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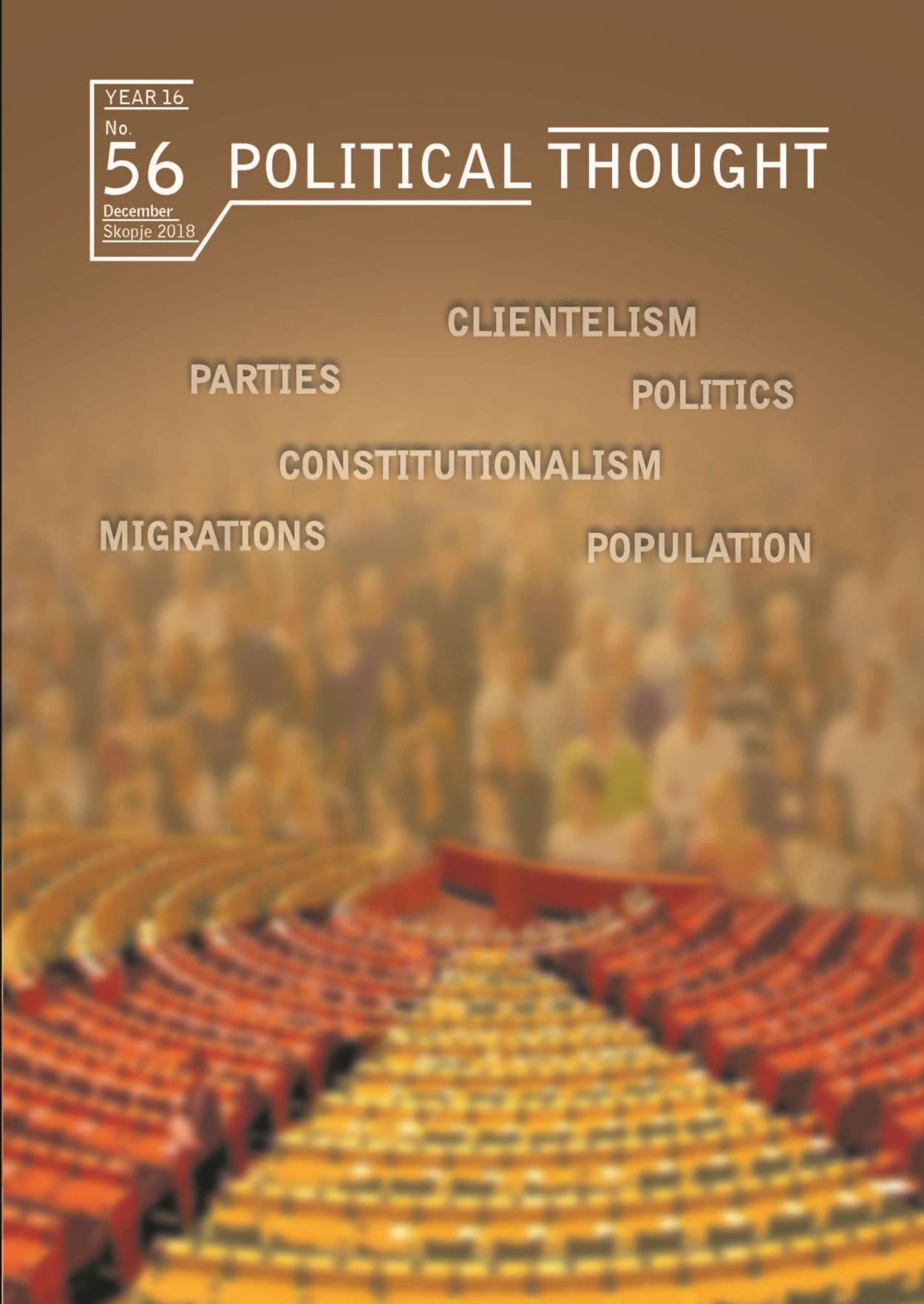
POLITICAL THOUGHT

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Short Biography

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Denis Preshova

THE SILENCE OF THE 'EXPERTS': THE CRISIS OF CONSTITUTIONALISM IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

INTRODUCTION

Constitutional and political crises, among other significant political challenges, have regularly occurred in the Republic of Macedonia since its independence in 1991. After every crisis, the question arises whether the lesson has been learnt, or whether the same challenge will reappear, often with increased intensity. This might be the crucial aspect which makes the difference between the success of developed countries and democratic systems on the one hand, and the defeat of those countries that just cannot reach their goal of becoming one of them, on the other.

The latest episode in a series of constitutional and political crises (including resolution) featured many questions and predicaments. Unfortunately, only

very few of them were resolved, due to the mere wish to get through with them quickly, notwithstanding the means needed to solve them.

One of the most important reasons for those questions and predicaments to persist can be found in a phenomenon that accompanied all relevant events and which is still very much present: the so-called vaudevillisation of the professional and scientific discourse. Instead of being debated mainly in professional and scientific circles which would recommend measures and solutions, the events and processes were dealt with by means of vaudevillisation. Owing to this phenomenon, instead of academic debates being led in the „temples of science" (or what should represent them), the constitutional and legal questions were discussed on TV, social media, etc., where neither professional nor scientific criteria are used to assess whether positions are well-founded. On the contrary, according to one of the main characteristics of vaudevillisation, the assessment of „expert" positions is based on the popularity either of the ones who express them of or the positions themselves, which, in turn, is determined by a momentary majority's mood. Hence, it is not surprising that the „experts'" allegiance to their favoured political option or particular interests outweigh their devotion to science, scientifically founded arguments, or professional standards.

 As a result, we are flooded with (dis)information, non-informed positions, and, sometimes, unbearably simplified „solutions" for complex problems, which leave political actors with plenty of room for manoeuvres.

These conditions lead to the conclusion that the best time to analyse concrete constitutional and legal questions is when they are not in the focus of the public debate. That is the time of the silence of the experts, reminiscent of the well-known book and movie „The Silence of the Lambs", when they show weakness and discomfort when it comes to presenting well-founded analyses. Only then we can examine the constitutional and legal situation in a well-founded and professional way, without any pressure from the vaudeville experts' non-articulate positions and arguments.

Such a time was used for writing this paper, which represents an attempt at offering a well-founded answer to some key questions by which the constitutionalism of the Republic of Macedonia is put at risk. The lightness with which political actors and institutions resort to unlawful means, with the excuse of them being imposed by circumstances, in order to reach a higher goal, leaves us with a serious dilemma: does constitutionalism allow for deviations from the principle of lawfulness, and what are the consequences from mechanisms for restricting political powers to do so? In other words, when political institutions resort to unlawful means, does this allow for following reactions to be unlawful, too?

The analysis of these questions will be based on two cases: the violation of the procedure to constitute the Assembly during its constituting session and the misuse of the right to suspensive veto by the President of the Republic of Macedonia. These two cases show us very clearly how unlawful measures taken by political actors, even if they initially seem to be appropriate for resolving a crisis, lead to its perpetuation in the medium and long run instead, and thus undermine the institutions that should be the main actors in overcoming it.

Before we start with the analysis of these two cases, we will first tackle some theoretical questions concerning constitutionalism, legalism, and informal institutions.

CONSTITUTIONALISM, LEGALISM, AND INFORMAL INSTITUTIONS

During the last few years, Macedonia, alongside many countries in Europe and beyond, has been faced with crises, not as much of democracy, as rather of liberal constitutionalism. The crisis has reached such a level that the constitutional resilience of developed constitutional systems vis-à-vis the threats to constitutionalism from authoritarian populism is being seriously discussed.[1] While the concepts of representation and majority are not seriously put into question, the principle and the idea that they have to be restricted by law is often intensely disputed. More and more politicians not only promote,[2] but also apply the idea of establishing illiberal democracy,[3] as a consequence of their resistance, „for democracy's sake", to restrictions of their political power.[4] It is the „liberal" in liberal democracy that stands for the ideas, values and principles that result in the essence of constitutionalism, namely, the restriction of political power by law.[5] Hence, constitutionalism means that law does not depend on those bestowed even with the greatest political power.[6] Even though often disputed,[7] the assertion that constitutionalism is one of the key preconditions

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1 See e.g.: Tom Ginsburg, Aziz Z. Huq and Mila Versteeg, 'The Coming Demise of Liberal Constitutionalism' 85 *The University of Chicago Law Review* 2018, p. 239-255, as well as the papers from the symposium dedicated to this topic in the same issue. Also, Dieter Grimm, 'How can a democratic constitution survive an autocratic majority', *Verfassungsblog,* 13.12.2018; Christoph Grabenwarter, 'Constitutional Resilience', *Verfassungsblog,* 6.12.2018; Mattias Kumm, 'How populist authoritarian nationalism threatens constitutionalism or: Why constitutional resilience is a key issue of our time', *Verfassungsblog,* 6.12.2018

2 The first official speech in which Viktor Orban promotes illiberal democracy was held on 26 July 2014, available at https://budapestbeacon.com/full-text-of-viktor-orbans-speech-at-baile-tusnad-tusnadfurdo-of-26-july-2014/

3 Fareed Zakaria, *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad* (W. W. Norton & Company 2007) p. 89-119.

4 Kumm, op.cit.

5 For more on constitutionalism see for instance Larry Alexander, „Constitutionalism", in Christiano, T. and Christman, J. (eds.), *Contemporary Debates in Political Philosophy* (Blackwell Publishing, 2009) p. 283-299; Massimo La Torre, *Constitutionalism and Legal Reasoning: A New Paradigm for the Concept of Law* (Springer 2007) p. 1-12; Russel Hardin, *Liberalism, Constitutionalism and Democracy* (Oxford University Press 1999) p. 80-140; Рената Тренеска-Дескоска, *Конституционализам* (Правен факултет „Јустинијан први"-Скопје 2015) p. 1-14. Mislam deka ne bi trebalo referencite koi se na makedonski da se preveduvaat, tuku da si ostanat vo orginal bidejki vo sportivno se dobiva vpecatok deka se publikacii na angliski. Dopolnitelno na toj nacin se obezbeduva konzistentnost bidejki publikaciite na srpski i slovenecki ne se prevedeni.

6 Åke Frändberg, From Rechtsstaat to Universal Law-State: An Essay in Philosophical Jurisprudence (Springer 2014) p. 96.

7 Jeremy Waldron, 'Constitutionalism – A Sceptical View' in Thomas Christiano and John Christman (eds.) *Contemporary Debates in Political Philosophy* (Wiley Blackwill 2009) 275-276; and Frändberg, op.cit, p. 95.

for establishing a democracy is proven by the current state of affairs.[8] The essence of constitutionalism consists in the legal framework which political power is embedded in, with the aim to protect the individual freedom of people and assure that this power originates from their free will to be governed. The mechanisms of constitutionalism, such as separation of powers, representation, control of compliance with the constitution, rules of proceeding, judicial review of legislative and administrative acts, etc., are institutionalised by the highest legal document of the state: the constitution, and further described and complemented in laws and other legislative acts. This confirms the direct link between constitutionalism and legalism, which represents a normative idea with the concept of legality at its core, according to which the state institutions have to act in accordance with the law and the rules.[9] Otherwise, instead of a tool or mechanism for restricting power, law can be treated like just another strategic alternative for the ones in power to resort to when deemed suitable.[10]

The question arises whether, according to this definition, constitutionalism and legalism have their own limitations, i.e. whether there are any legitimate grounds on which it is possible to deviate from the principle described above. Even in theory, legalism is not understood as absolute, which is why we mention two principles that are restrictively determined. According to the first one, having in mind that legality is a principle, it can be restricted to the benefit of other principles, i.e., if law contradicts certain principles such as legal equality, legal security, or legal accessibility, then, according to the dictum *summum ius, summa iniuria* (supreme law, supreme injustice), the principle of legality will be restricted.[11] According to the second principle, legality is restricted only under exceptional circumstances, e.g. during a state of war or immediately afterwards. When defining such circumstances, extreme caution is required, since it is precisely such broad formulations that can lead to misuse, which is not seldom resorted to as an excuse for unambiguously breaking the law for some higher goal or necessity.[12] In this context, we should emphasise that the well-known Radbruch Formula was developed by Radbruch himself in circumstances that he considered *sui generis*.[13] He thus actually alluded to the admonition which can be applied to the first principle of limitation, too, given that it concerns the relation between principles, i.e. values.[14] Eventually, this Formula of proceeding with

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8   Donald P. Kommers and W. J. Thompson, 'Fundamentals in the Liberal Constitutional Tradition', in Joachim Jens Hesse and Nevil Johnson (eds.) Constitutional Policy and Change in Europe (Oxford University Press 1995) p. 38.

9   Neil Maccormick, 'The Ethics of Legalism' 2 *Ratio Juris* 1989, p. 184-185; and Frändberg, op.cit., p. 59.

10 Frändberg, op.cit., p. 62.

11 Gustav Radbruch, 'Gesetzliches Unrecht und übergesetzliches Recht' 1 *Süddeutsche Juristen-Zeitung* 1946, p. 107; and Frändberg, op.cit., p. 90-91.

12 Frändberg, op.cit., p. 91.

13   Radbruch, op.cit. p. 107: "daß der Widerspruch des positiven Gesetzes zur Gerechtigkeit ein so unerträgliches Maß erreicht, daß das Gesetz als „unrichtiges Recht" der Gerechtigkeit zu weichen hat." Only if positive law, i.e. the law of justice, is being contradicted to an unbearable extent, a law is considered unjust.

14 Radbruch, op.cit. Radbruch`s description in his essay clearly comes to this conclusion. Justin Collings, *Democracy's Guardians: A History of the German Federal Constitutional Court 1951-2001* (Oxford University Press 2015), p. 244.

legal injustice, i.e. limitation of legalism, is regulated by the legislative bodies and applied by the courts exclusively.[15]

Constitutionalism and the limitations of legality lead to another question concerning a relatively recent phenomenon, which is the topic of a growing number of scientific studies: informal institutions, or, to be precise, the question whether disrespect of the mechanisms of constitutionalism and breaking the rules indicate the involvement of informal institutions, or whether those are classical cases of non-institutional behaviour. According to Helmke and Levitsky, informal institutions represent rules that are accepted by society, mostly unwritten, conveyed and followed beyond the formally regulated procedures, often aloof from the public eye.[16] There are three cases in which these kinds of institutions usually emerge: 1) if formal institutions and rules are incomplete and do not regulate certain matters; 2) if some goals cannot be reached by means of formal institutions because of existing rules, their ineffectiveness, or their unchangeability; and 3) if goals that are to be reached are not publicly acceptable.[17] Based on whether the informal institutions emerge in the context of efficient of inefficient formal institutions, and whether following informal rules leads to the same results as following the formal ones, informal institutions are divided into four groups: complementary, accommodating, competing, and substitutive.[18]

In the Republic of Macedonia, as Markovikj and Damjanovski point out,[19] the frequent political crises of the recent years and the facilitation by the international community have led to the practice of resolving such crises in meetings of the leaders of the relevant political parties. According to the authors, those meetings are an example of a substitutive informal institution, which, due to the ineffectiveness of the formal institutions when it comes to resolving crises, basically lead to results which are, even if not always, compatible with the results that formal institutions would produce: crisis resolution and system stability, albeit short-term.[20] Meanwhile, the existence of this informal institution prevents the development of a „public constitutional culture", which would include complementary informal institutions who participate in strengthening the efficiency of formal constitutional rules and institutions.[21]

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15 Radbruch, op.cit,, p. 107; and Collings, op.cit, p. 243-245.

16 Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky, 'Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda' 2 *Perspectives on Politics* 2004, p. 727, 731.

17 Helmke and Levitksy, op.cit., p. 730.

18 Helmke and Levitksy, op.cit,, p. 728-730.

19 Nenad Markovikj and Ivan Damjanovski, 'The EU's Democracy Promotion Meets Informal Politics: The Case of Leaders' Meetings in the Republic of Macedonia' 7 *REGION: Regional Studies of Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia* 2018, p. 71-96.

