



Democracy and Electoral Change in Indonesia: Lessons from the Italian and Bosnian Experiences

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Abstract

The study investigates democracy and electoral changes in Indonesia by comparing it with the experiences of Italy and Bosnia-Herzegovina. This research aims to understand the dynamics of electoral reforms and their impact on political stability and representation. Utilizing a qualitative methodology, including secondary data analysis and semi-structured interviews with experts, the study highlights Italy's adaptation of proportional electoral systems to address political instability and Bosnia's power-sharing mechanisms to manage ethnic diversity post-conflict. The findings emphasize the necessity for Indonesia to adopt inclusive governance structures and electoral reforms that balance stability with representation. The comparative analysis reveals that while electoral reforms can enhance democratic processes, they must be context-specific to address unique national challenges. The study concludes that Indonesia can learn from Italy's efforts to reduce political fragmentation and Bosnia's strategies to maintain ethnic balance, thereby fortifying its democratic systems and achieving long-term political stability.

Keywords: Electoral Reforms, Democracy, Indonesia, Italy, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Abstrak

Studi ini menyelidiki demokrasi dan perubahan elektoral di Indonesia dengan membandingkannya dengan pengalaman Italia dan Bosnia-Herzegovina. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami dinamika reformasi pemilu dan dampaknya terhadap stabilitas dan keterwakilan politik. Memanfaatkan metodologi kualitatif, termasuk analisis data sekunder dan wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan para ahli, studi ini menyoroti adaptasi Italia terhadap sistem pemilu proporsional untuk mengatasi ketidakstabilan politik dan mekanisme pembagian kekuasaan Bosnia untuk mengelola keragaman etnis pasca-konflik. Temuan ini menekankan perlunya Indonesia untuk mengadopsi struktur pemerintahan inklusif dan reformasi pemilu yang menyeimbangkan stabilitas dengan perwakilan. Analisis komparatif mengungkapkan bahwa meskipun reformasi pemilu dapat meningkatkan proses demokrasi, reformasi tersebut harus spesifik konteks untuk mengatasi tantangan nasional yang unik. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa Indonesia dapat belajar dari upaya Italia untuk mengurangi fragmentasi politik dan strategi Bosnia untuk menjaga keseimbangan etnis, sehingga memperkuat sistem demokrasinya dan mencapai stabilitas politik jangka panjang.

Kata Kunci: Reformasi Pemilu, Demokrasi, Indonesia, Italia, Bosnia-Herzegovina.



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INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, democracy and electoral change have become essential topics in global political studies, including Indonesia. Along with political developments in Indonesia, understanding the dynamics of democracy and electoral change through international case studies can provide valuable insights. Italy and Bosnia-Herzegovina have unique experiences in democracy and electoral reforms that can provide important lessons for Indonesia.

Italy's electoral system has undergone significant changes due to its complex and diverse political history. For example, the general election in February 2013 occurred amid public dissatisfaction with the government's austerity measures and high unemployment rates.¹ With a closed list used in such elections and the bonus of majority seats, the proportional electoral system creates an interesting political dynamic in which the party or coalition that wins the majority of the votes gains a majority of seats in Parliament.² These changes in the electoral system significantly impact the outcome of elections and the formation of governments and provide essential lessons on how the electoral system can affect political stability. With its complex post-war context, Bosnia-Herzegovina offers another perspective on democracy and electoral change.

The 2014 elections in Bosnia came amid growing discontent with 'business as usual' politics and the failure of state officials to improve people's quality of life.³ The institutional structure formed from the Dayton Treaty and the strict power-sharing system between the major ethnic groups (Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats) shows how institutional architecture can affect political dynamics and national stability.⁴ This Bosnian experience provides insight into the challenges and opportunities in building an inclusive democratic system amid ethnic and political diversity.

The 1945 Constitution of Indonesia underscores the importance of elections for political participation and good governance, ensuring fairness and legal certainty in their implementation.⁵ Indonesia, as a democracy with a large and diverse population, can learn from the experiences of Italy and Bosnia in managing electoral change and strengthening democracy. Case studies from both countries show the importance of electoral reforms that are adaptive and responsive to evolving social and political contexts. In addition, inclusivity in the political system is essential to ensure fair representation and prevent public dissatisfaction that can threaten the stability of democracy. By comprehending how Italy and Bosnia confront difficulties and modifications in their election systems, Indonesia can embrace suitable tactics and methodologies to fortify democracy and attain enduring political stability.

Democracy is a multifaceted system influenced by various factors such as electoral processes, political practices, and institutional reforms. Indonesia has experienced a mix of democratic progress and challenges. Despite facing authoritarian innovations and identity politics, Indonesia's defective electoral democracy has somewhat prevented a

¹ Aldo Di Virgilio and Daniela Giannetti, "The General Election in Italy, February 2013," *Electoral Studies* 34 (June 2014): 369–72, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2013.09.002>.

² Di Virgilio and Giannetti.

³ Soeren Keil and Valery Perry, "Back to Square One?: An Analysis of the 2014 General Elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina," *Electoral Studies* 38 (June 2015): 82–87, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2015.02.014>.

⁴ Keil and Perry.

⁵ Hasan Aulia Hudhaibi, "General Election (Election) As an Implementation of The Constitution in A Country with A Democracy System," *AL-MANHAJ: Jurnal Hukum Dan Pranata Sosial Islam* 5, no. 1 (June 20, 2023): 859–66, <https://doi.org/10.37680/almanhaj.v5i1.2682>.

total descent into autocracy or illiberalism.⁶ The expansion of electoral rights for ordinary citizens in Indonesia has significantly altered traditional voting patterns, although politicians may not have immediately recognized this shift.⁷ Furthermore, Indonesia has been hailed as the most stable democracy in Southeast Asia and a successful democratic transition story, becoming the third-largest democracy globally.⁸

The global backdrop of electoral reform and democratic trends is characterized by a complex interplay of historical developments, strategic political maneuvers, and varying regional dynamics. Since 1789, the spread of electoral democracy has been significant but uneven, with notable fluctuations and regional disparities in the adoption of democratic institutions.⁹ Electoral reforms and changes to the rules governing elections often serve as strategic tools for incumbents to secure their political advantage. However, research indicates that such reforms do not always benefit the incumbents, as seen in a study of 30 European countries from 1960 to 2011 found no consistent advantage for ruling parties from electoral reforms.¹⁰ The timing and economic context of reforms also play crucial roles; liberalizing reforms tend to be penalized by voters if implemented during economic contractions or close to elections, as voters may not fully appreciate the delayed benefits of such reforms.¹¹ Additionally, the initiation of electoral reforms is influenced by the electoral context, mainly whether small or new parties draw votes from the incumbents' base or their main competitors. Governments are more likely to propose restrictive reforms if small parties threaten their voter base and permissive reforms if these parties draw votes from their competitors.¹² Overall, the dynamics of electoral reforms are deeply embedded in the broader trends of democratic development, reflecting the political actors' strategic calculations and the electorate's varying responses.

