neighboring Croatia and Serbia as co-signatories to the Agreement, wherein significant authority is vested in the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁸ The Office of the High Representative (OHR), established by the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA), functioned as the highest political authority in the country and the chief executive officer for the international civilian presence. High Representatives were traditionally appointed from European Union countries, with their principal deputies hailing from the United States. The Principal Deputy High Representative's responsibilities included serving as the International Supervisor for Brčko, representing international interests in the Brčko District. The substantial powers and veto authority of the High Representative in Bosnian politics led to comparisons with a viceroy, highlighting the significant influence of this role.¹⁹ Bosnian politics are generally assumed to be defined by corrupt patronage networks, certain foreign powers wield outsized influence as well as limited opportunities for political participation by citizens from other communities other than Bosnian, Serb, and Croat communities. The political sphere is moreover characterized by severe partisan gridlock.²⁰ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative

elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. LIED classified elections as competitive since 1996. V-Dem's EF&FI rates them as free and fair between 1996 and 2004, before reducing the score to scoring them as only somewhat free and fair. V-Dem's CEI initially rated the elections as somewhat clean but reduced the score to speak of ambiguity in regards to electoral cleanliness since 2007. FH is more skeptical about the quality of the elections of the legislative and executive and rates them on a scale from 1 to 4 with a 2. International observers also raised concerns surrounding the elections on 10/07/2018, about the „integrity of the elections, including about a high number of ballots disqualified by the Central Electoral Commission (CIK)”.²¹ The assessment of the electoral regime differs significantly in different data sets. BMR considers the regime as democratic, LIED and RoW as an electoral democracy. HTW, MCM and CGV classify the regime as non-democratic.²² As classified by FH for the regime period until 2000, the country scores between 9 and 10 as not free, which we interpret as rather not free. Between 2002 and 2003 the country is partly free with a score of 8, which we interpret as rather not free. From 2004 to 2015, the country is partly free with a score ranging from 6 to 7, which we place in the rather free category. From 2016 onwards, Bosnia and Herzegovina receives a score of 8 to 9, which we interpret as falling into the rather not free category. Political liberties have been absent for the whole regime period according to LIED. V-Dem's PCLI classifies political liberties as somewhat present from 1996 to 1999 except for 1998 during which political liberties are coded as present. From 2000 to 2017 political liberties were present and from 2018 onward political liberties are somewhat present. For the year 1996, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were moderate, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were limited. From 1997 to 2004, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating moderate constraints on the executive. Between 2005 and 2014, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were moderate. For 2015 and 2017, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were limited. Since 2018, V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were moderate, while our classification of JCE alternates between robust (2018, 2022) and moderate constraints (2019-2021, 2023). GWF until the end of their observation period classifies the country as foreign-occupied. The general elections in 2022 were found to be competitive, however international observers reported media bias and the opposition claimed the election was marred by irregularities. After evidence came to light of voting fraud, the CIK ordered a recount. While Dodik won the presidency, illegally printed ballots were discovered and paired with the large number of disqualified ballots, the electoral integrity is questionable. Campaigns often used divisive and ethnically charged speech and candidates continue to be limited ethnically to Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats. According to FH, the judiciary is formally independent, however lacks power and is generally ineffective, while being subject to political pressures and interference.²³ According to our classification Bosnia and Herzegovina is an electoral hybrid regime between a highly defective electoral democracy and an electoral autocracy.

Electoral Hybrid Regime as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional sources (Kasapović 2010a)

Notes

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Bosnia-and-Herzegovina>

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bosnia_and_Herzegovina

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austro-Hungarian_rule_in_Bosnia_and_Herzegovina

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bosnia_vilayet

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austro-Hungarian_campaign_in_Bosnia_and_Herzegovina_in_1878

- ⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bosnian_Crisis
- ⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diet_of_Bosnia
- ⁸ [https://www.parlament.ba/Content/Read/180?title=Politi%C4%8DkopredstavljanjeBiHuKraljeviniSrba,HrvataiSlovenaca/KraljeviniJugoslaviji\(1918.%E2%80%931941.\)&lang=en](https://www.parlament.ba/Content/Read/180?title=Politi%C4%8DkopredstavljanjeBiHuKraljeviniSrba,HrvataiSlovenaca/KraljeviniJugoslaviji(1918.%E2%80%931941.)&lang=en)
- ⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_of_Slovenes,_Croats_and_Serbs#Creation_of_the_Kingdom_of_Serbs,_Croats,_and_Slovenes
- ¹⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Yugoslavia
- ¹¹ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Bosnia_and_Herzegovina#Kingdom_of_Yugoslavia_\(1918–41\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Bosnia_and_Herzegovina#Kingdom_of_Yugoslavia_(1918–41))
- ¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialist_Federal_Republic_of_Yugoslavia
- ¹³ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republika_Srpska_\(1992%E2%80%931995\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republika_Srpska_(1992%E2%80%931995))
- ¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republika_Srpska
- ¹⁵ <https://sfi.usc.edu/collections/bosnia-herzegovina>
- ¹⁶ <https://www.bmz.de/en/countries/bosnia-and-herzegovina>
- ¹⁷ <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/balkans/bosnia-and-herzegovina/elections-bosnia-and-herzegovina>
- ¹⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_Bosnia_and_Herzegovina#Dayton_Agreement
- ¹⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High_Representative_for_Bosnia_and_Herzegovina
- ²⁰ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/bosnia-and-herzegovina/freedom-world/2022>
- ²¹ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/bosnia-and-herzegovina/freedom-world/2022>
- ²² <https://freedomhouse.org/country/bolivia/freedom-world/2024>
- ²³ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/bosnia-and-herzegovina/freedom-world/2023>

References

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