20 Markovikj and Damjanovski, op.cit., p. 92-95.

21 On public constitutional culture, see Sujit Choudhry, 'Resisting democracy backsliding: An essay on Weimar, self-enforcing constitutions, and the Frankfurt School' 7 Global Constitutionalism 2018, p. 71. Analysing Kirchheimer, he points out: „Through iterative political interaction, over time, of living under and managing and settling political disagreement through a constitutional regime, a public constitutional culture can emerge from this shared practice, that both explains and justifies the constitutional framework within which it occurs. This is how the 'existing legal order'– of which the central component must be its constitution – begins as a system of 'factual relations of power' and trans-forms into a 'cosmos of acquired rights'."

For the purpose of this paper, we are not as much interested in the informal institutions as such as we are in the reasons for their emergence, mainly, the ineffectiveness of formal institutions. Hence, the focus lies on the reasons why formal institutions become inefficient and non-reliable, one of which certainly is that the mechanisms of constitutionalism are not respected by those who hold political power. Therefore, when examining informal institutions, we have to carefully distinguish them from non-institutional behaviour, even though both refer to deviations from the formal rules. Clientelism, for example, is a typical informal institution, while abuse of authority and power by state institutions is a typical non-institutional behaviour.[22] But as we will show with respect to Macedonia, it is exactly this non-institutional behaviour that makes formal institutions ineffective and diminishes their authority because of the need to create informal institutions which resume the task of resolving potential crises. It is because of this that all past governments have tried to control and exploit the mechanisms for restricting their power, which should be beyond their reach, or should be reformed, such as the judiciary, the constitutional judiciary, the regulatory bodies, etc., which were made ineffective and non-reliable for resolving constitutional and political crises. The ones who benefit most from this situation are the political parties with the most power and influence, since they create an atmosphere and expectations based on the perception that absolutely everything in the state depends on them and their will. It may seem contradictory, but the disrespect and misuse of formal institutions lead to their inefficiency, which is why, in turn, informal institutions emerge, which would become inopportune if formal institutions were reliable and efficient.

Based on this short theoretical introduction, we will analyse two recent events which have cast doubt on the functioning of constitutionalism in the Republic of Macedonia.

THE CRISIS OF CONSTITUTIONALISM AS REFLECTED IN THE CONSTITUTING SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY AND THE STATE PRESIDENT'S RIGHT TO SUSPENSIVE VETO

During the last few years, especially since the incident in the Assembly on 24 December 2012, so-called Black Monday,[23] there have been innumerable situations which have led to serious questions with respect to the functioning of constitutionalism in the Republic of Macedonia. We will discuss two recent events which are significant with regard to the constitutional and legal system for two reasons: firstly, these events have not been actually resolved by formal or informal institutions, at least not at the time this paper was written, but instead

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[22]   Helmke and Levitksy, op.cit., p. 727.

[23]   More on this event in Nenad Marković and Denis Prešova, 'Izazovi parlamentarne demokracije u Makedoniji' 14 Političke analize 2013, p. 36-43.

by means of non-institutional behaviour. Secondly, due to the character of this paper as well as the space limit, the events themselves need not be explained in detail since they are relatively well-known, leaving room for a detailed analysis of the proceedings and their consequences. The analysis of the two events will be based on three aspects: 1) the question of procedural legitimacy and the resistance to procedural rules and the separation of powers;[24] 2) the relation to institutional pluralism and pluralism of interpretation, especially concerning the interpretation of the Constitution;[25] and 3) the obvious intention to bypass the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Macedonia, the constitutional institution specialised on the control and protection of constitutionalism.

CONSTITUTIONALISM AND THE CONSTITUTIVE SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY

The parliamentary elections in December 2016 were supposed to trigger the resolution of the „captured state", which, seen from today, they did.[26] It did not come as a surprise for anyone that the „capturers" would use all kinds of lawful and unlawful instruments in order to keep their position, but hardly anyone could expect that the resolution would be brought about by the brutal, barbaric incidents in the Assembly on 27 April 2017. The shock from that incident probably accounts for the fact that there was no detailed examination of the events around the constitutive session of the Assembly,[27] which started on 30 December 2016 and actually did not end until 20 February 2018, when three vice presidents were elected.[28] A number of constitutional and legal questions arose from this constitutive session, but were never actually addressed.

First, the question arose whether it was lawful that the constitutive session be presided over by the former President of the Assembly, Trajko Veljanovski.[29] According to Article 63, paragraph 1 of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly,[30] the constitutive session of the Assembly has to be convened within 20 days

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24 On procedural legitimacy, see Kumm, op.cit. On the importance of parliamentary procedures, see Sujit Choudhry, 'Constitutional Resilience to Populism: Four Theses' *Verfassungsblog,* 11.12. 2018 and Jelena von Achenbach, 'No Case for Legal Interventionism: Defending Democracy Through Protecting Pluralism and Parliamentarism' *Verfassungsblog,* 12.12.2018.

25 Miguel Poiares Maduro, 'Three Claims of Constitutional Pluralism' in Matej Avbelj and Jan Komarek (eds.), *Constitutional Pluralism in the European Union and Beyond* (Hart 2012), p. 80; and Daniel Halberstam, 'Systems Pluralism and Institutional Pluralism in Constitutional Law: National, Supranational and Global Governance' in Matej Avbelj and Jan Komarek (eds.), *Constitutional Pluralism in the European Union and Beyond* (Hart 2012), p. 109-124.

26 EU – European Commission Progress Report Macedonia 2016 COM(2016)715, 9.11.2016, pp. 4,8.

27 For more information on the constitutive session of the Assembly, see Savo Klimovski, Renata Deskoska and Tanja Karakamiševa, *Ustavno pravo* (Prosvetno delo, 2009) p. 375-376; and Svetomir Škarikj and Gordana Siljanovska-Davkova, *Ustavno pravo* (Kultura, 2009), p. 605-606.

28 The vice presidents were elected during the 34th session on 20 February 2018, instead of during the constitutive session, as stipulated by Article 21, paragraph 2 of the Rules of Procedure, considering that it was the first election of vice presidents of the new, i.e. the ninth composition of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia. See the Decision on the Election of the Vice Presidents of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia Nr. 33/18 of 21 February 2018, and the Shorthand Notes from the Thirty-fourth Session of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, held on 20 February 2018, p. 7-8. Actually, the agenda for the constitutive session was defined on 30 December 2016, see the Shorthand Notes from the Constitutive Session of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, held on 30 December 2016, p. 3

29 Shorthand Notes from the Constitutive Session of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, held on 30 December 2016, p. 2.3

30 Rules of Procedure of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia (Official consolidated text), „Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia" Nr. 54/13 of 15 April 2013.

after the elections by the President of the Assembly of the former composition. Only if the outgoing President of the Assembly refuses to do this, the eligible members are responsible for finding an alternative solution, which was actually the case in the two previous compositions of the Assembly. In accordance with these provisions of the Constitution and the Rules of Procedure, if the President of the Assembly of the previous composition convenes the constitutive session, he will preside over it until the newly elected president or one of the vice presidents takes on the duty.[31] This question became acutely relevant because denying Veljanovski's right to preside over the constitutive session was one of the reasons for engaging in the procedure by which the current President of the Assembly, Talat Xhaferi, was elected.

Second, is it in accordance with the Rules of Procedure for Members of the Assembly who were elected from candidate lists of one political party or coalition to form ten different parliamentary groups? This question was relevant with regard to the constitutive session, since Assembly members from the coalition led by VMRO-DPMNE formed ten different parliamentary groups and thus obstructed the session.[32] The answer to this question depends on the exact time it refers to, i.e. whether the parliamentary groups are formed during the constitutive session or afterwards. Namely, Article 33 of the Rules of Procedure and Article 12 of the Law on the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia[33] stipulate that parliamentary groups are not directly linked to a particular party or coalition from whose candidate lists their members are elected. Nevertheless, these provisions foresee that the President of the Assembly, rather than the chairperson, be informed about the formation of a parliamentary group and handed a list with the signatures of the members, the coordinator, and the vice coordinator.[34] According to these provisions, it should be considered that, up to the moment when a parliamentary group is formed, the parliamentary groups are in accordance with the candidate lists from the parliamentary elections. This provision, by the way, can be found in Article 11 of the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly of Slovenia,[35] where it serves as an interim solution until the Assembly is constituted and parliamentary groups are officially formed.[36] Accordingly, we can conclusively ascertain that the formation of ten parliamentary groups from the candidate lists of the coalition led by VMRO-DPMNE before the end of the constitutive session, i.e. before the President

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31 Article 9, paragraph 2 of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly: „The Member of the Assembly who convened the first session (the chair-person) shall preside over the Assembly's session until the newly elected president or one of the vice presidents takes on the duty." When the constitutive session was convened, Trajko Veljanovski had been elected into the new composition of the Assembly.

32 Svetomir Škarikj, „One parliamentary group instead of ten", 21 August 2017, available at http://respublica.edu.mk/blog/2017-08-21-10-28-31

33 Law on the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, „Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia", Nr. 104/09 of 20 August 2009.

34 Article 12, paragraph 5 of the Law on the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia: „(5) The Parliamentary Group shall present to the President of the Assembly a list signed by each member of the Group, the Coordinator and his/her deputy."

35 Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly of 2 April 2002 (consolidated text) (PoDZ-1 – Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia No. 35/02), available at: https://imss.dz-rs.si/imis/71944837315a42bb600e.pdf

36 Article 16, paragraphs 28-31 of the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia

of the Assembly was elected, was not in line with the legal and procedural provisions.[37]

Third, and most important for the aim of this paper: was the current President of the Assembly elected according to the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia? This question includes a number of other legal predicaments that have not been resolved. Namely, the election of the President of the Assembly not being based on the Rules of Procedure was justified with references to previous obstructions and the unlawful behaviour of the constitutive session's chairman. However, the most disputable question with regard to the obstructions of the constitutive session of chairman Veljanovski was never pointed out. Namely, according to the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, the only issue to be discussed during the constitutive session is the report of the Verification Committee.[38] All other issues to be decided on during the constitutive session, such as the election of the Verification Committee and the Committee on Elections and Appointments, as well as the election of the President and the Vice Presidents of the Assembly are not discussed, but only decided, i.e. voted on. Accordingly, the chairman had absolutely no right to open a discussion on the election of the Committee on Elections and Appointments,[39] so that he unambiguously violated the Rules of Procedure and thus enabled obstruction of the Assembly's proceedings at its constitutive session. As a direct result of this, the Members of the Assembly were prevented from voting and from running for President or Vice President of the Assembly. On these grounds, it would have been possible to submit a request concerning the protection of rights and freedoms to the Constitutional Court, for example on the prevention of political action or on discrimination based on political grounds concerning the right to execute a public function, based on the offence committed by the chairman, i.e. his unlawful behaviour.

However, this does not deny the fact that the President of the Assembly was not elected according to the Rules of Procedure. First, he was elected before the election of the Committee on Elections and Appointments, which took place as late as 31 May 2017.[40] Second, the President of the Assembly was not elected according to the procedure stipulated by the provisions in Articles 21 – 28 of the Rules of Procedure, and the chairman was not presiding over the election. Third, the President of the Assembly was elected after the twentieth continuation of the constitutive session was closed, hence there is no official confirmation, neither of the election nor of the number of Members of the Assembly who

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37 See Škarikj, op.cit

38 Article 14 of the Rules of Procedure of the Republic of Macedonia

39 Shorthand Notes from the First Continuation of the Constitutive Session of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, held on 27 March 2017, p. 1: „I am opening a discussion on the Proposal on the election of a president, vice presidents, members, and deputy members of the Committee on Elections and Appointments of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia."

40 Decision on the election of the President of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, Nr. 53/17 of 8 May 2017; Decision on the election of a president, vice president, members and deputy members of the Committee on Elections and Appointments of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, Nr. 64/17 of 31 May 2017.

voted for the election of the President.[41] The decision was merely published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia.

This depiction of the events around the constitutive session and the election of the President of the Assembly shows that the behaviour of the session's chairman was unlawful, as well as was the election of the President of the Assembly, as an answer to the non-procedural obstructions. There was no attempt at institutional resolution of the unlawful proceedings of the session during the nearly one month that passed from the opening of the discussion by the chairman on 27 March 2017 until the election of the President. On the contrary, non-institutional behaviour was opted for. As a reaction to the unlawful proceedings, an unlawful election of the President of the Assembly took place, which was neither harshly criticised nor disputed, most probably due to the startling intrusion into the Assembly which took place immediately after the election on 27 April 2017. Based on previous practice in resolving constitutional and political crises, if this incident had not occurred, the development of events at the Assembly would have probably lead to another meeting of leaders, as a regular informal institution, which the crisis would have been resolved at. However, even if it may seem that the blockade was overcome with the election of the President, this will lead to medium and long term consequences regarding its procedural legitimacy because of the obvious violation of the Rules of Procedure and the clear intention not to involve the Constitutional Court. Should the Decision on the election of the President be disputed now, this would not be very likely to be fruitful, since cancelling the Decision would lead to serious consequences for legal security, given that the President has signed a great number of legislative acts of the Assembly, the legal validity of which would be put into question. Even if it is obvious that the President of the Assembly is supported by the absolute majority of the Members of the Assembly, and a decision on cancelling the election by the Constitutional Court would not have much influence on this, it would be important for stating the violations of the Rules of Procedure in the case of the election of the President of the Assembly, which should be considered in the future. Nevertheless, the arguments listed above can only have a secondary, that is, persuasive character, since a decisive resolution can only be made by the competent institutions, which has not been the case with these events, so that all the legal predicaments remain unresolved.

CONSTITUTIONALISM AND THE STATE PRESIDENT'S RIGHT TO SUSPENSIVE VETO

The second case that vividly illustrates the crisis of constitutionalism is linked to the right of the President of Macedonia to suspensive veto and his constitutional

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41 Shorthand Notes from the Twentieth Continuation of the Constitutive Session of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, held on 27 April 2017, p. 32.

competency to promulgate laws.[42] After the suspensive veto had not been used for nine years, the President finally dared to exercise this constitutional right. Moreover, he even managed twice to misuse another right of his linked to the veto, namely the promulgation of laws: first, in the case of the Law on the Use of Languages, and second, in the case of the Law on the Ratification of the Prespa Agreement. Nevertheless, instead of sanctioning this obvious misuse by initiating a procedure before the Constitutional Court, or by preventing it, at least after the first time, by amending the Law on the Assembly, which stipulates the period within which the President has to declare whether he will sign the decree for promulgation of the law at hand, the President of the Assembly decided to have the laws published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia.[43] Thus, he engaged in unlawful behaviour once more, and again with the excuse that this was done as a consequence of a previous act, now the State President's violation of the Constitution. Having in mind that the „vaudevillisation" of the scientific discourse has left us with eclectic arguments and a distortion of the elementary terms of constitutional law, a detailed explanation is indispensable.

Concerning the vote on the two laws mentioned, the State President decided to exercise his constitutional right to suspensive veto stipulated by Article 75 of the Constitution. In both cases, the President essentially disputed the laws' compatibility with the Constitution and decided not to sign the respective decrees for promulgation.[44] When the laws were reassessed by the Assembly, they were voted on with an absolute majority of the total number of Assembly members, as stipulated by Article 75, paragraph 2 of the Constitution. Based on that same provision, the State President was then obliged to sign the decrees for promulgation of these two laws. However, he refused to do so, thus violating the constitutional provision from Article 75, paragraph 3.

As for the Law on the Use of Languages, the President named two reasons for his decision not to sign it:[45] firstly, he referred to the breach of the guarantee that Zoran Zaev, now Prime Minister, would not put at risk the Republic of Macedonia's sovereignty, which the President had requested and been granted as a precondition for entrusting him with the formation of a government. This justification is especially disputable, since such a conditionality is not mentioned anywhere in the Constitution, nor has there ever been any precedent in the

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42 Article 75 of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia. For the problematic aspects of this institutions, see Denis Preshova, „The Naked, the Blind and the Ignorant: The Suspensive Veto Power of the President and the Institutional Balance in the Political System of the Republic of Macedonia", *Political Thought* Nr. 45 (Konrad Adenauer Foundation, March 2014), p. 9-17.

43 Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia Nr. 7/19 of 14 January 2019.