Electoral reforms play a crucial role in shaping democratic processes. Significant electoral reforms in Asia have been aimed at curbing corruption and 'money politics,' highlighting the importance of institutional measures in enhancing democratic practices.¹³ Additionally, electoral rules can influence legislators' behavior, as seen in Italy, where

⁶ Marcus Mietzner, "Authoritarian Innovations in Indonesia: Electoral Narrowing, Identity Politics and Executive Illiberalism," *Democratization* 27, no. 6 (August 17, 2020): 1021–36, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2019.1704266>.

⁷ Marcus Mietzner, "Political Opinion Polling in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia: Catalyst or Obstacle to Democratic Consolidation?," *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde / Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia* 165, no. 1 (2009): 95–126, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-90003644>.

⁸ Mohammad Zulfan Tadjoeidin, "Electoral Conflict and the Maturity of Local Democracy in Indonesia: Testing the Modernisation Hypothesis," *Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy* 17, no. 3 (August 2012): 476–97, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13547860.2012.694705>.

⁹ Isabela Mares, "Electoral Malfeasance in Historical Political Economy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Historical Political Economy* (Oxford University Press, 2023), 655–68, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197618608.013.35>.

¹⁰ Esra Issever-Ekinci, "Party Competition and Electoral Reforms: Why Do Governments Initiate a Reform?," *West European Politics* 47, no. 6 (September 18, 2024): 1363–91, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2023.2199247>.

¹¹ Alberto Alesina et al., "Structural Reforms and Elections: Evidence from a World-Wide New Dataset" (Cambridge, MA, January 2020), <https://doi.org/10.3386/w26720>.

¹² Issever-Ekinci, "Party Competition and Electoral Reforms: Why Do Governments Initiate a Reform?"

¹³ OLLI HELLMANN, "Electoral Reform in Asia: Institutional Engineering against 'Money Politics,'" *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 15, no. 2 (June 23, 2014): 275–98, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1468109914000073>.

different mechanisms impact how electoral rules shape legislative actions.¹⁴ Moreover, the quality of democracy is closely tied to electoral integrity and administration, emphasizing the significance of fundamental freedoms and human rights in ensuring free and fair elections.¹⁵ In political party institutionalization, Indonesia is characterized as an 'electoral democracy,' indicating a system where political parties play a central role in the democratic process. The study of Italy and Bosnia-Herzegovina has analyzed the mechanisms of democracy and electoral transformation in Indonesia.

The analysis emphasizes the significance of adaptable electoral changes, inclusivity in the political system, and the delicate equilibrium between political stability and representation, as demonstrated by several worldwide case studies. The trajectory of Indonesia, characterized by democratic advancements and persistent obstacles like corruption and identity politics, highlights the crucial significance of electoral integrity and institutional robustness in maintaining a thriving democracy. Indonesia can learn from Italy's attempts to decrease division and Bosnia's power-sharing methods to improve its democratic procedures and attain lasting political stability. These insights enhance our understanding of how Indonesia's electoral system has developed over time and offer a framework for analyzing the intricate interaction between social, political, and cultural elements that influence democratic governance.

RESEARCH METHODS

The technique employed in this work is doing a comparative analysis of electoral reforms and democratic processes in Indonesia, Italy, and Bosnia. The study employs a qualitative methodology, utilizing secondary data sources such as academic publications, government reports, and historical records to analyze the development of election systems and democratic reforms in each country. The study examines these nations' historical, political, and social circumstances to uncover crucial variables influencing electoral reform success or failure. This comparative paradigm facilitates a thorough analysis of each nation's difficulties and advantages, offering significant perspectives and teachings that may be implemented in the Indonesian setting. The investigation furthermore entails conducting semi-structured interviews with political analysts and scholars to get expert perspectives on the ramifications of these measures for Indonesia's democratic advancement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Democracy and Electoral System in Indonesia

Indonesia's journey to democracy has been complex, marked by various political systems and transitions. Following independence in 1945, the country adopted a parliamentary democracy, which later shifted to an authoritarian regime during President Sukarno's "Guided Democracy" era in 1959. This authoritarian rule continued under Suharto's New Order regime from 1966 to 1998, which was characterized by centralized power and limited political freedoms. The fall of Suharto in 1998 marked the beginning of the Reformasi period, aiming to establish a more democratic political system and restore civil liberties.¹⁶

¹⁴ Edoardo Alberto Viganò, "Electoral Incentives and Geographical Representation: Evidence from an Italian Electoral Reform," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 49, no. 2 (May 13, 2024): 257–87, <https://doi.org/10.1111/lsq.12418>.

¹⁵ Alistair Clark, "Identifying the Determinants of Electoral Integrity and Administration in Advanced Democracies: The Case of Britain," *European Political Science Review* 9, no. 3 (August 29, 2017): 471–92, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755773916000060>.

¹⁶ Edward Aspinall, "Indonesia: The Irony of Success," *Journal of Democracy* 21, no. 2 (April 2010): 20–34, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.0.0157>.

Indonesia has undergone significant electoral changes since the Reformasi era, notably by introducing direct presidential elections in 2004 and adopting an open-list proportional representation system. These modifications have profoundly impacted voter engagement and accountability, enabling citizens to directly choose their president and preferred candidates within party lists. This transition has fostered a more inclusive and competitive political landscape.¹⁷

In the post-Suharto period, dynastic politics emerged as a prominent feature of Indonesia's political scene. This trend has become widely accepted as the "new normal," suggesting that dynastic politics will likely endure unless substantial reforms are made in central-subnational government relations.¹⁸ Despite these challenges, Indonesia's imperfect electoral democracy has protected against authoritarian advancements, averting a complete slide into autocracy or illiberalism.¹⁹

Furthermore, Indonesia's political environment has experienced increased ideological polarization in recent years despite robust clientelist networks and low levels of party identification. This polarization has added layers of complexity to the country's political dynamics.²⁰ Additionally, there has been a noticeable shift towards the dominance of Islamically influenced socio-religious and political discourses, reshaping the socio-political and cultural fabric of the nation.²¹

Religious leaders in Indonesia have played a significant role in shaping elections by employing diverse strategies, such as establishing political parties, utilizing religious narratives, and advocating for peaceful electoral processes.²² Moreover, the fusion of religion and politics has become a notable aspect of Indonesian elections, with politicians leveraging religious sentiments to connect with voters.²³

The Reformasi era brought significant changes, including decentralization efforts that empowered local governments with more responsibilities, fiscal resources, and authority over resource allocation.²⁴ Despite these advancements, Indonesia faced challenges due to its history of weak institutions, high corruption levels, and a corrupt

¹⁷ Dede Mariana and Luthfi Hamzah Husin, "Democracy, Local Election, and Political Dynasty in Indonesian Politics," *JWP (Jurnal Wacana Politik)*, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.24198/jwp.v2i2.13998>.

¹⁸ Yoes C Kenawas, "The Irony of Indonesia's Democracy: The Rise of Dynastic Politics in the Post-Suharto Era," *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1177/20578911231195970>.

¹⁹ Marcus Mietzner, "Authoritarian Innovations in Indonesia: Electoral Narrowing, Identity Politics and Executive Illiberalism," *Democratization*, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2019.1704266>.