44 Speech by the President of the Republic of Macedonia Dr. Gjorge Ivanov, 17. January 2018; Letter to the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, Nr. 08-58/2, 17 January 2018, with attached statements on the text of the Law on the Use of Languages. All documents available at: http://pretsedatel.mk/mk/2011-06-17-09-55-07/2011-07-19-10-40-39/4754-obrakanje.html?qh=YToxOntpOjA7czoxNjoi0ZjQsNC30L-jRhtC40YLQtSI7fQ%3D%3D Letter by the President of the Republic of Macedonia, Dr. Gjorge Ivanov, to the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, 26 June 2018, available at: http://pretsedatel.mk/mk/2011-06-17-09-55-07/2011-09-03-11-41-54/5242-2018-06-26-07-41-28.html?qh=YToxOntpOjA7czoyNDoi0YDQsNGC0LjRhNC40LrQsNGG0LjRmNCwIjt9

45 Speech by the President of the Republic of Macedonia Dr. Gjorge Ivanov, 14. March 2018, available at: http://pretsedatel.mk/mk/2011-06-17-09-55-07/2011-07-19-10-40-39/5114-obrakjanjeprmzakonzajazici.html?qh=YToxOntpOjA7czoxNjoi0ZjQsNC30LjRhtC40YLQtSI7fQ%3D%3D

constitutional practice.[46] Secondly, the President referred to the violation of the procedural provisions during the adoption of the Law on the Use of Languages, as well as during its review after his suspensive veto. Namely, and quite legitimately, he quoted the misuse of the „European flag" and the violation of the Assembly procedure during the review, with the session being held after the foreseen period of 30 days, and without the possibility to discuss it, nor to examine the large number of amendments that had been proposed following the President's comments.[47] The State President did not make a statement on the second vote on the Law on the Ratification of the Prespa Agreement, as he had done in case of the Law on the Use of Languages.

After months of quarrels and tactical manoeuvres, both laws were published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia on 14 January 2019, after having been submitted by the President of the Assembly, together with the decrees on their promulgation, and without the State President's signature. Hence, the conditions of the publication cannot be compared to the case with the Law on the Use of Flags on 9 July 1997, which was signed by the President of the Assembly for the State President who was absent at the time.[48] In this case, the Constitutional Court did not refer to Article 75 of the Constitution, but to Article 82, „permanent inability of the President of the Republic of Macedonia to perform his duties", given that temporary inability is not a constitutional category as it is in the constitutions of some other countries.[49] However, in the current situation, the President of the Assembly violated not only Article 75, paragraph 2, but also Article 52, paragraph 2.

In both cases, the violation was justified with reference to previous unlawful proceedings. Neither the State President nor the Assembly tried to overcome the situation by means of the formal institutions, above all, by initiating a procedure before the Constitutional Court.

By not signing the decree after the second voting in both cases, the State President transformed his suspensive veto into an absolute veto, thus usurping the legislative function of the Assembly. More precisely, under such circumstances, whether a law is adopted and published is not the result of the Assembly majority's will, but the State President's, which contradicts the Constitution.

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46 Article 90, paragraph 1 of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia. Klimoski, Deskoska and Karakamiševa, op.cit., p 446-447 ; and Škarikj and Siljanovska-Davkova, op.cit., p. 653.

47 Article 135, paragraph 4, and Article173, paragraphs 2 and 3 of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, and Article 38, paragraphs 3 and 4 of the Law on the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia.

48 With Decision U. Nr. 141/1997 and U. Nr. 146/1997 of 18 November 1998, the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Macedonia repealed the Decree on Promulgation and the Law on the Use of Flags.

49 E.g., Article 106 of the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia. For details, see: Franc Grad, Igor Kaučič and Saša Zagorc, Ustavno Pravo (Pravna Fakulteta, Univerziteta v Ljubljani 2016), p. 464-465. Another example is Article 97 of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia.

Meanwhile, even if the State President argued that the Constitution was formally and substantially violated (lastly in his written statement on 15 January 2019),[50] he never even attempted to initiate for those constitutional and legal predicaments to be presented before the Constitutional Court. He simply did not turn to the Constitutional Court, even when the laws were already published and put into force. That same Court had previously tried to make it possible for the State President to grant amnesties without any previous procedures, and two judges of the Court's current composition were proposed by him.

DID THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA CONTRADICT THE CONSTITUTION?

The public attempts to justify the violation of the constitutional provision for promulgation, i.e., that the President of the Republic of Macedonia did not sign the decree, were neither well-founded nor balanced, to say the least. The most frequent assertion was that the President has the right to a „pocket veto" as does the President of the USA.[51]

This is proof of poor knowledge, not only of the political system of the USA, but also of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia. The US pocket veto is solely due to the fact that the Congress sessions are limited. Hence, if the ten day period provided to the US President for considering whether he will veto a bill elapses after a Congress session has ended, the President has no-one to return the vetoed bill to, so that it remains in his „pocket".[52] Additionally, the pocket veto can be used only if the President has not previously exercised his right to suspensive veto. In Macedonia, however, according to Article 66 of the Constitution, the Assembly is in continuous session, and in the case at hand, the State President had already used his right to suspensive veto when he refused to promulgate the laws. Hence, there are no grounds for claiming that a pocket veto was an option.

It was also asserted that constitutional and legal practice has „established case law"[53] [sic], referring to the cases of President Gligorov, who had refused to sign a law that had been adopted with a qualified majority, and the case of President Trajkovski, who had refused to sign the Law on Assembly Members after it had been voted on a second time with an absolute majority. By no means can it be

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50 Written statement of the President of the Republic of Macedonia, Dr. Gjorge Ivanov, 15 January 2018, available at: http://pretsedatel.mk/mk/2011-06-17-09-55-07/2011-09-03-11-41-54/5444-2019-01-15-11-27-49.html?qh=YToxOntpOjA7czoxNjoi0ZjQsNC30LjRhtC40YLQt-SI7fQ%3D%3D

51 Dimitar Apasiev, Smuggling bilingualism and the „pocket veto" of the President, 14 March 2018, available at: http://respublica.edu.mk/blog/2018-03-14-08-47-51

52 On the pocket veto, see e.g.: Robert Neal Webner, 'The Intersession Pocket Veto and the Executive-Legislative Balance Power' 73 *Georgetown Law Journal* 1985, p. 1185-1206; Ronald D. Rotunda and John E. Nowak, *Treatise on Constitutional Law: Substance and Procedure* (Thomson West 2007) 10.7(d) The Pocket Veto; Vučina Vasović, *Savremene Demokratije I* (Služben Glasnik 2006) p. 190-191; Klimovski, Deskoska and Karakamiševa, op.cit., p. 358-359.

53 Apasiev, op.cit.

denied that the Constitution was violated in both cases,[54] just as it was violated in the case of President Ivanov.

Another argument was related to the character, or the nature, of the decree for promulgation of a law: even though often referred to as having a constitutive character,[55] which is a plausible position,[56] this does not correspond with the Constitutional Court decision, defining it as a general declarative legal provision.[57] Hence, it is problematic to compare it to the Constitutional Court of Slovenia's decision of 14 June 2001, which states that the President of Slovenia, who does not have the right to suspensive veto, can refuse to promulgate a law during the time frame stipulated in Article 91 only if different aspects of the legislative procedure are formally unconstitutional.[58]

DID THE PRESIDENT OF THE ASSEMBLY CONTRADICT THE CONSTITUTION?

Some of the experts who were in favour of publishing the laws with a decree for promulgation not signed by the State President referred to the latter's previous unconstitutional proceeding for justifying their arguments. They mainly claimed that those proceedings had created conditions of „lawlessness", and that accepting them would mean to consider them as „justice" and, thus, to undermine the Constitution. Because of that, the argument continues, the institutions had to act, in this case the Assembly, since it is given priority by the Constitution.[59] Two aspects show that this argument is contradictory and unconvincing.

Firstly, as in the previous case, it is persistently not comprehended that one unlawful procedure (and not „lawlessness", which, according to Radbruch, is something different)[60] cannot be justified referring to an anterior one. This would obviously mean that the chain of unlawful procedures continues, however, those procedures cannot be defined in any other way. Nonetheless, it is this

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54 Svetomir Škarikj, Naučno tolkuvanje: Ustav na Republika Makedonija (Kultura 2014) p. 336.

55 Apasiev, op.cit.

56 These arguments were quoted more than four years ago by Preshova, op.cit., p. 16-17.

57 Constitutional Court of the Republic of Macedonia, Decision U.Nr. 175/2012 of 13.02.2013. This definition was also adopted by Škarikj and Siljanovska-Davkova, op.cit., p. 649-650. Compare to the statement of Svetomir Škarikj during the TV emission *Faktor magazin*, when he was referring to the constitutive character of the decree: „But this will not solve the problem, because then the largest obstacle for the Law to enter into force will appear, and that is the Constitutional Court. If the Law is published with a flawed decree, the Constitutional Court could state that such a legal act cannot be taken into consideration since it is not a law." However, the law was published and entered into force, and now it has to be examined whether this was done as foreseen by the Constitution.

58 Constitutional Court of Republic of Slovenia, U-I-104/01, 14 June 2001. See especially Article 28: „The promulgation is an act by which it is established that the law in question has been made through the participation of all the constitutionally determined participants; it is an act by which it is established that the law has been adopted by the authorised body in the prescribed procedure, that the law has actually been made, and that the law therefore exists." For this decision, see also Grad, Kaučič and Zagorc, op.cit, p. 471-472. This actually confirms the statement of Miodrag Jovičić, Ustav i ustavnost (Služben glasnik 2006), p. 408-409. On page 408, he points out: „The promulgation has basi-cally become an act of verifying the legal validity of a law, and it officially confirms its wording (by signing the original adopted legal text)".

59 Ljubomir D. Frčkoski, Gargamel and the surgical nurse, 16 January 2019, available at: https://www.libertas.mk/gargamel-i-sestrata-instru-mentarka/

60 Radbruch, op.cit., p. 107.

chain that is being applied for discrediting the mechanisms of constitutionalism, i.e. the instruments for restricting political power. Those same arguments were referred to by President Ivanov for not signing the decrees, even if the laws had been voted on in the Assembly for a second time. Additionally, under the given circumstances, the President of the Assembly violated not only Article 75, paragraph 2, but also Article 52, paragraph 1, which stipulates that laws are published within no more than seven days. According to Article 68, paragraph 1, indent 2, it is the Assembly that adopts laws. Had both laws been published within seven days after they were adopted, and not ten and six months later, at least these provision would not have been violated.

The arguments that justify the unconstitutional proceedings of the State President also reveal the position of anti-pluralism,[61] that is, they deny institutional and interpretative pluralism,[62] according to which the Constitution defines the mechanism for resolving conflicts that have arisen from contradictory interpretations of constitutional provisions by different institutions. It is the Constitutional Court that has to limit the room for manoeuvres when it comes to justifying violations of the constitutional and legal norms due to interpretative pluralism.

The Constitutional Court will have to deal with the question sooner or later, in one way or another. However, having in mind its previous practice, it is very likely that it will refrain from answering the question whether the State President violated the Constitution, thus leaving room for the situation to be repeated.

Secondly, the interpretation that the Constitution gives the Assembly some kind of priority which justifies unconstitutional publishing of laws is not acceptable.[63] The President of the Assembly is not in the position to give the State President a deadline or to accept one, it is the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia which is. Hence, it is not the President of the Assembly, nor the Assembly itself that decides on violations, but the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Macedonia. Attempts at justifying the denial of this fact by questioning the qualification of the constitutional judges or referring to the lack of the institution's credibility and authority cannot be considered valid, since three members of the Court's current composition were named by the current majority in the Assembly, which, moreover, has not initiated any reform of the institution. It seems that this is a way of deliberately exerting negative influence on the (already hardly existent) credibility and authority of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Macedonia, with the aim of neutralising its potential limitation of

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61 Kumm, op.cit.

62 Maduro, op.cit., p. 80; and Halberstam, op.cit., p. 109-124.

63 Statement by Svetomir Škarikj during the TV emission *Faktor magazin*: „The President of the Assembly can sign the Law on the Use of Languages and submit it to the Official Gazette with the explanation that the President of the Republic of Macedonia violated the Constitution, since, as the speaker of the legislative branch, he is obliged to submit the Law for publication, given that every citizen, including Ivanov, is obliged to respect the Constitution."

the Assembly majority's will. That is why the practice of trusting institutions only when they are entirely controlled by the political power has to be stopped.

The same contradiction can be seen from Škarikj`s position, who, directly addressing President Ivanov, claims that:

> „If you do not sign the decrees, the laws will end up in the „Official Gazette" anyway. This is due to the Constitution (Article 51), which is directly applied and has to be respected by everyone, including you. That is why the laws will be brought to the „guillotine" before the Constitutional Court."[64]

Article 51, paragraph 2 of the Constitution states that everyone is obliged to respect the Constitution and the laws, which certainly includes the President of the Assembly. Thus, Škarikj`s statement applies to him, too.

We know that at least some of the violations of the legal rules will be brought before the Constitutional Court when considering this constitutional and legal question. However, we must not be misled to believe that the question will be resolved there, since we know that, whenever issues that are touchy with regard to ethnicity and identity are discussed, the constitutional judges mainly vote along the lines of ethnicity, and, on the same grounds, any further voting will lead to appeals to disrespect the Constitutional Court's decision. Apart from that, the Constitutional Court might have to take the sensitive decision on the ratification of an international agreement that will very soon enter into force. This could lead us into another round of tense political negotiations, mostly conducted along informal channels of political decision and action. In the end, this is very likely to further undermine the efficiency and authority of the institutions. Moreover, all political parties would once again see their general positions confirmed. However, consistent compliance with the law could serve as a basis for building complementary informal institutions for establishing common values and expectations about adhering to formal rules, which would strengthen the latter[65] and exercise positive influence on the development of political and legal culture in the Republic of Macedonia.

CONCLUSION

The crisis of constitutionalism on the European and global scale, as of late, has been raising significant academic and scientific interest, even in the developed democracies. Although we are constantly facing a crisis of constitutionalism in the Republic of Macedonia, dealing with it is not being taken very seriously, so that problems in our constitutional and legal political practice are being

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64   Svetomir Škarikj, 'Appeal to Ivanov to refrain from the unconstitutional pocket veto', 04 July 2018, available at: http://respublica.edu.mk/blog/2018-07-04-10-54-18

65   Helmke and Levitsкy, op.cit., p. 729.

repeated. „Unscientific lessons" are also a result of the vaudevillisation of the scientific and professional discourse, characterised by various types of disinformation and eclecticism in the arguments which serve other goals than dealing with the threats to constitutionalism. Thus, every political government has had ample room for justifications when acting outside the institutions if this meets their interests, which are often interlinked with their wish to evade the restriction of their power. Two such cases of direct violation of constitutional norms have been the subject of this paper: the unlawful proceedings related to the constitutive session of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia and to the suspensive veto of the State President. Analysing the dynamics of the relations between formal and informal institutions and, what is even worse, non-institutional behaviour, we attempted to show how serious the problems of constitutionalism are, in order to fundamentally approach its mechanisms and their reactivation. Judging by previous experience, the events of the past twenty years in the Republic of Macedonia are very easily forgotten, and the capacity for resolving new political and constitutional crises gets weaker every time. The signs of the crisis have been discernible for quite some time; we will have to see to which extent, with our political and legal culture and awareness, we will succeed in recognising them and reacting accordingly.

Short Biographies

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Nenad Markovikj
Dragan Gocevski

OBSERVATIONAL ANALYSIS OF POPULAR CONCEPTION OF CLIENTELISM IN MACEDONIA

INTRODUCTION

Clientelism is a worldwide phenomenon with emblematic examples appearing in in Southeast Europe. Several quantitative and qualitative studies have been devoted to the study of clientelism, all pointing to the practice being widespread in the region, in different forms and with varying intensity, in particular societies in Southeast Europe. The Republic of Macedonia is no exception, given that clientelist practices can be traced in different segments of society.

Reaching back to Roman times, clientelism is usually defined through the perspective of a relation between a stronger and a weaker agent (patron and client), usually involving a corrupt two-way relation of favours and counter-favours. The exchange of favours and counter-favours can relate to material goods, influence, power, or any social good that can be understood as a

commodity. It also involves a direct relation, predominantly between two people, but can involve third parties as well. The context of clientelist relations is usually the scarcity of a certain resource in society, which a number of people is interested in, but not all have access to. Being often used as a cooptation mechanism for marginal populations, it usually involves an asymmetrical relation of a powerful patron and a socially deprived client. As a practice, it is present both in authoritarian, totalitarian and democratic societies, and is tightly linked to the phenomenon of informality.

The article examines qualitative data related to perceptions of the occurrence of clientelism in the Republic of Macedonia. Additionally, it examines the personal involvement in clientelist practices in various social spheres. The article analyses descriptive statistics (frequencies), with the aim to inform the reader on the current perceptions of clientelist practices and the involvement in clientelist practices in Macedonian society. The text also analyses the gap between the perceptions and the personal experience in different social spheres. It is based on quantitative data gathered through the project "INFORM: Closing the gap between formal and informal institutions in the Balkan."

MEANING AND CONCEPTS OF CLIENTELISM

Early research on clientelism, from the 1960s to the 1980s, sparked a debate on the substance, meaning and impact of clientelist ties.[1] Later studies were more isolationist, explaining individual cases with different levels of analysis rather than contributing to a common understanding of what clientelism actually 'is' and 'how' it influences society.[2]

Earliest mentions of the term 'clientelism' can be dated back to ancient Rome during the early Republic period. It was used to describe a relationship between a *patrocinium* and *clientelae,* or patron and clients. The term was in use throughout the Roman imperial period. Some medieval historians referred to this type of relationship as bastard feudalism, a reference found in vernacular Mediterranean speech and Latin America. Other cultures used different but similar phrasings to describe this relationship.[3]

The Roman Empire and feudal Europe were built on exchange relationships. The emergence and dissemination of civil rights (primarily active and passive election) was juxtaposed to clientelist rivalry between political parties. During

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1 Essays on clientelism in: eds. Steffen W. Schmidt, Laura Guasti, Carl H. Landé and James C. Scott. *Friends, Followers, and Factions: A Reader in Political Clientelism.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); definitions proposed by: Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Luis Roniger. *Patrons, Clients and Friends: Interpersonal Relations and the Structure of Trust in Society.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984);

2 Tina Hilgers. *Clientelism in Everyday Latin American Politics* (US: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 9;

3 Luis Roniger, "Modern Patron–Client Relations and Historical Clientelism: Some Clues from Ancient Republican Rome", *Archives européennes de sociologie* 24(1)/(1983), 63–95; Luis Roniger, "Patron-Client Relations." *The International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioural Sciences*, edited by N. Smelser and P. Baltes, vol. 16. (London: Elsevier 2001), 11118–111120; Suzana Corzo Fernández, *El clientelismo político. El plan de empleo rural en Andalucía, un estudio de caso.* (Sevilla, Spain: Universidad de Granada, 2002);

the 20th century, US cities were governed by political partisan machines, utilizing clientelist patronage to co-opt immigrant population. Wholesaling votes via charity campaigns or the threat of political or geographic persecution by influential groups and individuals is the hallmark of contemporary political exchange in post-industrial democracies. Pre-colonial African kingdoms, Indian principalities, Latin American civilizations and South Asian family networks relied on exchange. The powerful offered material benefits, protection from natural disasters and enemies in return for accepting (and ultimately supporting) their rule. Colonizers throughout the world established patronage ties to local warlords (leaders), enabling them to subdue the local populace with minimum man power.[4] Following independence from colonizers, state leaders who failed to maintain control through legitimate institutions used clientelist-patronage relationship with local leaders (powerbrokers) to sustain political stability.[5]

Depending on how we read it, or how an author describes it, clientelism might be mistaken for a different type of relationship, or simply called otherwise: merit badges (ribbons), privileges, appointments to public office (management boards of public institutions), etc. Groups who typically use these euphemisms are party sympathizers, party activists. and staff in political campaigns.[6] It is interesting to note that people typically ascribe clientelism to societally unacceptable behaviour and actions that are not in accordance with law, whilst they find addressing exchange relations acceptable (favourable), although clearly reflecting a *quid-pro-quo* interaction.[7] Clear examples of corruption in publicized scandals are recognized as clientelism and commonly not justified by the general public. Meanwhile, party supporters that donated money during campaigns, if nominated for public office of any kind, do not recognize this type of exchange as clientelism, because they (consciously or not) consider they earned it.

A specific of clientelism as an exchange of power, influence and access to goods and services is directness. Clientelism is a personal link between a patron, a broker, and a client. Exchange schemes are relatively long lasting, between public office holders, their parties, and citizens and businesses. Citizens who provide votes in return for access to excludable/scarce services or positions establish personal contacts with patrons/brokers.[8] When citizens vote for a party because of shared values and genuine trust in their representatives, this is not clientelist interaction because the voters do not feel they are personally owed something,

4   Nadeau K., "Peasant Resistance and Religious Protests in Early Philippine Society: Turning Friars Against the Grain." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41(1)/ (2002), 75–85; C. Newbury, *Patrons, Clients, and Empire: Chieftaincy and Over-rule in Asia, Africa, and the Pacific*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); P. Axel T., "Reciprocity and Statehood in Africa: from clientelism to kleptocracy." *International Review of Economics* 55(1–2)/ (2008), 209–227.

5   J. S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World.* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988); and Hilgers *Clientelism in Everyday Latin American Politics*, 8;

6   Ibid, 28;

7   Random non-probable convenience sample, due to the small sample size attitude expressed represent the authors impression and should not be used as reference for conclusions;

8   J. Hopkin, "Conceptualizing Political Clientelism: Political Exchange and Democratic Theory", Paper prepared for *APSA annual meeting*, Philadelphia, 31.8.2006, Panel 46-17 '*Concept Analysis: Unpacking Clientelism, Governance and Neoliberalism*' (2006), 5.

nor are incumbents knowledgeable of who (personally) voted for them. In a clientelist exchange, the client considers his patron or broker personally indebted to him for the support provided, by securing access to a scarce good or service. Selective approach to goods/services that are hard to come by may include aiding clients on the labour market, e.g. employment in the public sector.[9] An illustrative example of this practice from recent history was when Jacques Chirac, during his term as mayor of Paris, 'allegedly' employed members of his party in the town hall who never appeared to work, and worked for the party instead. A similar situation was observed in the Austrian government before the 1980s; the Spanish Socialist Party appointed 25.000 persons to posts, completely bypassing formal employment procedures etc.[10]

When discussing the motivation for citizens to enter a 'tit-for-tat' exchange relationship with a person who holds or aspires to a public office, we must understand that, what is offered and sought in return is support or loyalty for something that cannot be obtained easily or at all along 'formal' systemic channels. In other words, the motivation for clientelism is often scarcity. Scarcity is commonly defined as limited accessibility to sought-after goods.[11] The concept of scarcity applies an individual's power to appropriate some or all products or services with the means at his disposal. Typically, such power is granted via political or public office that vests the person with the right to legitimately allocate public (scarce) resources. Interpreting the structure of social action, Talcott Parsons, Bryan Turner and Chris Rojek describe a primary dichotomy of economics as the science of scarcity, and sociology as the science of solidarity. The contrast between scarcity and solidarity explains the theory of system action. If a society is characterized by insurmountable scarcity, then the economic allocation of (limited) resources and political governance over conflicting interests about how to (re)distribute resources is faced with fundamental problems.[12] In order to overcome Marx's class war and Malthusian drought, the conflict over (scarce) resources must be resolved, or at least managed.

Ignoring societal conflict over scarce resources can contribute to the emergence and escalation of socially undesirable processes. In contemporary literature, Thomas Dixon describes several possible outcomes if environmental scarcity is not adequately managed, and all outcomes are ultimately accompanied by violent conflict: 1) disputes as a direct result of local environmental degradation through harmful emissions from factories, excess deforestation, and dam construction; 2) ethnic clashes caused by migration and deep social rifts because

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9   Ibid, 6;

10   Ibid, 10;

11   More on scarcity and clientelism: Dragan Gocevski, *"Voter' Tendecies Towards Clientelism in the Republic of Macedonia"* Yearbook of the Faculty of Law in East Sarajevo, Journal of Legal and Social Sciences, Vol.8. No.1/2017. (East Sarajevo 2017) 1-18;

12   Bryan Turner and Chris Rojek, *Society and Culture, Principles of Scarcity and Solidarity*, (Sage 2001), 87, 89.

of scarce natural resources; 3) civil disobedience (including uprisings, crime, and coups d'état) caused by scarcity of natural resources that impact economic productivity, which in return effect living standards, the behaviour of the elites, and the state's ability to effectively allocate available resources and provide popular needs; 4) inter-state war caused by environmental scarcity, e.g. water; and 5) north-south conflicts (between the developed world and developing countries) over the allocation or adaptation and compensation for global environmental issues, e.g. global warming, ozone layer depletion, threats to biodiversity, and depletion of the fish stock.[13]

Without delving into further discussion on scarcity, or the various forms in which it appears in society, scholars define it as all tangible goods or services individuals find important, for personal or objective reasons, that cannot be easily obtained and are in limited supply. This is most relevant for goods and services that affect the quality of life or the very existence of individuals. Having a "job", as an economic category. may be considered a scarce commodity that affects the quality or existence of a person in modern society, even more so in political systems built around free market economies. We may also accept the premise that, on the free market, the state (or political actors) is expected to provide optimal conditions for supply and demand on the labour market.

UNESCO reports claim that clientelism is, for many, the primary informal mechanism to co-opt the (otherwise) marginalized population, i.e. those 'excluded from the significant share of the population, with limited access to the political arena and the labour market,[14] a most common trait of political systems in developing[15] countries.

An environment with developed clientelist networks may be described as follows: Political officials actively undermine efforts to introduce transparency. Media which are critical of established elites meet legal obstacles, and journalists are often threatened or executed for attempts at revealing corruption. Judges can be bribed, and the most progressive ones are endangered. Citizens conform to political elites' policies until they can no longer afford it. Elites can buy decisions in their favour, whilst the poor are less likely to receive justice in administrative/judicial procedures. Entrenched interests and a culture of family ties, cronyism, clientelism, and nepotism undermine professional bureaucracy. Even statesmen devoted to ideals and legal procedures often find themselves in unavoidable situations of managing public goods under discretion, in order to please privileged groups.[16]

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13 Thomas Homer-Dixon, *Environment, Scarcity and Violence*, (Princeton University Press, 1999).

14 Jane Jenson, "Backgrounder: Thinking about Marginalization: What, Who, and Why?" *Canadian Policy Research Networks, Inc. (CPRN)*, (Ottawa, Canada November 30.2000), 1n1. Available at: www.cprn.org;

15 and third world

16 J. Fox, "Chapter 10 State, Power and Clientelism" in *Clientelism in Everyday Latin American Politics*. Edited by Tina Hilgers (US: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 6, 187-211.

The penetration of informal links within formal networks, i.e. their spill over formal barriers and between organizations, is a well-studied and known fact in business literature. Managers know and accept that the way things are handled is not always a reflection of the formal organization.[17] Students of management are taught the necessity of networking, and universities cell management courses are based on their graduate's potential to build networks.[18]

Clientelist ties as forms of informal relationships within formal networks and formal organizations can survive in and interact with many types of political systems, including democracies. Depending on contextual factors and the level of analysis, clientelism may erode, accompany, or complement democratic processes.[19]

Clientelism entails an asymmetrical but mutually beneficial relationship of exchange and power, a non-universal *quid-pro-quo* between individuals and groups of unequal socio-economic or political status. The span of inequality in status between partners in the asymmetrical relationship varies from case to case and dissipates by democratizing a political system where resources are more broadly distributed. Still, despite these variations, all clientelist relations are governed by mediators and a selective approach to means and markets that 'others' are excluded from. Those in control offer selective access to goods and opportunities, positioning themselves and their supporters at positions in which they can direct assets and services in their favour. Partners are expected to return the instrumental help, politically or otherwise, working for 'some' agent during elections, strengthening the reputation and prestige of the patron. Once a continuous relationship is established, it is no longer important which preceded which, the favour or the 'earned reward'.[20]

Richard Graham described clientelism as the rules of a game based on the principle 'give here, take there'.[21] In the political sphere, clientelism is associated with the use of public assets and elections, encompassing votes and support in return for employment and other privileges for the supporters.

Clientelism restricts the institutionalization of public accountability and mechanisms of government control,[22] creating a state of over-employment with unqualified staff in public services, biased competition in public jobs, and overestimation of their work. Secluded negotiations and private contracts over public assets are typical symptoms of clientelism.[23] These tendencies can be seen

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17 Rob Cross, Nitin Nohria and Andrew Parker, "Six Myths About Informal Networks—And how to overcome them." *MIT Sloan Management Review* 43(3)/(2002): 67–76.

18 This can be verified by a simple internet search for contemporary management courses.

19 Hilgers, *Clientelism in Everyday Latin American Politics*, 25.

20 Ibid, 26.

21 Richard Graham, "Clientelismo na cultura política brasileira. Toma lá dá cá." *São Paulo: Braudel Center Papers* No. 15. (1997).

22 More on restrictive effects of clientelism in representative democracies: Hopkin, "Conceptualizing Political Clientelism", 15.

23 L. Avritzer. *Democracy and the Public Space in Latin America*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002).

in political systems transitioning from a long-term single-party government, like Mexico,[24] or multi-party systems, like Brazil and Colombia.[25]

Clientelism is not uncommon in socialist/communist political systems either. Corruption preceded the fall of the Soviet Union. The Soviet government was plagued by a wide spread corruption, and most public officials regularly accepted bribes, embezzlement, etc. One might say this way of doing things was institutionalized. Informal norms guided the behaviour of officials and citizens. A multitude of hidden patronage networks linked many statesmen to lower officials, lower officials to citizens and other officials within the party, etc. In a very centralized system (of formal and informal networks), 15 Soviet Socialist Republics were held under control by patronage.[26]

Sectors benefiting from clientelist brokerage and patronage consider them pragmatic. They can be useful to advance in competitive social, economic and political environments. In a clientelist environment, even those who benefit from it most criticize it for violating impartiality and universal rights but end up referring to such principles as ideals and dreams.[27]

Regardless of historic, socio-economic and political factors, as well the type of political system, informal patronage networks have proven to be resilient to change. They are so resilient because informal norms are more difficult to change than formal ones. Laws can be amended, institutions transformed, but old habits die hard.[28] Under the circumstances of unstable markets, clientelist ties survive because of the segmented structure of the labour market, the rise of informal jobs (grey economy), and the lack of social security.

In societies with a thriving informal sector (small unregistered businesses, independent or self-employed handymen, construction workers, street salesmen, unregistered house maids, etc.), privatization and outsourcing production worsen the already poor condition of the vulnerable citizens in the labour market, who lose their formal employment status and their social insurance. Those citizens may be more prone to enter a clientelist interaction with political elites in order to gain their support.[29]

Once one understands its strategic political utility in the hands of political agents and brokers, it becomes apparent why clientelism has remained so important

24 J. Fox, "The Difficult Transition from Clientelism to Citizenship: Lessons from Mexico." *World Politics* 46(2)/ 1994, 151–84.

25 Leonardo Avritzer, "The Crisis of Political Representation and the Emergence of New Forms of Political Participation in Latin America." Forthcoming in *Shifting Frontiers of Citizenship in Latin America*, edited by M. Sznajder, L. Roniger and C. Forment. (Leiden, Netherlands and Boston, MA: Brill, 2012), 217-235.

26 Christof H. Stefes, *Undestanding Post-Soviet Transitions, Corruption, Collusion and Clientelism.* (Euro-Asian Series: Palgrave Macmillan 2006)

27 R. Graham, "Clientelismo na cultura política brasileira. Toma lá dá cá." *São Paulo: Braudel Center Papers* No. 15 (1997)

28 More in: James G. March and Johan. P. Olsen, "The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors **in** Political Life", *American Political Science Review*, 78/4/(1984), 734–749; and Christof H. Stefes *Stability vs. Volatility: Why the CIS Is Not a Shining Example for Central Europe*, (Demokratizatsiya, 11/2/2003), 320–323.