²⁰ Diego Fossati, Burhanuddin Muhtadi, and Eve Warburton, "Why Democrats Abandon Democracy: Evidence from Four Survey Experiments," *Party Politics* 28, no. 3 (May 8, 2022): 554–66, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068821992488>.

²¹ Peter Suwarno, "Conservative Islamic Factions vs. Secular Nationalists: Toward a Civil Contestation in Democratic Indonesia," *Indonesian Journal of Social Sciences* 13, no. 2 (October 31, 2021): 62, <https://doi.org/10.20473/ijss.v13i2.30425>.

²² Syukur Kholil, Sulidar, and Maulana Andinata Dalimunthe, "Vernacular Politics Revisited: The Role of Ulama in the 2020 Simultaneous Local Elections in Indonesia," *International Society for the Study of Vernacular Settlements* 11, no. 3 (April 15, 2024): 135–45, <https://doi.org/10.61275/ISVSej-2024-11-03-10>.

²³ Faizal Hamzah Lubis, Faiz Albar Nasution, and Rahma Hayati Harahap, "The Commodification of Religious Rituals: Representations of Political Actors in Indonesian Elections," *Pharos Journal of Theology*, no. 105(2) (March 2024), <https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.105.214>.

²⁴ Blane D. Lewis, "Indonesian Local Government Spending, Taxing and Saving: An Explanation of Pre- and Post-decentralization Fiscal Outcomes*," *Asian Economic Journal* 19, no. 3 (September 19, 2005): 291–317, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8381.2005.00214.x>.

civil service. The country underwent a substantial decentralization, transferring power from the central government to regional authorities.²⁵

Indonesia's democratic journey has been debated. Some view it as a success story, while others criticize it as a low-quality democracy.²⁶ The country's transition to democracy has been associated with a shift in power dynamics, with expectations rising for Indonesia to play a more prominent role in advocating democracy within the region.²⁷ Various factors, including liberal theories and political elites' role, have influenced Indonesia's democratization process.²⁸

Furthermore, Indonesia's Constitutional Court has played a crucial role in its democratic consolidation, contributing significantly through its professionalism and integrity to Indonesia's transformation into a consolidating democracy.²⁹ The country's history of democracy is intertwined with efforts to address issues such as corruption, human rights violations, and the need to establish a true democratic identity.³⁰

Efforts to combat corruption have included establishing the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), which has been active in prosecuting high-profile cases and promoting transparency. Human rights improvements have been pursued through various legal and institutional reforms, although challenges remain in ensuring their full realization. Additionally, establishing a democratic identity involves promoting political participation, civic education, and a culture of democracy that values pluralism and tolerance.

The successes and challenges of this journey highlight the ongoing struggle to balance authority and freedom, ensuring that democratic gains are achieved, sustained, and deepened over time. This continuous evolution underscores the importance of vigilance, reform, and strengthening democratic institutions to safeguard Indonesia's democratic future. Moreover, the international context and regional dynamics also shape Indonesia's democratic trajectory as it navigates its position within the broader landscape of Southeast Asian politics.

Democracy and Electoral System in Italy

A complex history of electoral changes and coalition governments has shaped Italy's political landscape. Since transitioning to a republic in 1946, Italy has experienced a parliamentary system with proportional representation, leading to a fragmented political environment characterized by frequent government turnovers.³¹ The Christian Democrats'

²⁵ Bambang Suharnoko Sjahrir, Krisztina Kis-Katos, and Günther G. Schulze, "Administrative Overspending in Indonesian Districts: The Role of Local Politics," *World Development* 59 (July 2014): 166–83, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2014.01.008>.

²⁶ Aspinall, "Indonesia: The Irony of Success."

²⁷ Moch Faisal Karim, "Middle Power, Status-Seeking and Role Conceptions: The Cases of Indonesia and South Korea," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 72, no. 4 (July 4, 2018): 343–63, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2018.1443428>.

²⁸ Yuki Fukuoka, "Indonesia's 'Democratic Transition' Revisited: A Clientelist Model of Political Transition," *Democratization* 20, no. 6 (October 2013): 991–1013, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2012.669894>.

²⁹ Rosalind Dixon, "Constitutional Design Two Ways: Constitutional Drafters as Judges," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3066511>.

³⁰ Hady Poerwanto, Joko Setiyono, and Sunardi, "Corruption as a Violation of Human Rights, Economic, Social and Cultural Human Rights Perspective," *International Journal of Law and Politics Studies* 5, no. 1 (February 9, 2023): 119–29, <https://doi.org/10.32996/ijlps.2023.5.1.14>.

³¹ Nicolò Conti, Andrea Pedrazzani, and Federico Russo, "Policy Polarisation in Italy: The Short and Conflictual Life of the 'Government of Change' (2018–2019)," *South European Society and Politics* 25, no. 3–4 (October 1, 2020): 317–50, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13608746.2020.1840110>.

dominance post-World War II was challenged by coalition dynamics that fostered political instability and short-lived administrations.³² Notably, between 1994 and 2008, the period saw competition between the Centre-Left and Centre-Right coalitions, with the latter revolving around figures like Berlusconi and the Lega.³³

More recently, the rise of populist parties has significantly impacted Italian politics. The coalition between the Five Star Movement (M5S) and the Lega in 2018 marked a shift towards populism, with leaders like Luigi di Maio and Matteo Salvini forming a government with a non-partisan Prime Minister, Giuseppe Conte, under the banner of the ‘government of change.’³⁴ This populist coalition tested various policies, reflecting a broader trend of politicization within Italian governance.³⁵

The influence of populist parties in Italy has been debated, with some arguing that their impact has been overstated.³⁶ However, the coalition between the Lega and the Five Star Movement in 2018 showcased how populism can sometimes prevail over traditional ideologies, influencing policy directions.³⁷ Furthermore, the election of far-right populist coalitions in Italy has led to significant changes in areas such as immigration law, reflecting a broader shift towards sovereignist policies.³⁸

Italy's foreign policy has also undergone adjustments, particularly after events like Brexit. Despite these changes, pillars like Atlanticism and Europeanism have remained central to Italian foreign policy, reflecting a bipartisan effort to anchor Italy within NATO and the EU.³⁹ The interplay between party ideologies and coalition dynamics continues to shape Italian politics, emphasizing the importance of understanding the underlying motivations driving policy decisions.⁴⁰

Italy has undergone significant electoral reforms that have shaped its political landscape. The 2005 electoral reform, known as the Porcellum, introduced during an economic crisis, played a crucial role in altering the party system in Italy.⁴¹ Additionally, electoral reforms implemented in Italy from 1993 to 2001, transitioning the electoral

³² Alexandre Afonso and Fabio Bulfone, “Electoral Coalitions and Policy Reversals in Portugal and Italy in the Aftermath of the Eurozone Crisis,” *South European Society and Politics* 24, no. 2 (April 3, 2019): 233–57, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13608746.2019.1644809>.

³³ Afonso and Bulfone.

³⁴ Conti, Pedrazzani, and Russo, “Policy Polarisation in Italy: The Short and Conflictual Life of the ‘Government of Change’ (2018–2019).”

³⁵ Gianfranco Baldini and Matteo F.N. Giglioli, “Bread or Circuses? Repoliticization in the Italian Populist Government Experience,” *Government and Opposition* 56, no. 3 (July 8, 2021): 505–24, <https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2020.5>.

³⁶ Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, “Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash,” *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2818659>.

³⁷ Belén Fernández-García, “The Triumph of (Underlying) Ideology Over Populism in Western Europe,” *Frontiers in Political Science* 3 (May 13, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2021.667320>.

³⁸ Sarah Walker, “Weathering the Ill Wind: The Affective and Embodied Dimensions of <sc>Anti-Immigrant</sc> Political Discourses on Young African Men in Italy,” *Antipode* 55, no. 1 (January 8, 2023): 307–22, <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12873>.

³⁹ Lorenzo Cladi and Andrea Locatelli, “Explaining Italian Foreign Policy Adjustment after Brexit: A Neoclassical Realist Account,” *Journal of European Integration* 43, no. 4 (May 19, 2021): 459–73, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2020.1800676>.

⁴⁰ Fabrizio Coticchia, “A Sovereignist Revolution? Italy’s Foreign Policy under the ‘Yellow–Green’ Government,” *Comparative European Politics* 19, no. 6 (December 21, 2021): 739–59, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41295-021-00259-0>.

⁴¹ Martin J Bull and Gianfranco Pasquino, “Italian Politics in an Era of Recession: The End of Bipolarism?,” *South European Society and Politics* 23, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13608746.2018.1436493>.

system from purely proportional to a plurality rule for a significant portion of parliamentary seats, substantially impacted the composition of governing coalitions and redistribution.⁴² The introduction of the Italicum electoral system in 2015 aimed to ensure majority outcomes while maintaining minority representation, reflecting a balance in the electoral framework.⁴³

Furthermore, adopting a single-member district-based electoral system in 1993 was intended to promote a two-party system and alternation in government, aligning with Duverger's Law.⁴⁴ To evaluate the impact of electoral reforms on political stability and democracy in Italy, it is crucial to consider the role of electoral institutions in shaping political outcomes. Electoral systems are pivotal in determining the nature of political parties, coalition dynamics, and governance stability Iversen & Soskice.⁴⁵ The choice of electoral systems can significantly influence political stability, voting behavior, and party systems within a democracy.⁴⁶ Furthermore, citizens' satisfaction with democracy can be influenced by political institutions, underscoring the importance of understanding how electoral reforms impact democratic processes.⁴⁷ Electoral reforms can also impact corrupt practices and particularistic exchanges within a political system, as demonstrated by the Italian case.⁴⁸

The effects of electoral reforms on political stability and democracy can vary depending on the context and the specific changes implemented. While some reforms may target stabilizing the party system and enhancing representation, others may lead to unintended consequences such as strategic manipulation of policy outcomes.⁴⁹ It is essential to consider the broader implications of electoral reforms beyond their immediate objectives, as even seemingly minor reforms can have significant consequences for democracy.⁵⁰

Democracy and Electoral System in Bosnia

As shaped by the Dayton Peace Agreement, post-war Bosnia was established as a decentralized state to distribute power among the Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs, aiming to

⁴² Massimo Bordignon and Andrea Monticini, "The Importance of the Electoral Rule: Evidence from Italy," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2011, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1762577>.

⁴³ Roberto D'Alimonte, "The New Italian Electoral System: Majority-Assuring but Minority-Friendly," *Contemporary Italian Politics* 7, no. 3 (September 2, 2015): 286–92, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23248823.2015.1093280>.

⁴⁴ STEVEN R. REED, "Duverger's Law Is Working in Italy," *Comparative Political Studies* 34, no. 3 (April 1, 2001): 312–27, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414001034003004>.

⁴⁵ TORBEN IVERSEN and DAVID SOSKICE, "Electoral Institutions and the Politics of Coalitions: Why Some Democracies Redistribute More Than Others," *American Political Science Review* 100, no. 2 (May 19, 2006): 165–81, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055406062083>.

⁴⁶ Carles Boix, "Setting the Rules of the Game: The Choice of Electoral Systems in Advanced Democracies," *American Political Science Review* 93, no. 3 (September 1, 1999): 609–24, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2585577>.

⁴⁷ Christopher J. Anderson and Christine A Guillory, "Political Institutions and Satisfaction with Democracy: A Cross-National Analysis of Consensus and Majoritarian Systems," *American Political Science Review* 91, no. 1 (March 1, 1997): 66–81, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2952259>.

⁴⁸ Simona Piattoni and Matteo Fabio Nels Giglioli, "Does Changing Electoral Systems Affect (Corrupt) Particularistic Exchanges? Evidence from the Italian Case," *Politics and Governance* 8, no. 2 (May 28, 2020): 78–91, <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v8i2.2913>.

⁴⁹ Massimiliano Ferraresi et al., "Switch toward Tax Centralization in Italy: A Wake-up for the Local Political Budget Cycle," *International Tax and Public Finance* 26, no. 4 (August 15, 2019): 872–98, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10797-019-09531-2>.

⁵⁰ Monique Leyenaar and Reuven Y Hazan, "Reconceptualising Electoral Reform," *West European Politics* 34, no. 3 (May 2011): 437–55, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2011.555974>.

maintain peace and stability.⁵¹ The complex governance system introduced by the Dayton Agreement, along with the presence of nationalist elites, challenged the Europeanization process in Bosnia.⁵² The agreement included a new constitution prescribing a mix of power-sharing and territorial decentralization to address the differing goals of the Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs.⁵³ This structure aimed to balance the aspirations for a unitary state with those seeking separate entities.⁵⁴

The case of Bosnia and Herzegovina illustrates the difficulty of establishing democracy in internally divided societies where domestic and international actors exploit these divisions.⁵⁵ The consociational democracy model, which emphasizes passive coexistence and agreement among ethnic elites, significantly shaped the socio-political processes in post-conflict Bosnia.⁵⁶ Despite its imperfections, consociational democracy has been crucial in post-conflict regions.⁵⁷

Furthermore, the Dayton Peace Accords led to the creation of a highly decentralized state in Bosnia and Herzegovina, reflecting the aftermath of a violent war and ethnic cleansing, which resulted in a divided society.⁵⁸ Bosnia's decentralized political and administrative structure is evident in the exclusive jurisdiction over land and water resources held by entities and districts rather than at the state level.⁵⁹

The proportional representation and power-sharing system in Bosnia, established after the Dayton Agreement, has prevented conflict and entrenched ethnic divisions, leading to political gridlock and hindering effective governance.⁶⁰ This system, while maintaining peace and ethnic representation, has reinforced divisions and inefficiencies, thereby stifling democratic development.⁶¹ The consociational democracy model, which emphasizes passive coexistence and agreement among ethnic elites, has significantly shaped the socio-political processes in post-conflict Bosnia.⁶² However, this model has

⁵¹ Melek Aylin Özoflu and Bora Besgul, "A Critical Analysis of the Neoliberal State-Building in Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Gap Between Aims and Achievements," *Corvinus Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, October 5, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.14267/CJSSP.2023.1.6>.

⁵² ANA E. JUNCOS, "Europeanization by Decree? The Case of Police Reform in Bosnia*," *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 49, no. 2 (March 2011): 367–89, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5965.2010.02144.x>.