29 Rojas Rivera and Angela Milena, *Political Competition in Dual Economies: Clientelism in Latin America*. upgrade paper in PhD in Economics. (University of Warwick: Coventry, UK, March 2009).

in the period of economic and political transformation in countries like Brazil, Argentina, Russia, Poland, Bulgaria or Turkey.[30]

Inclusion into clientelist networks is affected by the economic inequality of households. In poor households, adults might seek more economic certainty before they opt to participate in a political process. When choosing to get involved in political activities, poor households may rather participate in short term actions such as rallies and demonstrations. Economic inequality affects politics in a similar way. In poor countries, providing material goods such as pasta, sugar and clothes[31] may appear more appealing to potential supporters than the promise of human rights and civil liberties.[32]

Macedonia falls under the group of countries where clientelism is a reoccurring topic both among academicians and in the media. A number of international organizations, such as the European Commission and Freedom House, have warned of widespread clientelist practices in their reports, and the topic has been researched in a number of academic articles and books, where Macedonia is considered one of the regional case studies where clientelism is a widespread practice. However, precise studies are needed in order to determine the level of prevalence of such practices in different social segments, both from the perspective of public perceptions as well as the personal involvement of citizens. Measuring these two specific dimensions will not only give results on the categories measured, but also on the possible gap between them (perceptions and involvement).

RESEARCH DESIGN

The text is based on a descriptive, largen observational study, using cross-sectional quantitative data[33] (nation-wide public opinion poll) obtained in the project "INFORM: Closing the gap between formal and informal institutions in the Balkan."[34] The nation-wide public opinion poll was carried out in the Republic of Macedonia with a stratified, representative sample of 1015 respondents (N=1015). The poll took place in Macedonia in May-June 2017. The focus of the opinion poll were informal practices in the country. It is part of a regional research throughout Southeast Europe based on the project.

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30 Ibid; also see: L. Vass, "Public Administration Spoilt: Over-Politicization and Patronage Threatening the Professional Policy Making (Hungarian Case)". Paper presented at the *20th World Congress of the International Political Science Association*, Fukuoka, Japan, (July 9–13.2006); and S. Levitsky, "From Populism to Clientelism? The Transformation of Labor-Based Party Linkages in Latin America." In *Patrons, Clients, and Policies*, edited by H. Kitschelt and S. I. Wilkinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 206–226.

31 Hopkin, "Conceptualizing Political Clientelism", 8.

32 J. Shefner, "Chapter 3, What is Politics for? Inequality, Representation, and Needs Satisfaction Under Clinetelism and Democracy" in *Clientelism in Everyday Latin American Politics*. Edited by Tina Hilgers (US: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) 41-59.

33 Maryann Barakso, Daniel M. Sabet and Brian Schaffner. *Understanding Political Science Research Methods The Challenge of Inference.* (New York and London: Routledge, 2013), 86-89, 105-113, 138-140.

34 This article is based on research carried out in the project "Inform: Closing the Gap between Formal and Informal Institutions in the Balkans." This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 693537.

The study uses part of the data of the project related to perceptions on the occurrence of clientelism, as well as personal involvement in clientelist practices in different social spheres in the Republic of Macedonia. Only descriptive statistics (frequencies) are analysed, trying to inform the reader on the current perceptions on clientelist practices, but also on the involvement in clientelist practices. Additionally, the study analyses the possible gap between the perceptions and the personal experience in different social spheres.

PERCEPTIONS ON THE OCCURRENCE OF CLIENTELISM IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Perceptions on clientelism in a society are as important as the actual occurrence of clientelist practices itself. Perceptions and actual experience are strongly interlinked phenomena, being that experience is not the only factor that influences perceptions. Experiences of family members, relatives, neighbours, friends, etc., as well as the media, vastly shape our perception on clientelist practices. Nevertheless, perceptions on clientelism can be a strong indicator of clientelist practices in a given society, especially if clientelism is widespread in a number of societal spheres, such as education, police, public administration, judiciary etc. Thus, discussing perceptions on clientelism in the case of the Republic of Macedonia seems to be a good starting point for examining personal involvement in clientelist practices. On the one hand, this allows comparability between perceptions and actual occurrences, and on the other, it offers comparability within the category of perceptions, meaning that perceptions apropos different spheres of society can vary. Hence, it is important to see which spheres of society are perceived as being subject to clientelist practices to a greater extent, compared to others.

Our study examines perceptions in five major areas: healthcare, judiciary, educational system (all stages: kindergarten, school, and university), police, and employment. Perceptions on different practices were measured: gifts/favours, financial compensation, relying on personal connections, and, in the case of employment, requests for party membership as a prerequisite for getting a job. The perceptions were measured on a Likert scale, where 10 corresponds with the perception of the largest frequency of occurrence, and 1 of the smallest. Answers from 1 to 5 are grouped as negative answers (specific practice does not occur or occurs infrequently), while answers from 6 to 10 are grouped as positive (the practice occurs frequently, very frequently or constantly).

With respect to the **healthcare sector**, statistical indicators reveal a very high perception of the occurrence of clientelist practices. Bringing gifts or exchanging favours in order to get a better healthcare service has been perceived as a very frequent practice (value 10) in 20,49% of the cases, while the overall corpus of

positive answers is 56,51%. Financial compensation is perceived as happening all the time by 19,66% of the overall statistical mass of respondents, while the sum of positive answers is 53,03%. Utilizing social contacts in order to get better healthcare service is seen as a constant practice by 27,47% of the respondents, while the positive answers amount to a total of 66,39%. It seems that utilizing social contacts is perceived as by far the most popular clientelist practice in the country when it comes to the healthcare sector, followed by gifts/favours and financial compensation.

A similar situation can be described regarding the **judiciary** in the Republic of Macedonia. In the judicial sector, bringing gifts and providing favours is perceived as constantly occurring by 18,20% of the respondents, while the corpus of positive answers is 47,68%. When it comes to direct financial compensation, the percentage of respondents who answered that it occurs all the time is 16,92%, while all positive answers account for 52,43%. Utilizing contacts in the judiciary to influence the courts is perceived as a constant practice by 22,69% of the respondents while, the sum of positive answers is 56,28%. The perceptions, as in the case of healthcare, clearly indicate that utilizing personal connections is the most widespread clientelist practice. Unlike in healthcare, the second most frequently perceived practice is financial compensations, while providing favours and giving gifts comes third.

The **educational system**, measured as a compound indicator of all phases of education (kindergarten, school and university) is visibly less perceived as a nesting ground for clientelist practices, when it comes to getting a place for a child in one of the three educational phases. Namely, giving gifts and exchanging favours is perceived as a constant practice by only 11,77% of the respondents, which is much lower compared to the judiciary and the healthcare sector. The sum of positive answers in this case was 37,63%, which is also dramatically lower than in the two previous spheres. Financial compensation is perceived as a constant practice by 10.52% of the respondents, while the sum of positive answers accounts for 31,39% of overall answers. Speaking of perceptions on using personal contacts, the percentages reveal a noticeable increase. The category of respondents that perceive utilizing contacts as a constantly occurring practice in placing a child in the educational system is 18,69%, while the overall amount of positive answers in this category is above 50% (50,3%). Once again, utilizing personal contacts is perceived as the most widespread clientelist practice when it comes to the educational system, followed by giving gifts/ exchanging favours and direct financial stimuli.

The fourth social segment examined is the **police**. Here, bringing gifts and providing favours in order to avoid paying a ticket or a fine is seen as a constantly occurring practice by 16,74% of the respondents, while the percent of respondents that share the perception of this practice as occurring more or less

frequently amounts to 46,12%. Direct financial stimuli (paying money) in order to avoid paying a ticket or a fine is perceived as constantly occurring by 16,29% of the respondents, with the sum of positive answers being 42,64%. In the third category, utilizing personal connections in order to avoid paying a ticket or a fine, the number of respondents who perceive this as a permanent occurrence is 24,23%, which is noticeably more, compared to giving gifts/exchanging favours or paying money (bribe). The sum of positive answers in this category amounts to 54,14% of the respondents, which is also visibly more than giving gifts/exchanging favours and paying money. Utilizing personal connections (contacts) is once again seen as the most frequently occurring practice, followed by giving gifts/exchanging favours and paying money (bribe).

The last category analysed is **getting a job in the state/public sector or enterprises**. Instead of three, four categories were introduced. Besides giving gifts/exchanging favours, paying money and utilizing personal connections, in order to get a job in a state/public sector or enterprise, the fourth category of being offered membership in a political party was introduced. Anecdotally, becoming a member of a political party in power is a common practice for getting a job in the public sector in return, so this category was introduced as an additional option only in this case. Bringing gifts or providing favours is perceived as a constant practice by 23,80% of the respondents, while the total of positive answers in this category is 56,57% of all respondents (categories 6 to 10). Paying money for getting a job in the public sector is perceived as constantly occurring by 23,66% of the respondents, while the positive answers amount to 53,75% of all answers. Finding contacts for getting a job in the public sector is perceived as a permanently occurring practice by 32,37% of the respondents, while the corpus of positive answers is 66,32%. Both indicators are by far highest in both categories (number of respondents perceiving finding contacts as a constantly occurring practice, as well as overall sum of positive answers) compared to all other cases and categories. However, one category stands above all categories when it comes to the perceptions of clientelist practices, and that is becoming a member of a political party for getting a job in the public sector or enterprise. In this specific category, the percentage of respondents perceiving this practice as constantly occurring amounts to 40,76%, while the total of positive answers of respondents perceiving this practice as a more or less constant amounts to almost 70% (more precisely, 69,19%). This indicates a very wide-spread perception of party membership as a prerequisite for getting a job in the state/public sector or enterprise, by far wider than all other examined spheres.

Several conclusions on the public perceptions on clientelist practices in the Republic of Macedonia is the spheres of healthcare, judiciary, education, police, and employment in the state/public sector can be drawn:

- In almost all examined social segments, excluding the educational system, more than 50% of the respondents perceive frequent or constant occurrence of clientelist practices, meaning that there is an overall negative inclination in perceiving clientelism.
- Finding social contacts is perceived as the most common clientelist practice in all examined social spheres.
- Paying money is perceived as the least present practice in all examined spheres, except the judiciary.
- Party membership for getting a job in the public sector is perceived as the most common practice by far.
- The educational system is perceived as the sphere with the least clientelist practices.
- Out of all examined societal segments, employment in public/state sector or enterprises is perceived as the segment with the highest proliferation of clientelist practices.

PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT IN CLIENTELIST PRACTICES IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Besides the perceptions on clientelism, the personal involvement of citizens is an important aspect of clientelist practices. The importance of measuring personal involvement in clientelist practices (and that of close friends, relatives or colleagues) is important for establishing whether there is a considerable gap between the perceived situation concerning clientelism in a given society, or whether perceptions and personal experience coincide to a certain extent. It also allows for the analysis of different societal spheres and the measurement of gaps between perceptions and clientelist practice, in an effort to further discuss why some societal spheres are perceived as more corrupt than the actual experience of citizens accounts for.

The first set of questions regard the personal involvement of the respondents in various clientelist practices, such as: offering money in exchange for a vote, turning to a party official/influential for help, being requested by a manager to vote for a specific party, and being requested by a manager to attend activities of a party. For those four specific practices, the statistical frequencies indicate the following situation:

The most common practice is turning to a party official/influential: 14% of the respondents admitted having been involved in such a practice.

- The second most common practice is being offered money in exchange for a vote: 7,44% of the respondents admitted having been offered money in exchange for a vote.

- The third most common practice is being requested by a manager to vote for a specific party, which has occurred to 6,03% of the respondents.
- The least present practice is being requested by a manager to attend activities of a party, which has happened to 3,38% of the respondents.

Once again, informal personal contacts are the most present form of clientelist behaviour when it comes to the relation between political party centres and citizens. It is the most common practice, given that 14% of the respondents have turned to party officials and persons with influence for different kinds of favours. Vote buying and pressure from managers for voting or attending party meetings are less present, although far from unfamiliar practices in the Macedonian society. The data indicate both demand and supply for political informality, with the demand being visibly higher than the supply, according to percentages, when considering this micro-context of questions.

Since perceptions of informality in various societal spheres were measured, the following group of questions regard personal involvement (or involvement of relatives, friends or neighbours) in clientelist practices in different societal spheres. The following questions were considered:

- personal involvement (or involvement of relatives, friends or neighbours) in giving gifts, providing favours, paying money or finding a connection in a healthcare institution in order to get a better service;
- personal involvement (or involvement of relatives, friends or neighbours) in giving gifts, providing favours, paying money or finding a connection to influence a court in one's favour;
- personal involvement (or involvement of relatives, friends or neighbours) in giving gifts, providing favours, paying money or finding a connection to get a place for a child in the kindergarten, school or university;
- personal involvement (or involvement of relatives, friends or neighbours) in giving gifts, providing favours, paying money or finding a connection to get a job in a public institution or company.

The sphere where most respondents admit having been involved in clientelist practices is **healthcare**. When it comes to personal involvement (or involvement of relatives, friends or neighbours) in giving gifts, providing favours, paying money or finding a connection in a healthcare institution in order to get a better service, as much as 45,02% of the respondents provided positive answers.

Healthcare is followed by **employment in public companies or institutions,** where personal involvement (or involvement of relatives, friends or neighbours) in giving gifts, providing favour, paying money or finding a connection to get a job in a public institution or company was admitted by 32,17% of the respondents.

Next in line is the **educational system**. Personal involvement (or involvement of relatives, friends or neighbours) in giving gifts, providing favour, paying money or finding a connection to get a place for a child in the kindergarten, school or university was admitted by 27,21% of the respondents.

The societal sphere where respondents tend to be least involved in clientelist practices is the **judiciary**. Namely, personal involvement (or involvement of relatives, friends or neighbours) in giving gifts, providing favours, paying money or finding a connection to influence court was admitted by a quarter of the respondents, or, more precisely, 25,38%.

It seems that perceptions on clientelism in different societal spheres and the involvement in clientelist practices are not fully congruent. Namely, the perception of the employment sector as being the most prone to clientelist practices does not match the personal involvement in clientelist relations, where the healthcare system seems to be the ring-leader in clientelist practices. Also, the perception that the educational system is least contaminated by clientelist practices does not match the personal involvement indicator, while, in fact, the judiciary is the societal sphere with the smallest number of respondents who admit having been involved in clientelist practices. However, this should be analysed with reserve due to the fact that the contact of the population (including the examined respondents) with the judiciary is far more sporadic, compared to healthcare or the educational system. Additionally, when it comes to personal involvement, the difference between the judiciary and the educational sphere is very small (less than 2%), which indicates similar perceptions by the respondents, which is noticeably lower than, for instance, in the case of the healthcare system.

CONCLUSIONS

Clientelist perceptions and practices in specific societies have been a major interest of political science and sociology during the last two decades. In this regard, the region of Southeast Europe offers fertile ground for the research on clientelist practices, given that studies indicate that clientelist practices are widespread the region. The Republic of Macedonia is no exception to the rule, with quantitative studies confirming the initial interest of this article: the perceptions on clientelism in the Macedonian society, the practices that people are involved in, as well as the possible gap between the perceptions and the practices. Based on a quantitative study and a nation-wide opinion poll implemented in 2017, the article analysed the three elements (perceptions, practices, possible gap) related to clientelism, in the spheres of healthcare, judiciary, the education system, the police and the public sector employments, and came to several conclusions.

Frequent or constant occurrence of clientelist practices is perceived with regard to almost all examined social spheres. Additionally, finding social contacts is perceived as the most common clientelist practice in all examined social spheres, while paying money is perceived as the least present practice in all examined spheres, except in the judiciary. As expected, party membership for getting a job in the public sector is perceived as the most common practice, while the educational system is perceived as being least prone to clientelist practices. Opposite to that, employment in public/state sector or enterprises is perceived as the sphere with the highest occurrence of clientelist practices.

As for the practices, there is a gap in the perception of the employment sector as being the most prone to clientelist practices and the personal involvement in clientelist relations. Furthermore, the healthcare system appears to be the leader in clientelist practices. Also, the perception of the educational system as least involved in clientelist practices does not match the personal involvement, where, in fact, the judiciary is the sphere with the smallest number of respondents confirming involvement in clientelist practices. With regard to personal involvement, the difference between the judiciary and the educational sphere is very small, which indicates similar perceptions by the respondents, which in turn is noticeably lower than in the case of the healthcare system.