⁵³ Alex Schwartz and Melanie Janelle Murchison, "Judicial Impartiality and Independence in Divided Societies: An Empirical Analysis of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia-Herzegovina," *Law & Society Review* 50, no. 4 (December 1, 2016): 821–55, <https://doi.org/10.1111/lasr.12237>.

⁵⁴ Schwartz and Janelle Murchison.

⁵⁵ Gerrit S.A. Dijkstra and Jos C.N. Raadschelders, "THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA," *World Affairs* 185, no. 2 (June 27, 2022): 285–311, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00438200221087971>.

⁵⁶ Nikola Ambarkov, "BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA 25 YEARS AFTER DAYTON – BETWEEN THE CLASSICAL LIJPHART'S CONSOCIATION AND HIS NEWLY INTRODUCED TERM FOR CONSENSUAL DEMOCRACY," in *THE EURO-ATLANTIC VALUES IN THE BALKAN COUNTRIES* (Faculty of Security- Skopje, 2020), 109–27, <https://doi.org/10.20544/ICP.11.01.20.p07>.

⁵⁷ Ambarkov.

⁵⁸ Özoflu and Besgul, "A Critical Analysis of the Neoliberal State-Building in Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Gap Between Aims and Achievements."

⁵⁹ Marijana Kapović Solomun et al., "Understanding the Role of Policy Frameworks in Developing Land Degradation in Stakeholders Perception from a Post-conflict Perspective in Bosnia and Herzegovina," *Land Degradation & Development* 32, no. 12 (July 30, 2021): 3393–3402, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ldr.3744>.

⁶⁰ Özoflu and Besgul, "A Critical Analysis of the Neoliberal State-Building in Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Gap Between Aims and Achievements."

⁶¹ JUNCOS, "Europeanization by Decree? The Case of Police Reform in Bosnia*."

⁶² Schwartz and Janelle Murchison, "Judicial Impartiality and Independence in Divided Societies: An Empirical Analysis of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia-Herzegovina."

also been criticized for entrenching ethnic divisions and hindering the development of a more cohesive society and effective governance.⁶³

The impact of these reforms on social cohesion and democracy in Bosnia has been mixed. While the system has ensured representation for different ethnic groups, it has also reinforced divisions and inefficiencies, posing challenges to democratic development.⁶⁴ The entrenchment of ethnic identities in the political system has led to political parties often representing specific ethnic groups rather than broader national interests, contributing to political gridlock and hindering effective governance.

Comparison of Electoral Systems and Reforms in Indonesia, Italy, and Bosnia

The reforms in Indonesia post-1998 introduced a multiparty system, direct presidential elections, and open-list proportional representation to enhance transparency and representation.⁶⁵ These reforms have significantly impacted the country's democracy, with direct presidential elections improving the quality of democracy by fulfilling critical aspects of the Indonesia Democracy Index.⁶⁶ However, concerns have been raised about the declining quality of democracy due to identity-based forces and challenges to the direct presidential election system.⁶⁷ These identity-based forces have led to increased polarization, often along religious and ethnic lines, threatening social cohesion and stability. Moreover, there are fears that political elites might exploit these divisions to consolidate power, undermining democratic norms and institutions. To safeguard its democratic achievements, Indonesia must address these issues through inclusive policies and robust mechanisms that promote unity and mitigate identity-based conflicts. Effective measures against corruption and political manipulation are also essential to maintain the integrity of the democratic process.

In Italy, post-1990s reforms transitioned from proportional representation to a mixed-member system to reduce fragmentation and encourage stable governments.⁶⁸ Recent adjustments in Italy include electoral thresholds and majority bonuses to enhance the government's stability further.⁶⁹ These changes reflect a strategic shift in the electoral system to address the challenges of fragmentation and governance efficiency.

The transition from a purely proportional representation system to a mixed-member system was initiated to curb the high political fragmentation that characterized Italy's post-war politics. Proportional representation, while ensuring broad representation of diverse political views, often resulted in coalition governments with multiple parties, leading to instability and frequent changes in government. Italy aimed to foster more significant, more stable parties and reduce the frequency of government turnover by introducing a mixed-member system, which combines elements of proportional representation with first-past-the-post single-member districts.

⁶³ Dijkstra and Raadschelders, "THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA."

⁶⁴ Ambarkov, "BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA 25 YEARS AFTER DAYTON – BETWEEN THE CLASSICAL LIJPHART'S CONSOCIATION AND HIS NEWLY INTRODUCED TERM FOR CONSENSUAL DEMOCRACY."

⁶⁵ Boy Anugerah, "Strengthening Democracy in Indonesia: Comparison between Representative and Direct Presidential Election Policies," *Jurnal Studi Sosial Dan Politik* 6, no. 1 (June 30, 2022): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.19109/jssp.v6i1.10650>.

⁶⁶ Anugerah.

⁶⁷ John G. O'Reilly, "A Proposal to Strengthen Indonesian Democracy," *Asian Politics & Policy* 15, no. 3 (July 3, 2023): 520–47, <https://doi.org/10.1111/aspp.12705>.

⁶⁸ Riduan Masud et al., "Forecasting Political Parties and Candidates for Indonesia's Presidential Election in 2024 Using Twitter," *International Journal of Health Sciences*, July 14, 2022, 1323–33, <https://doi.org/10.53730/ijhs.v6nS6.10691>.

⁶⁹ Masud et al.

The transition from a purely proportional representation system to a mixed-member system in Italy was primarily driven by the need to address the high political fragmentation that characterized the country's post-war politics. The proportional representation system, which aimed to ensure broad representation of diverse political views, often led to the formation of coalition governments involving multiple parties. This situation resulted in political instability and frequent changes in government (Warner, 2008).⁷⁰ Italy sought to cultivate more significant and stable political parties while reducing the frequency of government turnover by introducing a mixed-member system that combines elements of proportional representation with first-past-the-post single-member districts (Persson & Tabellini, 2004).⁷¹

The shift in Italy's electoral system can be traced back to the referendum in 1993, which marked a significant departure from the previous proportional representation system. This change recast party competition into center-left and center-right blocs, signaling a transition towards a different political landscape (Lanzone & Woods, 2015).⁷² Over the years, Italy underwent several rounds of electoral reforms, moving from a mixed-member system to adjusted proportional representation and eventually to a de-facto proportional representation system, before settling on a mixed electoral system in 2017.⁷³

The adoption of proportional representation in Italy from 1948 to 1994 fostered a proliferation of parties and incentivized politicians to rely heavily on patronage networks. This led to a fragmented political space and contributed to the challenges of governance and stability.⁷⁴ By incorporating elements of plurality rule into the electoral system, Italy aimed to shift towards a more stable governance structure while still maintaining representation of diverse political views.⁷⁵

The reforms in Italy's electoral system were designed to balance enhancing participation and improving governability without compromising the fundamental aspect of representation.⁷⁶ The evolution of Italy's electoral system reflects a continuous effort to find a model that can effectively manage the country's political landscape, balancing representation with stability and governance.

In conclusion, Italy's transition from a purely proportional representation system to a mixed-member system was a strategic response to the political fragmentation and instability that characterized its post-war politics. By incorporating elements of different electoral systems, Italy aimed to foster more stable political parties, reduce government turnover, and balance representation and governance.

⁷⁰ Carolyn M Warner, "Religious Parties in a Secularizing Political Space: The Case of Italy," *Asian Security*, 2008, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14799850701783353>.

⁷¹ Torsten Persson and Guido Tabellini, "Constitutions and Economic Policy," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 18, no. 1 (February 1, 2004): 75–98, <https://doi.org/10.1257/089533004773563449>.

⁷² Liza Lanzone and Dwayne Woods, "Riding the Populist Web: Contextualizing the Five Star Movement (M5S) in Italy," *Politics and Governance*, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v3i2.246>.

⁷³ "Towards a New Ontology of Polling Inaccuracy: The Benefits of Conceiving of Elections as Heterogenous Phenomena for the Study of Pre-Election Polling Error" (Swansea University, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.23889/SUthesis.64642>.

⁷⁴ REUVEN Y. HAZAN and GIDEON RAHAT, "Representation, Electoral Reform, and Democracy," *Comparative Political Studies* 33, no. 10 (December 2000): 1310–36, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414000033010003>.

⁷⁵ Alan Renwick, "Italy: Diluting Proportional Representation," in *The Politics of Electoral Reform* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 169–78, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511676390.012>.

⁷⁶ Charles K Rowley, "Foreword," in *Rules, Choice and Strategy* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2001), <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781781950821.00005>.

These reforms have significantly impacted Italy's political landscape. The mixed-member system and electoral thresholds have reduced the number of parties in parliament, contributing to greater political stability. The majority bonus system has allowed winning parties to form governments with clearer mandates, improving governance efficiency and reducing the frequency of no-confidence votes and government collapses.

However, these changes have also sparked debate and criticism. Some argue that the majority bonus system can disproportionately favor the largest party, potentially marginalizing smaller parties and reducing the overall representativeness of the parliament. Critics also contend that the focus on stability may come at the expense of political pluralism and democratic inclusiveness, as the system incentivizes the formation of larger political blocs, which may overshadow minority voices.

Despite these concerns, Italy's electoral reforms have been pivotal in addressing the chronic instability that plagued its post-war political system. Italy has sought to create a more stable and efficient political environment by balancing the need for broad representation with mechanisms to ensure governability. As Italy continues to refine its electoral system, the challenge will be to maintain this balance, ensuring that stability benefits do not come at the cost of democratic inclusiveness and representation. The ongoing evolution of Italy's electoral framework underscores the dynamic nature of democratic governance and the continuous effort required to adapt and improve political systems in response to changing needs and challenges.

Bosnia's post-Dayton Agreement governance system combines proportional representation with power-sharing mechanisms to ensure ethnic balance and prevent conflict.⁷⁷ This unique system aims to maintain stability and prevent conflicts by ensuring representation for different ethnic groups. However, this complex governance structure often leads to gridlock in decision-making processes.⁷⁸

The Dayton Agreement, signed in 1995, ended the Bosnian War and established a framework for the political structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This agreement created a highly decentralized state comprising two entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republika Srpska, and a separate district, Brčko. The governance model implemented by the Dayton Agreement was designed to address the deep ethnic divisions that fueled the conflict by ensuring that all three major ethnic groups—Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs have a role in the country's political system.

The proportional representation system in Bosnia ensures that legislative bodies reflect the diverse ethnic makeup of the population. This system is complemented by a complex power-sharing arrangement that includes a tripartite presidency, with each presidency member representing one of the three major ethnic groups. Additionally, critical decisions often require approval from representatives of all three ethnic groups, creating a system of checks and balances to prevent any single group's dominance.

While this structure promotes ethnic inclusivity and prevents majoritarian rule, it also has significant drawbacks. The requirement for consensus among ethnically diverse representatives can lead to prolonged negotiations and difficulty in reaching decisions. This often results in political stalemates and inefficiencies, hindering the government's ability to address pressing issues and implement reforms. The power-sharing arrangement, while stabilizing, can entrench ethnic divisions by reinforcing the

⁷⁷ Edward Aspinall and Marcus Mietzner, "Indonesian Politics in 2014: Democracy's Close Call," *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies* 50, no. 3 (September 2, 2014): 347–69, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00074918.2014.980375>.

⁷⁸ Aspinall and Mietzner.

importance of ethnic identity in politics, potentially perpetuating the very divisions it aims to bridge.

Furthermore, the complex governance system can create opportunities for political actors to exploit ethnic divisions for their gain, leading to corruption and patronage. The focus on ethnic representation can overshadow other critical policy areas, such as economic development, social justice, and infrastructure improvement. As a result, Bosnia and Herzegovina faces ongoing challenges in achieving political stability, economic growth, and social cohesion.

Despite these challenges, the post-Dayton governance system remains a crucial framework for maintaining peace in Bosnia. Efforts to reform this system must carefully balance the need for more efficient governance with the imperative of maintaining ethnic representation and preventing conflict. Addressing the underlying causes of ethnic tension and fostering a more integrated society is essential for the long-term stability and prosperity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

These examples demonstrate how different countries have implemented electoral reforms to address specific challenges and improve their democratic systems. Indonesia focused on enhancing transparency and representation, Italy aimed at reducing fragmentation and ensuring stable governments, while Bosnia prioritized ethnic balance and conflict prevention through power-sharing mechanisms. Each country's approach reflects its unique political context and the need to adapt electoral systems to promote effective governance and representation.

Table 1. Comparison of Electoral Systems and Reforms in Indonesia, Italy, and Bosnia

ASPECT	INDONESIA	ITALY	BOSNIA
POLITICAL HISTORY	Transition from authoritarian rule post-1998	Transition from monarchy to republic post-WWII	Post-war decentralized state under the Dayton Agreement
ELECTORAL SYSTEM	The multiparty system, direct presidential elections, open-list proportional representation	A mixed-member system combining FPTP and PR, electoral thresholds, majority bonuses	Proportional representation power-sharing mechanisms to ensure ethnic balance
MAJOR REFORMS	1998 reforms enhancing transparency and representation	1990s reforms reducing fragmentation, 2005 Porcellum, Italicum in 2015	Dayton Peace Agreement establishing power-sharing and proportional representation
CHALLENGES	Corruption, money politics, identity politics	Political fragmentation, rise of populism, political gridlock	Ethnic divisions, political gridlock, inefficient governance
SUCSESSES	Improved representation, competitive elections	Reduced fragmentation, more stable governments	Maintained peace, ensured ethnic representation

IMPACT ON STABILITY	Improved but facing ongoing challenges	Mixed success; more stability but issues with populism	Prevented conflict but entrenched divisions and inefficiencies
SOCIAL COHESION	Diverse society, balancing ethnic/regional interests	Issues with populism affecting national unity	Reinforced ethnic divisions, political gridlock
INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTH	Developing institutions, challenges with enforcement and corruption	Established institutions challenged by political dynamics	Weak institutions hampered by ethnic division

The table compares the electoral systems and reforms in Indonesia, Italy, and Bosnia. Indonesia transitioned from authoritarian rule post-1998, establishing a multiparty system with direct presidential elections and open-list proportional representation, focusing on transparency and representation. Italy transitioned from a monarchy to a republic post-WWII and adopted a mixed-member system to reduce fragmentation and enhance stability, with reforms like the Porcellum and Italicum. Bosnia, established as a decentralized state post-war by the Dayton Agreement, uses proportional representation and power-sharing to ensure ethnic balance. Each country faces unique challenges: Indonesia grapples with corruption and identity politics; Italy deals with political fragmentation and populism; Bosnia struggles with ethnic divisions and political gridlock. Successes include improved representation and competitive elections in Indonesia, reduced fragmentation and more stable governments in Italy, and maintained peace with ethnic representation in Bosnia. However, the impact on stability varies, with Indonesia and Italy facing ongoing challenges, while Bosnia's system prevents conflict but reinforces divisions. Social cohesion and institutional strength also differ, with Indonesia balancing ethnic interests, Italy affected by populism, and Bosnia's institutions weakened by ethnic divisions.