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Short Biography

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Vasko Naumovski

SOME ASPECTS OF THE ROLE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION IN THE BALKANS AFTER THE COLD WAR

The Balkan Peninsula has been in the range of the Russian influence for decades. Different aspects have defined the interests for greater involvement in the region: historical bilateral ties, religious and ethnic affiliation, security concerns, energy supply, etc. During the military conflicts in Europe and the Cold War, the Balkans had remained in the sphere of interest of the Soviet/Russian foreign policy.

After the end of the Cold War, the political, economic and security developments in the countries of the region, such as accession to EU and NATO, the wars in Bosnia and Kosovo, the energy dependence, as well as the Russian internal developments, redefined the mutual relations,

The predominant Slavic population most Balkan countries has played an important role in history, and pan-Slavic ideas have remained alive throughout the political development in the region. The position of the Soviet Union

during the Cold War, as well as the Russian Federation's attitude towards the development in the 1990's, has shown that this region is of significant importance for the Russian policy in Europe. During Vladimir Putin's leadership, the foreign policy of the Russian Federation has gone through changes, which has been visible in its Balkans policy.

Energy and economy have become the new priorities for Russia in the Balkans, without abandoning the strategic geopolitical and security interests. The rise of the Turkish interest in the region additionally increased the need for adjustments in the post-Cold War political landscape. Shifting the United States' focus away from the Balkans has created new opportunities for Russia, and the stalemate in the EU accession of some Balkan countries has led to modifications in their foreign policy goals.

This paper examines Russia's influence in the countries of the Balkan region, its interests in this part of Europe, as well as its relations to other (dis)integration processes. The following questions will be analysed: What were the reasons for the Soviet involvement in conflicts on the Balkans during the World Wars and the Cold War? How did Russia react to the dissolution of Yugoslavia? What were the responses of Russian foreign policy to the EU and NATO enlargement by countries in the region? What are the circumstances of the Russian position regarding the independence of Kosovo? How does the energy issue relate to the bilateral relations with the Balkan countries? What theoretical assumptions can be used to explain Russia's policy in the region? Is Russia seeking to restore the balance of power established during the Cold War? What are the future prospects of the Russian influence in the Balkans?

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BALKANS

The importance of states as actors in the international system provided by the realist theory, as well as their rational behaviour, is one way to explain the involvement of Russia in the region. Is Russia trying to reclaim the position it had during the Cold War, using trade, energy and cultural instruments? Does Russian national interest prevail in this process, or does it also take into account the interests of the countries in the region? How do these actions influence the political situation in the Balkan countries?

The geostrategic importance of the Balkans determined the interest of the great powers in a greater involvement in the region, including the European states, Russia, as well as Turkey. Russia has been aspiring to gain access to the Mediterranean Sea for centuries, and predominance in the Balkans the easiest way to realize it. Helping the Slavic Orthodox peoples under the Ottoman rule only strengthened the motivation for greater involvement, a situation described

by some authors as "Russia's historic mission to liberate and protect the little Slav brothers in the Balkans".[1]

These conditions would remain valid for Russia's, i.e. the Soviet Union's engagement in the region for most of the 20th century, even though its sustainability has been questioned by some Western intellectuals. For example, in 1934, Albert Mousset claimed that "the idea of Russian domination in the Balkans is only a historical memory",[2] but at the same time he recognised that the so-called "Slavist ideology" was perceived as a danger to the European nations, and the word "Pan-Slavism" caused "many chancelleries to shiver" in the 19th and 20th century.[3]

Social constructivism partly explains the interest of the Russian Empire during the 19th and early 20th century, when Slavic identity was crucial for Russia's interest in the region, and for the expectations of the Balkan peoples. An interesting example is the poem "The Eagle" by the Russian poet Aleksey Khomyakov from 1832, which sets the frame for the image of Slavic solidarity.[4] Although periodical and never fully realised, Pan-Slavic ideology has been revisited whenever necessary for Russia to justify its appetites in the Balkans. Orthodox unity is another aspect, especially addressed at the times of religious oppression in the region.

The division of the Balkans into an Austrian sphere of influence (the Western Balkans) and a Russian one (the Eastern Balkans)[5] was the starting point for greater involvement in the entire region. Supporting the independence of the Balkan nations in the 19th and 20th century, as well as communist cooperation before and during the Second World War, saw the Russian / Soviet influence strengthening.

Soviets seemed to be very satisfied with the spheres of influence agreed on at the end of World War II. The so-called Percentages agreement put the seal on Soviet dominance in the Balkans: in October 1944, Stalin and Churchill agreed to divide the spheres of influence: Yugoslavia 50-50; Bulgaria 75-25, Romania 90-10 in favor of the Soviet Union, while the Western Allies would get 90-10 in Greece. With this agreement, Greece "narrowly missed entering the Soviet orbit", while Turkey "survived Stalin's postwar territorial demands".[6]

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1   Langer W. L. (1928) Russia, the Straits Question and the Origins of the Balkan League, 1908-1912, Political Science Quarterly, Vol. 43, No. 3 (Sep. 1928), pp. 321-363.

2   Mousset A. (1934) Slav Solidarity in the Balkans, International Affairs, Vol. 13, No. 6 (Nov. – Dec. 1934), pp. 772-791.

3   Ibid.

4   Poem "The Eagle", Aleksey Khomyakov, https://russian-poetry.com/orel-2/

5   Bekich D. (1985) Soviet Goals in Yugoslavia and the Balkans, Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 481 (Sep. 1985), pp. 81-91.

6   Brown J. F. (1984) The Balkans: Soviet Ambitions and Opportunities, The World Today, Vol. 40, No. 6 (Jun. 1984), pp. 244-253.

With this division, it seemed that the Balkans "powder keg" was finally under control, and that the Soviets would remain in control in the region. The Greek Civil War (1946-1949), in which one of the sides was indirectly supported by Yugoslavia and the USSR, was the last attempt to expand the sphere of influence, which ended with the defeat of the Greek communist army.

RENEWED INTEREST IN THE POST-COMMUNIST ERA

The Iron Curtain was spread right across the Balkans, with Yugoslavia as a gray area at the border between East and West. Although all the Balkan countries (except Greece) embraced communist ideology, Yugoslavia and Albania remained outside the Moscow-controlled area, and Romania showed signs of independence in its foreign policy. Their position showed that Soviet domination did not comprise the entire Balkans. According to some assessments, by their mutual agreements, these three communist Balkan states basically engaged in anti-Soviet defense cooperation.[7] This shows that the Soviet supremacy began to weaken immediately after the war, a process which came to its end with the fall of the communism.

Geostrategic interests explain the interventions of great powers in ethnic conflicts,[8] and ethnic conflicts on the Balkans were another opportunity for Russia to reveal its interest in the region. In the circumstances of the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the immediate reactions of the Soviet leadership were in favour of maintaining the unity of the Federation. This was seen as a logical position, having in mind the possibility of a break-up of the multi-ethnic Union of Soviet Socialist Republics if they supported self-determination in the case of Yugoslavia. Personally, Soviet leader Gorbachev was a vigorous supporter of the cohesion and territorial integrity of Yugoslavia.[9] Trying to maintain his authority on the international stage, he even tried to act as a mediator at the beginning of the conflict – an effort that did not produce any results.

Of far greater significance was the perception of the events in Yugoslavia as a precedent for the Russian Federation, which was also threatened by disintegration. This was connected with the concern that the Russian Federation, during its economic crisis, might also be torn apart by centrifugal forces. And finally, the Russians saw themselves in the same position as all the states whose integrity was threatened by armed separatist movements.[10]

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7   Bekich (1985)

8   Carment D., James P. (1996) Two-Level Games and Third-Party Intervention: Evidence from Ethnic Conflict in the Balkans and South Asia, Canadian Journal of Political Science, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Sep. 1996), pp. 521-554.

9   Cohen L. (1994) Russia and the Balkans: Pan-Slavism, Partnership and Power, International Journal, Vol. 49, No. 4 (Autumn 1994) pp. 814-845.

10   Bonin P. (2001) The last reserves of the imagined Great Power. On the significance of the Balkans for Russian political and economic actors, New Balkan Politics, Issue 2, 2007.

Meanwhile, contacts were established between military officials and nationalist groups from Serbia and Russia, as well as semi-independent bilateral relations between the former Yugoslav and Soviet Republics, and, later mutual recognition of independence.[11] These developments, together with the internal transformation of the USSR, significantly changed the Soviet, i.e. Russian position.

The new Russian leadership under President Boris Yeltsin and Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev took a different stance: support for the independence of the Yugoslav republics, and cooperation with the European powers and the US in the efforts to stabilize the region. Kozyrev's liberal internationalist approach was based on the assumption that liberal states share common values, and that the international institutions have to play a key role in the international relations. Accordingly, Russia shared the West'sinterests and had to cooperate within the UN and the CSCE.[12] Internal political and economic difficulties prevented stronger demeanour on the international stage.

Yeltsin and Kozyrev faced serious pressure from the nationalist and communist groups at home, but they managed to stay on track. The accusations that Russia had betrayed its natural ally Serbia were common for Russian and Serbian hard-liners. In addition, in May 1992, Russia voted in favour of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 727, which imposed sanctions on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (then Serbia and Montenegro). The expectations of the Serbian leadership had been that sanctions would not be imposed by the UN, exactly because of the special relations with Russia as a permanent SC member.

However, in order to change the image of the country and its leadership, Russia chose to align itself with the West and emphasise the role of the international institutions. In this period, Russia's policy in the Balkans was not competition or conflict, but rather cooperation with the other great powers by stressing the role of the UN. Thus, they demonstrated not only that Russia could not be ignored in search of a peaceful solution, but that it was crucial for any settlement in the Balkans. Had Russia decided to fully support the Serbian leadership, a UNSC resolution would never have been possible, and the developments might have taken a different turn.

At a later stage of the conflict, NATO acted without a SC resolution, but at the request of the UN Secretary General. Russia's reaction was furious, both official and public, but it could not do anything else at that moment. After the end of the war in Bosnia, Russia participated in the NATO-led IFOR and SFOR missions. Moscow showed signs of having "adopted a more assertive stance vis-à-vis

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11 Cohen L. (1994) Russia and the Balkans: Pan-Slavism, Partnership and Power, International Journal, Vol. 49, No. 4 (Autumn 1994) pp. 814-845.

12 Headley J. (2003) Sarajevo, February 1994: The First Russia-NATO Crisis of the Post-Cold War Era, Review of International Studies, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Apr. 2003), pp. 209-227.

the West... designed to confirm Russia's great power status",[13] but overall, its cooperation with the other international actors was satisfactory. Again, internationalist positions dominated Russia's foreign policy.

By adding the new members Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania (2004), Croatia and Albania (2009), as well as Montenegro (2017), NATO further strengthened the Western presence in the former Soviet sphere of influence. This was perceived as a challenge to Russia's security interests, but their choices were limited: while Balkan nations decided to join the Alliance, pro-Russian forces were significantly weakening during the 1990s. Russia's economic influence was weak, too, and Putin's international power not at its height.

The enlargement of the European Union included some Balkan states (Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia) as well, with the other ones striving for membership. Public support has remained on a high level, and alternatives are hardly even considered. Unlike the NATO enlargement, EU membership cannot be regarded as a threat toRussian security, but it still represents stronger relations of the Balkan nations with the European powers, whose interests may differ from Russian ones.

Another challenge for Russia was the NATO bombing on Yugoslavia in 1999, carried out without authorisation from the UNSC. This flagrant violation of international law sparked reactions in Russia, but again, the traditional Serbian ally could not do more. The arrival of Russian troops in Kosovo was only a short-term satisfaction for the Serbs.

In June 1999, an incident at Pristina airport brought NATO and Russia to the brink of a major crisis: Russian troops from Bosnia had arrived at the airport ahead of the NATO troops. NATO soldiers surrounded the airport, and General Wesley Clark gave the order to seize the airport by force. This order was not carried out, and later both sides agreed on handling the airport security together. Later, it was revealed that the situation had been much more serious: British general Mike Jackson was said to have replied to Clark: "I'm not going to have my soldiers be responsible for starting World War III".[14] After the introduction of the KFOR mission, Russian troops participated in this NATO-led mission under a UN mandate until 2003 .

Kosovo's declaration of independence in February 2008 and its recognition by the Western powers created another situation which was new to the international legal order, bypassing UN principles. The Kosovo case contributed more to consolidate Russia's anti-NATO stance than the Organisation's eastern

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13 Headley J. (2008) Russia and the Balkans: Foreign Policy from Yeltsin to Putin. New York: Columbia Press.

14 "How James Blunt saved us from World War 3", The Independent Daily, London, 15 November, 2010.

enlargement.[15] Unlike in the 1990s, when Russia joined the other UNSC members in imposing sanctions on Serbia, the traditional alliance was maintained.

The new self-proclaimed state would not become a UN member, and its independence would continue to be disputed in the years to come. Russia's behaviour in the region in 2007-08 was fundamentally opportunistic: Moscow's goal was to weaken the authority of NATO, the US, and the EU, and the Balkans served as a convenient platform for this broader goal.[16]

Russia exploited the recognition of Kosovo to its own geopolitical advantage. To them, it was illogical for Kosovo to be recognized as an independent state, but not the Serbs' state in Bosnia.[17] A visible consequence of the proclamation and recognition of Kosovo was Russia's action in Abkhazia and South Ossetia in August 2008: both republics were self-proclaimed, and Russia's intervention was not according to international law. Despite repeated calls for assistance from the Georgian leadership, the Western powers' reaction was limited to political statements.

Russia's unilateral action in the two Georgian breakaway republics was also an answer to the Western military and political actions in Kosovo, and it demonstrates the country's intention to maintain the role of a super power after the Cold War. This indicates the pragmatism of Putin-dominated foreign policy (although Dmitry Medvedev was holding the presidential seat at that time). Another region where Russia upholds its military presence is Transnistria in Moldova.[18]

NEW INSTRUMENTS: OIL AND GAS

Apart from its political engagement, Russian influence is evident in the energy sector. Gas and oil are the last reserve of Russian Balkan policy.[19] During the last decade, Russian companies have invested large sums in the Balkan energy sector The Russian energy strategy in the Balkans is an integral part of the country's foreign policy in the region: *the first echelon* of advance.[20] According to the "Energy Strategy of Russia for the Period up to 2030" adopted in 2010, *"The energy policy should be directed towards a change from raw material supplier to active participant on the global market, which is a task of strategic importance.*

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15 Baranovsky V. (2000) Russia: A Part of Europe or Apart from Europe?, International Affairs, Vol. 76, No. 3 (Jul. 2000), pp.443-458.

16 Valasek T. (2009) Is Russia a partner to the EU in Bosnia? London: Center for European Reform.

17 Kumar R S. (2008) From Kosovo to Georgia: The US, NATO and Russia, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 43, No. 36 (Sep. 2008), pp. 24-27.

18 Transnistria is a region of Moldova which proclaimed independence in 1990, officially not recognized by Russia. However, Moscow has a consulate in its capital Tiraspo, and 1200 Russian troops are still present in the region.

19 Bonin (2001)

20 Simurdic M. (2009) Russian Energy Policy and the Balkans, in Sixth Report Monitoring Russia Serbia Relations Project, Belgrade: International and Security Affairs Centre.

This ensures Russia's energy security and its position as a stable and reliable partner of the European countries and the world community."[21]

The geostrategic importance of the Balkans is once more taken into account by Russian policy-makers. An important characteristic of the region is its strategic geographic position at the crossroads of the main hydrocarbon transportation routes from energy-rich areas such as Russia, the Middle East, the Caspian, and Central Asia to industrialised and energy consuming areas such as Central and Western Europe.[22] Oil and gas pipelines through the region are crucial for energy delivery to some parts of the European market. Furthermore, the region is related to "the 'New Great Game', i.e. the modern re-run of the struggle between Imperial Britain and Imperial Russia of the XIX century for influence in Central Asia". [23]

In 2007, President Putin reminded the Balkan nations of Russia's special interest in the region. In a speech in Zagreb, at the Balkan Energy Cooperation Summit, he emphasised that "*Russian relations with its partners in the Balkans have traditionally been based on mutual sympathy, common spiritual traditions, the closeness of our languages and cultures and a common history*. He dwelled on "*the project to develop the gas network in Macedonia and expand the gas pipeline network to Albania, Southern Serbia and Kosovo*", which proves that this project was devised with a regional approach.[24] He also mentioned the $1.5 billion investment by "Lukoil", as well as the investments by "Gazprom", "Transneft" and other Russian companies in the region.