Indonesia can draw several valuable lessons from the electoral experiences of Bosnia and Italy to refine its system. Firstly, inclusive governance is crucial, as seen in Bosnia, where ensuring representation for all ethnic groups helps maintain peace and stability. Secondly, Indonesia should strive to balance national unity with ethnic representation, learning from Bosnia's challenges in preventing divisions while promoting a cohesive national identity. Thirdly, effective governance can be enhanced by avoiding political gridlock through mechanisms that facilitate decision-making, inspired by Italy's mixed-member system, which balances proportionality and stability. Lastly, Bosnia's power-sharing arrangements demonstrate that post-conflict stability requires robust political structures to ensure long-term peace and governance efficiency. Implementing these lessons can help Indonesia improve its electoral system, fostering social cohesion, democratic development, and effective governance.

Factors Influencing the Success and Failure of Reforms

Political stability, social cohesion, and institutional strength are crucial factors influencing the success and failure of reforms in different countries. In Italy, the transition to a mixed-member system led to reduced fragmentation but faced challenges with

populism and political gridlock, impacting political stability.⁷⁹ The struggles with populism in Italy also affect national unity, highlighting issues with social cohesion.⁸⁰ Despite establishing institutions, Italy is challenged by political dynamics, affecting its institutional strength.⁸¹

Maintaining peace through power-sharing mechanisms in Bosnia has entrenched ethnic divisions, leading to inefficiencies and impacting political stability.⁸² The power-sharing system in Bosnia prevents conflict but reinforces ethnic divisions, affecting social cohesion. Weak institutions, hampered by ethnic divisions, pose challenges to institutional strength.⁸³

Indonesia's reforms improved representation and competitiveness but struggled with corruption and money politics, influencing political stability. Indonesia's diverse society requires ongoing efforts to balance ethnic and regional interests, affecting social cohesion.⁸⁴ Developing institutions in Indonesia face challenges in enforcement and corruption, impacting institutional strength.⁸⁵

Factors such as political stability, social cohesion, and institutional strength influence the success and failure of reforms. Countries like Italy, Bosnia, and Indonesia showcase how these factors interact to shape the outcomes of reform efforts, emphasizing the importance of addressing these aspects comprehensively to achieve sustainable and practical reforms.

Political stability is a foundational element for successful reforms. In Italy, a mixed-member electoral system was introduced aimed at enhancing stability by reducing party fragmentation. However, the rise of populist movements has introduced new challenges. Populism often thrives on dissatisfaction with the status quo, leading to political volatility and complicating the consensus-building necessary for stable governance. The tension between traditional parties and populist movements can lead to legislative gridlock, preventing the effective implementation of reforms.

Similarly, Bosnia's power-sharing system, established to maintain peace post-Dayton Agreement, has ensured political stability by preventing outright conflict. However, this system has also resulted in a rigid and resistant-to-change form of stability. The necessity for consensus among ethnically divided representatives can lead to prolonged decision-making processes and political inertia, undermining the efficacy of governance.

Reforms that promote democratic representation and competitiveness have bolstered political stability in Indonesia. Nevertheless, pervasive corruption and money's influence in politics pose significant threats. These issues undermine public trust and can destabilize the political environment, complicating efforts to sustain and deepen democratic reforms.

⁷⁹ Masud et al., "Forecasting Political Parties and Candidates for Indonesia's Presidential Election in 2024 Using Twitter."

⁸⁰ Dawn Brancati, "Decentralization: Fueling the Fire or Dampening the Flames of Ethnic Conflict and Secessionism?," *International Organization* 60, no. 03 (July 9, 2006), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S002081830606019X>.

⁸¹ Masud et al., "Forecasting Political Parties and Candidates for Indonesia's Presidential Election in 2024 Using Twitter."

⁸² Aspinall and Mietzner, "Indonesian Politics in 2014: Democracy's Close Call."

⁸³ Aspinall and Mietzner.

⁸⁴ Anugerah, "Strengthening Democracy in Indonesia: Comparison between Representative and Direct Presidential Election Policies."

⁸⁵ Anugerah.

Social cohesion is another critical factor influencing reform outcomes. In Italy, social cohesion has been strained by economic disparities and the impact of populist rhetoric, which often exacerbates societal divisions. The fragmentation within Italian politics reflects deeper social divides, complicating efforts to forge a unified national agenda and implement cohesive reforms.

Bosnia's power-sharing system, while preventing conflict, has entrenched ethnic divisions, impacting social cohesion. The emphasis on ethnic identity in politics perpetuates divisions and hinders the development of a unified national identity. This lack of social cohesion makes it difficult to mobilize broad-based support for reforms and to implement policies that benefit the entire population.

Indonesia's diverse society necessitates continuous efforts to balance ethnic and regional interests. While the country's reforms have enhanced representation, they must also address the underlying social tensions that can arise from such diversity. Ensuring social cohesion in Indonesia involves promoting inclusivity and addressing disparities that could lead to social unrest.

Institutional strength is essential for the successful implementation and sustainability of reforms. In Italy, while institutions have been established to support the mixed-member system, political dynamics, including populist pressures, challenge their effectiveness. Strong institutions are needed to manage these dynamics and implement reforms as intended.

Bosnia's institutions are weakened by the ethnic divisions they aim to manage. Complex power-sharing arrangements can result in inefficiencies and a lack of apparent authority, undermining the strength and effectiveness of governance structures. Strengthening institutions in Bosnia requires overcoming ethnic divisions and fostering a more unified administrative approach. In Indonesia, institutions face significant challenges related to enforcement and corruption. Despite reforms to improve governance, corruption remains a pervasive issue that weakens institutional integrity and effectiveness. Strengthening institutions in Indonesia involves combating corruption and enhancing their capacity to enforce laws and implement policies effectively. In conclusion, the success and failure of reforms in countries like Italy, Bosnia, and Indonesia are heavily influenced by political stability, social cohesion, and institutional strength. These factors interact in complex ways, shaping the outcomes of reform efforts. Addressing these aspects comprehensively is essential to achieving sustainable and practical reforms. Policymakers must focus on creating stable political environments, fostering social cohesion, and building strong institutions to support the long-term success of reforms.