The "South Stream" gas pipeline was supposed to be one of the largest investments in the region, aiming to ensure energy security in the region. The "Nabucco" pipeline, a US project backed by the EU, was seen as rival to "South Stream", which once again illustrates the competition on Balkan grounds. The US position on this issue is determined by the desire to "promote energy diversification", knowing that countries that are dependent on energy from sole suppliers are also politically dependent.[25] Starting from the realistic assumption of establishing a dominant position with the investment in the energy sector, Russia is also expecting political benefits.

The presence of Russia in the region will be significantly determined by the increasing importance of energy security, and its presence will be maintained long-term. "South Stream" should be considered together with the development

21 "Energy Strategy of Russia for the Period up to 2030", Ministry of Energy of the Russian Federation, Moscow, 2010.

22 Ralchev S. (2012) Energy in the Western Balkans: A Strategic Overview. Sofia: Institute for Regional and international studies.

23 Simurdic (2009)

24 Vladimir Putin, Speech at the Balkan Energy Cooperation Summit, Zagreb, 24.06.2007, http://archive.kremilin.ru (accessed on: March 22, 2013).

25 Phillip Gordon, US Assistant Secretary of State, Remarks at the Atlantic Council, Nov. 13, 2012, http://www.acus.org (accessed on March 21, 2013).

of the North European Gas Pipeline, as both projects will significantly enhance Russia's importanceas an energy supplier for the rest of Europe.[26]

Bilateral relations with the Balkan countries are also experiencing adjustments. Serbia, for example, reaches out for Russian support whenever under pressure from the EU to make further concessions regarding Kosovo; the Republika Srpska also receives support from Russia in its disputes within the Bosnian Federation; Macedonia appreciated the support from the permanent UNSC member in the name dispute with Greece; Bulgaria changed its position regarding the support for Russian gas and oil pipelines on its territory, as well as the construction of a nuclear power plant by Russian companies; Greece flirts with Russia whenever treated inappropriately by the EU; etc. Notwithstanding, Balkan countries joined the Western powers in the wave of expelling Russian diplomats following the "Skripal case" in 2018.[27]

Pragmatism prevails in the behaviour of the Balkan countries in their relations with Russia. Adjusting to realistic assumptions, national governments assess the cost and benefit from their bilateral relations with this international power while pursuing their European (and NATO) membership aspirations. Similarly, Russia's national interests are the primary reason for maintaining (and extending) its presence in South-Eastern Europe. Some elements of the theory of hegemonic stability may also be found. A relative withdrawal of the EU and the US from the region would open a window of opportunity for Russia to play the role of a dominant power, which would restructure the interaction among the Balkan countries.

FUTURE CHALLENGES

Russia could be imperfect Europe; the best of Europe; or another Europe.[28] In all options, it stays heavily involved in the Balkan affairs. The Balkans remain an arena of East-West geopolitical rivalry, as it has been for centuries. Today's instruments of rivalry are not armies, but rather economic and political forces, such as control over energy pipelines and production, and its use for political rather than purely economic objectives.[29] After all, Russia will continue to pursue its national interests, trying to counter-balance the EU and NATO expansion in the former Soviet space.

An address by President Putin at a meeting with Russian ambassadors clearly defines his country's view of contemporary international relations: "*We are all*

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26   Smith M. (2008) Russian Energy Interests in the Balkans, Shrivenham: Defense Academy of the United Kingdom, Advanced Research and Development Group.

27   Croatia, Albania, Romania and Macedonia expelled Russian diplomats in March 2018, while Greece expelled two Russian diplomats in July 2018, not related to the "Skripal case".

28   Baranovsky (2000)

29   Blank S. (2013) Russian Policy in the Western Balkans, Washington: Atlantic Council.

the more worried when we see attempts by some actors in international relations to maintain their traditional influence, often by resorting to unilateral action that runs counter to the principles of international law. We see evidence of this in so-called 'humanitarian operations', the export of bomb and missile diplomacy, and intervention in internal conflicts."[30]

While some interpret contemporary Russia as largely accommodationist and non-threatening to the West, others perceive the Kremlin's objectives as expansionist and disrespectful of international rules.[31] According to some authors, Russia's Balkan policy aims at "undoing the substance, if not the form, of the European settlement of 1989-99, a major component of which was the resolution of the Yugoslavian wars of the 1990s", and "Moscow does all it can to block a resolution on the Bosnian and Kosovo issues and exploits ethnic animosities whenever it can".[32] However, the need for stability in the Balkans is in the interest of Russia, too, with the final solutions for some cases being disputed. Different views on the ways of solving the Bosnian and Kosovo crisis do not mean that Russia does not want to resolve them.

"The Western Balkans is hardly a sideshow... they are a key area of geopolitical competition which we cannot afford to neglect".[33] Russia still sees a potential danger to be pushed out of the Balkans, while the EU and NATO are predominant by means of different political, economic and security arrangements. Some Russian analysts even see this as a part of Washington's plan to surround Russia.[34] However, since the end of the Cold War, we can notice a pattern of disengagement on all sides.[35]

Russia might be the only major power that continuously maintains its interest in the region, while the US largely withdrew after the Clinton administration, and its European partners followed. Croatia's accession to the EU in 2013, and Montenegro's NATO membership since 2017 demonstrate the West's intention to keep the Balkans in the focus. Nevertheless, domestic developments in some of the large EU member states and the overall opposition to further EU enlargement may endanger the long-term vision to fully incorporate the Balkans into the EU.

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30   Vladimir Putin, Address at the Meeting with Russian Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives in International Organisations, Moscow, 09.07.2012, http://eng.kremlin.ru (accessed on March 22, 2013).

31   Tsygankov A. (2013) Contested Identity and Foreign Policy: Interpreting Russia's International Choices, International Studies Perspectives, Vol. 14, No. 1, March, 2013.

32   Blank (2013)

33   Ibid.

34   Reljic D. (2009) Rusija i Zapadni Balkan, Belgrade: ISAC.

35   Miller B., Kagan K. (1997) The Great Powers and Regional Conflicts: Eastern Europe and the Balkans from the Post-Napoleonic Era to the Post-Cold War Era, International Studies Quarterly, Vol. 41, No. 1 (Mar. 1997), pp. 51-85.

The "great power balancers"[36] leading Russia today will continue to try to expand its influence. The concept of spheres of influence is not unknown to the Russian leadership: "regions of privileged interests", as Medvedev called them in 2008, are countries which Russia shares "special historical relations" with, and they are not limited to the neighbouring regions.[37]

The Balkans have long had the image of a special sphere of Russian interest, and it will hardly dispose of this image any time soon.[38] Future prospects of Russia's influence in the Balkans depend on certain political and economic developments: the final status of Kosovo, the speed of the European integration of the region, the success of its energy policy, the level of interest of other major powers in the region (especially Turkey), as well as the potential for other conflicts where Russia can interfere.

The significance of the Balkans for Russian foreign policy goals has not diminished, and opportunities opened with the absence of other players will be utilized. Unlike the liberal internationalist policy adopted by the Yeltsin government in the 1990s, Putin's Russia accepts pragmatic views, and the Balkans is not an exception. Of course, the environment has changed during the last two decades, and may change further, but this pattern is very likely to be followed in the years to come.

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36   Kuchins A., Zevelev I. (2012) Liberals, Balancers, and Nationalists, The Washington Quarterly, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Winter 2012).
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38   Bonin (2001)

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THE WESTERN BALKAN ROUTE OF MIXED MIGRATION FLOWS (2015-2016) AND ITS IMPACT ON MACEDONIAN POLITICS

INTRODUCTION

"We will have to accept a certain degree of legal immigration; that's globalization... In the era of the smartphone, we cannot shut ourselves away... people know full well how we live in Europe."

Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany

"Countries that don't stop immigration will be lost."

Viktor Orban, Prime Minister of Hungary

"Numbers and statistics show that Macedonia is and will remain a mere transit country for migrants and refugees."

Mila Carovska, Minister of Labour and Social Policy
of the Republic of Macedonia

The European Union (EU) has always been a preferred destination for refugees fleeing violence and persecution, as well as economic migrants. During the last several decades, there has been a constant flow of refugees and migrants to the EU Member States and other developed countries in Northern Europe, which culminated in 2015 and 2016 with the influx of several million refugees and migrants. Throughout history, the Balkan peninsula has witnessed massive population movements. Since the arrival of the Slav populations in the 7th century, the Ottoman expansion, the extension of the Habsburg domain, the rise and growth of national states, the two World Wars and the ethnic wars of the past decades, there have been numerous population movements caused more or less directly by political and military events.[1]

This paper will initially examine the national legal framework regulating migrant, refugees' and asylum-seekers' issues in the Republic of Macedonia. Furthermore, it will address the role of the country as part of the Western Balkans migrant and refugee transit route, which extends from the Eastern Mediterranean route, leading from Turkey through Greece and the countries of former Yugoslavia to Hungary in the North and Austria in the West. This route is used by displaced persons mostly originating from the Middle East, as well as a growing number of refugees and migrants from North Africa, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The use of the Western Balkans route intensified following the EU visa liberalization for Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Macedonia in 2009-2010. Due to the Syrian crisis, the route was extensively used in 2014-2016. This paper mainly focusses on examining the role of the Republic of Macedonia as a transit zone for the refugees and migrants on their way from Greece towards the western parts of the EU. According to the statistics of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Macedonia, in the period from June 2015 (when the official registration of refugees began) until the closure of the "Balkan Route" in March 2016, a total of 472.437 refugees transited through the country's territory, but given that refugees were registered only during this period, the real number of refugees who have passed through is much larger.[2] According to a statement made by Macedonia's Minister of Interior Oliver Spasovski, "between 800.000 and 1.000.000 persons transited through Macedonia during 2015 and in the first half of 2016."[3] The European Commission published a similar report, stating that "in 2015, over 815.000 refugees and migrants passed through … Macedonia on

1   Bonifazi, Corrado and Mamolo, Marija, Past and Current Trends of Balkan Migrations, Espace, populations sociétés, 2004, pp. 519

2   Reaction to the xenophobia against refugees, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of Macedonia, 09/07/2017
    http://www.mhc.org.mk/announcements/630?locale=en#.Ws1QFPluapp accessed on 03/26/2018

3   Macedonia still transit country for migrants: minister, Xinhua News Agency, 04/06/2017
    http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-04/06/c_137090910.htm accessed on 03/27/2018

their way to Serbia, Hungary and Croatia."[4] In 2015, 600.000 registered at the Preševo camp alone, on the border between Macedonia and Serbia.[5]

Apart from examining the role of the Republic of Macedonia as a transit country on the Western Balkan route, focus will be placed on the impact of the migrant and refugee crisis on domestic politics.

The refugee and migrant crisis were a "stress test" for the Macedonian state. Based on the bitter experiences from the previous refugee crises during the 1990s (Bosnia and Kosovo), finding a viable and durable solution was of outstanding importance, which stressed the need for a swift response. Despite the deep internal political difficulties, which caused the migrant crisis to be perceived as a secondary political and security issue, the political elites proved to be more or less aligned for facing the challenge. During the peak of the crisis in 2015 and early 2016, the government's approach to the migrant and refugee crisis enjoyed broad public support. Ironically, the fiercest debate on the issue arose in 2017, when the new Macedonian government drafted the Strategy for Integration of Refugees and Foreigners 2017-2027 and the National Action Plan for Integration of Refugees 2017-2027, which will also be examined in this paper.

Finally, we will address the trends in public opinion in the Republic of Macedonia on the issue of migrants and refugees.

NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK ADDRESSING MIGRANT AND REFUGEE ISSUES

The main focus of examination are the effects of the migrant and refugee crisis on the domestic political scene. Therefore, it is necessary to provide an overview of the national legal framework which regulates this matter.

The Republic of Macedonia is State Party of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 and the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees of 1967.[6]

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4 Report on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, 02/07/2018 https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/fyrom_en.pdf accessed on 03/27/2018

5 Greider, Alice, Outsourcing Migration Management: The Role of the Western Balkans in the European Refugee Crisis, Migration Policy Institute, 08/07/2017 https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/outsourcing-migration-management-western-balkans-europes-refugee-crisis accessed on 03/27/2018

6 The Convention relating to the Status of Refugees was adopted on 28 July 1951 by the United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons convened under General Assembly resolution 429 (V) of 14 December 1950 and entered into force on 22 April 1954. The Protocol of 1967 is attached to United Nations General Assembly resolution 2198 (XXI) of 16 December 1967.
They are the key global legal documents covering the most important aspects of a refugee's life, defining the term 'refugee' and outlining the rights of the displaced, as well as the legal obligations of states to protect them. According to their provisions, refugees deserve, as a minimum, the same standards of treatment enjoyed by other foreign nationals in a given country and, in many cases, the same treatment as nationals. The 1951 Convention also recognizes the importance of international solidarity and cooperation in trying to resolve any issues with the status and the legal position of refugees. The Convention defines a refugee as a "person who is outside his or her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of being persecuted because of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail him—or herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution". The core principle is non-refoulment, which asserts that a refugee should not be returned to a country where they face serious threats to their life or freedom. This is now considered a rule of customary international law.
Convention and Protocol available at http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.pdf

It is also State Party of the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1997 European Convention on Nationality.

The Republic of Macedonia has a sound legal framework for its asylum system. The base of the national legal framework for the treatment of refugees and asylum-seekers in the Republic of Macedonia is the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection,[7] which was adopted in 2003, and amended in 2007, 2008, 2009, 2012, 2015 and 2016 in order to fully meet the international standards for dealing with refugees and asylum-seekers. The Law governs the conditions and procedures for granting and revocation of the right to asylum to an alien or a stateless person seeking recognition of the right to asylum in the Republic of Macedonia, as well as the rights and duties of asylum seekers and persons who have been granted the right to asylum in the Republic of Macedonia (Article 1, Paragraph 1). Moreover, it governs the conditions under which Macdeonia can grant temporary protection, as well as the rights and duties of persons under temporary protection (Article 1, Paragraph 2). Further laws pertaining to the various aspects of the treatment of refugees and asylum-seekers in the Republic of Macedonia include the Law on Social Protection, the Law on Foreigners, the Law on Health insurance as of 2010, which regulates the healthcare rights of persons recognized as refugees, etc.

The Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection defines an asylum seeker as "an alien who seeks protection in the Republic of Macedonia and has submitted an application for recognition of the right to asylum, which a final decision has not yet been taken on within the framework of the respecte procedure" (Article 3, Paragraph 1), whereas a refugee is defined as "an alien who, after the assessment of his claim, has been found to fulfil the requirements set out in the Convention stated in Article 2 Paragraph 1 of the law, that is, a person who, owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or his political opinion, is outside the state of his nationality and is unable, or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that state, or who, not having a nationality and being outside the state in which he had a habitual place of residence, is unable, or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it" (Article 4, Paragraph 1). A person under subsidiary protection is defined in Article 4-a of the Law as "an alien who does not qualify as a recognized refugee but to whom the Republic of Macedonia shall grant the right of asylum and whom it shall allow to remain within its territory because of substantial grounds for believing that if he/she returned to the state of his/her nationality, or, if she/he is a stateless person, to the state of his/her previous habitual residence, he/she would face an actual risk of suffering serious harm."