Relevance of Political, Social, and Cultural Contexts

Political, social, and cultural contexts significantly shape the success or failure of reforms in different countries. In Italy, a long history of political fragmentation and coalition governments has influenced the country's political context, impacting the implementation of reforms.⁸⁶ The challenges with populism and political gridlock in Italy are rooted in this historical context and affect the stability of the political system.⁸⁷ Additionally, Italy's cultural and institutional legacies have influenced changes

⁸⁶ Masud et al., "Forecasting Political Parties and Candidates for Indonesia's Presidential Election in 2024 Using Twitter."

⁸⁷ Masud et al.

in skill formation and administrative reforms, particularly in response to crises like the Eurozone crisis.⁸⁸

Bosnia is a post-conflict society that needs ethnic balance, which has shaped the country's political context and governance structure.⁸⁹ The power-sharing mechanisms in Bosnia aim to maintain peace and prevent conflicts by ensuring the representation of different ethnic groups, reflecting the country's social and cultural divisions.⁹⁰ The influence of segregated education on security and stability in post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina highlights the deep-rooted cultural and political divisions that persist in the country.⁹¹

Indonesia's emerging democracy with diverse political interests and regional autonomy presents a unique political context that influences the success of reforms.⁹² The ongoing efforts to balance ethnic and regional interests in Indonesia reflect the country's social cohesion challenges.⁹³

The need for gender inclusiveness in Indonesia's political representation underscores the importance of addressing social and cultural factors in shaping political outcomes.⁹⁴ The interplay of political, social, and cultural contexts is evident in the challenges and opportunities for reforms in Italy, Bosnia, and Indonesia. Understanding these contexts is crucial for designing effective reform strategies responsive to each country's specific needs and dynamics, ultimately contributing to sustainable democratic development and governance.

In Italy, the historical context of political fragmentation has deep roots in the country's diverse regional identities and political traditions. The proliferation of political parties and frequent coalition governments have historically resulted in legislative inefficiencies and challenges in implementing coherent policy agendas. This fragmentation has provided fertile ground for populist movements, which capitalize on public dissatisfaction with traditional parties. The rise of populist parties in recent years has further complicated the political landscape, leading to gridlock and challenges in passing reforms. The cultural context, particularly the importance of regional identity and the legacy of patronage politics continues to influence the effectiveness of governance and reform efforts.

Bosnia's political context is deeply influenced by its history of ethnic conflict and the need to maintain a delicate balance among its constituent ethnic groups. The Dayton Agreement's power-sharing mechanisms directly respond to this context, designed to ensure that no single group can dominate the others. However, this arrangement has also entrenched ethnic divisions and made it difficult to achieve efficient governance. The

⁸⁸ Fabienne-Agnes Baumann and Janis Vossiek, "Changing Skill Formation in Greece and Italy – Crisis-Induced Reforms in Light of Common Institutional Legacies," *International Journal for Research in Vocational Education and Training* 9, no. 3 (November 9, 2022): 340–62, <https://doi.org/10.13152/IJRVET.9.3.3>.

⁸⁹ Aspinall and Mietzner, "Indonesian Politics in 2014: Democracy's Close Call."

⁹⁰ Aspinall and Mietzner.

⁹¹ Nerma Halilović-Kibrić, "The Influence of Segregated Education on Security and Stability in Post-Conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina," *Security Dialogues / Безбедносни Дијалози* 1, no. 1 (June 30, 2018): 7–24, <https://doi.org/10.47054/SD181007hk>.

⁹² Anugerah, "Strengthening Democracy in Indonesia: Comparison between Representative and Direct Presidential Election Policies."

⁹³ Anugerah.

⁹⁴ Daniel M Butler, Margit Tavits, and Dino Hadzic, "Gender Bias in Policy Representation in Post-Conflict Societies," *Political Research Quarterly* 76, no. 1 (March 22, 2023): 200–212, <https://doi.org/10.1177/10659129211045020>.

social context in Bosnia is marked by ongoing ethnic segregation, including in education, which perpetuates divisions and undermines social cohesion. Cultural divisions remain a significant barrier to developing a unified national identity, making it challenging to implement reforms that require broad-based support across different ethnic communities.

Indonesia's political context is characterized by its transition from authoritarian rule to democracy and diverse and decentralized political landscape. The country's large and varied population includes numerous ethnic groups with distinct interests, making balancing regional and ethnic interests a central challenge for governance. The social context includes ongoing efforts to enhance social cohesion and address inequalities among regions and groups. Cultural factors, such as the role of religion and traditional practices, also play a significant role in shaping political dynamics and reform efforts. The push for greater gender inclusiveness in political representation reflects broader social changes and the importance of integrating diverse perspectives into governance.

The success of reforms in these countries is closely tied to their ability to navigate and respond to their unique political, social, and cultural contexts. In Italy, this means addressing the root causes of political fragmentation and populism, fostering a more stable and cohesive political environment. For Bosnia, it involves finding ways to bridge ethnic divisions and promote more inclusive governance structures. In Indonesia, ongoing efforts are required to balance diverse interests and enhance social cohesion, ensuring that reforms are inclusive and equitable. By understanding and addressing these contexts, policymakers can design more effective reform strategies that are responsive to the specific needs and dynamics of each country, ultimately contributing to sustainable democratic development and governance.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that electoral reform is deeply shaped by each country's political history, social structure, and cultural context, as reflected in the comparative experiences of Indonesia, Italy, and Bosnia. Indonesia's adoption of direct presidential elections and an open-list proportional representation system has strengthened democratic participation and electoral accountability. Nevertheless, persistent challenges such as corruption, vote-buying practices, and identity based polarization continue to undermine political stability and public trust. These findings indicate that procedural democratic reforms alone are insufficient unless accompanied by effective institutional safeguards and strong law enforcement mechanisms to protect electoral integrity.

In Italy, electoral reforms aimed at reducing party fragmentation through mixed member systems, electoral thresholds, and majority bonuses have contributed to greater governmental stability. However, the persistence of populist movements and legislative deadlock reveals the structural limitations of electoral engineering in addressing deeper political and societal divisions. Similarly, Bosnia's consociational power-sharing model has been effective in preventing renewed conflict and ensuring ethnic representation, yet it has also institutionalized ethnic segmentation and administrative inefficiency. These cases highlight a central finding of this research: while electoral systems can promote stability and inclusion, they may also generate unintended consequences when not supported by broader political integration and civic trust.

Based on these findings, this study recommends that electoral reforms should be designed within a comprehensive and context-sensitive framework. For Indonesia, priority should be given to strengthening anti-corruption institutions, regulating campaign finance, and mitigating identity-based polarization through inclusive political education. Italy should pursue reforms that enhance legislative effectiveness while safeguarding

proportional representation to maintain democratic inclusiveness. In Bosnia, gradual institutional reforms that encourage cross-ethnic cooperation and reduce rigid ethnic vetoes are essential for improving governance efficiency. More broadly, this research suggests that successful electoral reform requires a balanced approach that integrates political stability, democratic representation, and social cohesion, offering valuable lessons for other countries undergoing democratic transitions.

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