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[7]   Latest version of the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection available at http://www.refworld.org/docid/53072d144.html

The main amendments to the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection, made in 2015 and 2016, were aimed at bringing the law in line with the EU asylum instruments by implementing improvements in the areas of access to territory and asylum procedures as well as the conditions for the detention of people seeking international protection. The amendments include a procedure for the registration of the intention to submit an asylum application at the border, which protects asylum-seekers from the risk of refoulment and allows them to enter the country and remain legally for the period of 72 hours before formally submitting their asylum application.[8] A significant result of these changes was that refugees were no longer treated as "illegal migrants" and did not have to hide from the state authorities.[9]

Ensuring the rights of asylum-seekers and persons who have been granted the right to asylum is a responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (Article 48 of the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection). Hence, in 2008, Macedonia adopted the Integration Strategy for Refugees and Foreigners for the period 2008-2015[10] and a corresponding National Action Plan (NAP).[11] In this context, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, in partnership with UNHCR, established the Centre for Integration of Refugees and Foreigners, responsible for the facilitation of the main activities outlined in the NAP. Currently, there are two transit centres (Vinojug near Gevgelija at the border with Greece and Tabanovce near Kumanovo at the border with Serbia), as well as reception centres located in Vizbegovo and Gazi Baba in the capital Skopje. It is noteworthy to mention that the 2008-2015 Strategy was primarily aimed at facilitating the local integration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians (RAE) from the region, who were granted international protection, without special consideration for refugees from outside the region.[12] Furthermore, in July 2016, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy published the Strategy for Integration of Refugees and Foreigners 2017-2027 and the National Action Plan for Integration of Refugees 2017-2027, which caused a significant political disturbance, as will be discussed below.

THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA AND ITS ROLE AS A TRANSIT COUNTRY DURING THE MIGRANT AND REFUGEE CRISIS 2015-2016

The Western Balkans geographic region, comprised of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia,

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8   Koshevaliska, Olga, Tushevska Gavrilovikj, Borka, and Nikodinovska Krstevska, Ana, Migration Crisis: Macedonia on crossroads http://eprints.ugd.edu.mk/16515/1/Migration%20crisis.%20Macedonia%20at%20crossroads.pdf accessed on 03/25/2018

9   Refugees Rights: National and international standards vis-a-vis the situation on the ground, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of Macedonia, 01/16/2017 http://www.mhc.org.mk/analysis/518?locale=en#.WtS5HPluapp accessed on 03/25/2018

10   Strategy available at http://mtsp.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/strategija_begalci.pdf

11   National Action Plan available at http://e-demokratija.mk/documents/10157/26941/Национален+акционен+план+-+Стратегија+за+интеграција+на+бегалци+и+странци+во+Република+Македонија+2008+-+2015?version=1.0

12   Gerovska Mitev, Maja, Providing adequate social services for refugees: a challenge in FYR Macedonia, ESPN Flash Report 2016/36, July 2016

is no stranger to refugee flows, having experienced massive displacement as a result of violence and ethnic cleansing during the 1990s. During the 2015-2016 crisis, the Balkan countries at first opted to facilitate the movement of asylum seekers through their territories and thus to pass on the responsibility for them, but pressure from the EU Member States ultimately led to a domino effect of border closures and increasing movement restrictions as the crisis wore on.[13]

The number of irregular migrants passing through Macedonia increased dramatically in 2015, especially following Germany's signals to accept asylum seekers. Macedonia, along with Serbia and other countries on the Western Balkan route, was more than willing to facilitate the transportation of the migrants and refugees, whose number started to increase exponentially. The pressure rose, not only due to the growing numbers, but also because of more and more reports on migrants suffering abuse and because fatalities among people walking along railway lines increased. After having declared a state of crisis on its southern and northern borders, Macedonia enacted legislation that allowed migrants to register their "intent to seek asylum" upon entry and receive a 72-hour temporary permit to remain in the country (based on the Law on Crisis Management ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia" No.29/2005)), thus facilitating the transportation of migrants by trains and buses. Statistics show that, during the peak of the crisis, up to 10.000 refugees and migrants[14] were transiting through Macedonia on a daily basis, which amounted to over €50.000 in daily expenses for the registration procedures, sheltering, food, transportation, etc. According to the European Commission, the EU provided humanitarian funding in the amount of over €4,7 million to help in providing emergency assistance.[15] Furthermore, under the Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Europe (RMRP) covering Turkey, Southern Europe, the Western Balkans, and other parts of Europe, US$26 million were allocated to Macedonia for ensuring consistent border and protection monitoring, strengthening existing national protection and response mechanisms, and promoting access to fair and efficient status determination procedures, relevant services, and assistance.[16]

Meanwhile, the division between Western, or "Old" Europe, with its traditional values and open approach to migrants, and Eastern/Central, or "New" Europe, wit its view on refugees as a threat, began to deepen, heralding problems along the Western Balkans route. This massive dispute was articulately analysed by

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13 Ibid

14 During the peak of the crisis, representatives of the Macedonian Red Cross stated that, on average, between 5.000 and 10.000 migrants and refugees transit through Macedonia on a daily basis. UNHCR representatives also estimated 7.000 to be the daily average. On certain days, that number reached 13.000. На територијата на Македонија дневно влегуваат 5-10 илјади бегалци, Anadolu Agency, 11/18/2015 https://aa.com.tr/mk/наслови-на-денот/на-територијата-на-македонија-дневно-влегуваат-5-10-илјади-бегалци/475848 accessed on 03/27/2018

15 Report on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, 02/07/2018 https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/fyrom_en.pdf accessed on 03/27/2018

16 Balkan Migration Route: Ongoing Story, European Western Balkans, 02/22/2018 https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2017/02/22/balkan-migration-route-ongoing-story/ accessed on 03/27/2018

political scientist Ivan Krastev, who argues that "the divide between attitudes in Eastern and Western Europe on issues of diversity and migration strongly resembles the divide between the large cosmopolitan capital cities and the countryside within Western societies themselves – two worlds that are deeply mistrustful of each other". According to him, now, just like in 2003, two different versions of Europe are emerging: Central Europe, where the rise of threatened majorities is most visible and ethnic homogeneity praised as major historical achievement, and Western Europe, where the elites – if not always the public – remain faithful to their liberal commitments. Furthermore, he argues, while in Western Europe the legacy of colonialism shapes encounters with the non-European world, Central European states have come into being as a result of ethnic cleansing and the disintegration of empires, and for many of them, the return to ethnic diversity means a return to the troubled times of the interwar period, which offers one answer to the question why Central European governments and societies have been so hostile to the idea of resettling refugees throughout the European Union.[17]

The migrant and refugee crisis brought about three hot spots of bilateral tension along the Western Balkan route. The tensions in the Turkish-Greek, Greek-Macedonian and Serbian-Croatian relations reflected the antagonism between the "Merkel" and the "Orban" doctrine. In November 2015, Macedonia and other countries along the Western Balkans route enacted border controls to allow only migrants from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan to pass. In early 2016, Austria, Germany and other EU Member States started imposing restrictions, which affected all countries along the Western Balkan route, thus aggravating the situation. At the same time, the leading Balkan states, Turkey and Greece, negotiated with Germany and the EU regarding the migrants and refugees on their territory. Seeking visa liberalisation and financial compensation, Turkey did not control the refugee flows to the Greek islands and the mainland.[18] Greece, meanwhile, used the crisis as leverage. According to Greek Minister of Defense Panos Kammenos[19] and Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikos Kotzias, "if the country fails financially, it will send migrants and possible jihadists to the EU."[20]

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17 Ivan Krastev on Migration, Robert Bosch Academy http://www.robertboschacademy.de/content/language2/html/54899.asp accessed on 03/22/2018

18 Kambas, Michele, Coscun, Orhan and Baczynska, Gabriela, Turkey's Erdogan threatened to flood Europe with migrants: Greek website, Reuters, 02/08/2016 https://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-eu-turkey/turkeys-erdogan-threatened-to-flood-europe-with-migrants-greek-website-idUSKCN0VH1R0 accessed on 03/23/2018

19 "If they deal a blow to Greece, then they should know the migrants will get papers to go to Berlin," he said. "If Europe leaves us in the crisis, we will flood it with migrants, and it will be even worse for Berlin if in that wave of millions of economic migrants there will be some jihadists of the Islamic State too." "If they strike us, we will strike them. We will give to migrants from everywhere the documents they need to travel in the Schengen area so that the human wave could go straight to Berlin." Waterfield, Bruno, Greece's Defense minister Kammenos threatens to send migrants including jihadists to Western Europe, The Telegraph, 03/09/2015 https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/11459675/Greeces-defence-minister-threatens-to-send-migrants-including-jihadists-to-Western-Europe.html accessed on 03/22/2018

20 Foreign Minister Kotzias was the first to publicly acknowledge the link between the negotiations between Greece and the EU around an agreement for resolving the financial crisis. As he stated on March 7, 2015, in Riga, "Europe will be overwhelmed with jihadist migrants if an agreement is not concluded and Greece fails financially." Greek Foreign Minister: Jihadists will Flock in Europe if Greece Crumbles, Greek Reporter, 03/07/2015 http://greece.greekreporter.com/2015/03/07/greek-foreign-minister-jihadists-will-flock-in-europe-if-greece-crumbles/ accessed on 03/23/2018

With the escalation of the crisis, the Višegrad countries (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia), joined by Austria and Slovenia, decided to close the Western Balkans route, which prompted Macedonia to close its border with Greece and to build a fence. The subsequent closure of the borders along the Western Balkan route provided Chancellor Angela Merkel with a political exit strategy, in the light of her isolated political position at home and abroad.[21] Anti-immigrant and Islamophobic groups mirrored the rise of the popular right in Germany, Austria and Hungary. The latter two, joined by Slovenia and Macedonia, erected fences on key stretches of their borders. Reports on violent clashes between migrants and the border police at the Idomeni border crossing between Greece and Macedonia began to spread. Causing a diplomatic dispute, Greek President Prokopios Pavlopoulos accused the Macedonian authorities of ill-treatment of refugees while they were attempting to cut the fence and pass an illegal border crossing near Idomeni.[22] Macedonian President Gjorge Ivanov accused Greece of irresponsibly channelling more than a million people, including "jihadists", to Western and Northern Europe.[23] The Greek side added "refugee treatment" to the long list of conditions for lifting their veto on Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic integration, which included objections to the name, language, nationality, and the Constitution of Macedonia, to name just a few.

Tensions eased when EU governments voted to close the Western Balkans corridor in March 2016 and the EU-Turkey agreement was concluded. Although the route was closed, the strategic importance of the Western Balkan countries, which was unavoidably affirmed during the migrant and refugee crisis, was once again placed high on the EU agenda. This resulted in the EC's "credible enlargement perspective for an enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans", confirming the European future of the region as a geostrategic investment in a stable, strong and united Europe based on common values,[24] adopted in February 2018.

THE EFFECTS OF THE MIGRANT AND REFUGEE CRISIS 2015-2016 ON THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL SCENE

In the beginning of 2015, the Republic of Macedonia was faced with a political crisis triggered by a wiretapping scandal, when the then opposition leader and current Prime Minister Zoran Zaev publicly released a large number of illegally

21 Karnitschnig, Matthew, Austria does Angela Merkel's dirty work, Politico, 01/21/2016 https://www.politico.eu/article/austria-refugees-germany-angela-merkel-asylum-migration/ accessed on 03/25/2018

22 Harris, Mary, President Pavlopoulos: Greek Veto on FYROM's EU-NATO Bid is Non-Negotiable. Greek Reporter, 05/08/2016 http://greece.greekreporter.com/2016/05/08/president-pavlopoulos-greek-veto-on-fyroms-eu-nato-bid-is-non-negotiable/ accessed on 03/25/2018

23 Diekmann, Kai, Ronzheimer, Paul and Biskup, Daniel, Macedonian president settles a score here. Bild, 05/10/2016 https://www.bild.de/politik/ausland/gjorge-ivanov/macedonian-president-settles-a-score-here-44888176.bild.html accessed on 03/25/2018

24 Commission adopts a credible enlargement perspective for the Western Balkan countries https://ec.europa.eu/commission/news/strategy-western-balkans-2018-feb-06_en accessed on 03/25/2018 "A credible enlargement perspective for an enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans" is available at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/communication-credible-enlargement-perspective-western-balkans_en.pdf

recorded telephone conversations, which involved highest-ranking Macedonian Government officials, including the then Prime Minister and VMRO-DPMNE leader Nikola Gruevski. Following an array of mutual accusations, with help from EU and US representatives and special envoys, the so-called Pržino Agreement was concluded to overcome the crisis.[25] Nevertheless, the internal turmoil continued, culminating in a violent storming of the Macedonian Parliament on 27 April 2017. The crisis was resolved with the formation of a new Government in June 2017, led by the Social-Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM).

Due to the perennial internal political crisis, the migrant and refugee issue played only a subordinate role on the Macedonian political scene, which can be described by three distinctive features: first, it was used as a distraction from internal political issues. Second, although widely reported on, it remained a secondary political issue. And third, political opponents used it to attack each other as part of their PR strategies, in an attempt to gain stronger support, rather than manifesting actual difference in concepts and ideologies. The main reason why the opposition was only allegedly, rather than actively opposing the government's and president's decisions, was the strong public support of the so-called "protective measures".

Analysis shows that the opposition rejected certain actions, simply because the governing party supported them. For instance, the then main opposition party SDSM criticized the amendments to the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection, claiming it would not solve the problem of abysmal conditions in the refugee centres,[26] but, finally, they did not oppose amending it. Furthermore, the opposition criticized the decision to build a border fence in November-December 2015, arguing that it would not solve the problem,[27] but did not actually oppose it once construction started, nor did they object to the decision to build another, parallel fence in February 2016. Nevertheless, when several NGOs were signing a petition demanding that the fence be removed in March 2016,[28] the conservative media accused SDSM of being behind the initiative in order to inflict political damage on the governing party.[29]

At the peak of the crisis, public opinion was stongly supportive of protective measures. According to aa survey conducted by the Institute for Political Research Skopje (IPRS) in October 2015, the majority of respondents supported building a fence on the southern border: 66.2% supported it, while 25.4% were

25 Statement by Commissioner Hahn and MEPs Vajgl, Howitt and Kukan: Agreement in Skopje to overcome political crisis, European Commission, 07/15/2015 http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-15-5372_en.htm accessed on 03/26/2018

26 Migrantite gi skaraa SDSM i VMRO-DPMNE, Faktor, 06/15/2015 http://faktor.mk/2015/06/15/migrantite-gi-skaraa-sdsm-i-vmro-dpmne/ accessed on 03/26/2018

27 SDSM: Krizata so migrantite ne se rešava so ogradi tuku so sistemski rešenija, Nova TV, 09/11/2015 http://novatv.mk/sdsm-krizata-so-migrantite-ne-se-reshava-so-ogradi-tuku-so-sistemski-reshenija-2/ accessed on 03/26/2018

28 Otvoreno pismo od 16 organizacii: Itno da se urne bodlikavata ograda ya begalcite, A1 on, 03/17/2016 http://a1on.mk/wordpress/archives/591992 accessed on 03/26/2018

29 Nevladinite na SDSM i SOROS baraat da se trgne ogradata, Kurir, 03/17/2016 http://kurir.mk/makedonija/vesti/istite-levichari-i-nvo-i-vo-grtsija-gi- sozdavaat-problemite-so-migrantite/ accessed on 03/24/2018

against it.[30] The negative public perception of migrants and refugees, albeit to a lesser degree, remains even two years later, as will be observed below.

THE STRATEGY FOR INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES AND FOREIGNERS 2017-2027 AND THE NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES 2017-2027

Ironically, the largest political disturbance related to the migrant and refugee crisis occurred well after the peak of 2015-2016. Namely, the new Macedonian Government lead by SDSM, i.e., the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, drafted the Strategy for Integration of Refugees and Foreigners 2017-2027 and the National Action Plan for Integration of Refugees 2017-2027, which were presented to the general public for comments before the final version was approved by the Assembly. According to the Ministry, the Strategy was drafted in coordination with UNHCR and other relevant institutions. It was aimed at dealing with four significant areas for asylum seekers: housing, education, employment, and integration, revising shortcomings of the previous strategy and improving the integration process.

The draft Strategy and Action Plan were met with severe antagonism from VMRO-DPMNE. The party accused the ruling SDSM of threatening the overall security, the economy and the health system of the country with the permanent settlement of 150.000 to 200.000 migrants on its territory. "These strategic documents will mean enormous costs totalling billions of Euros in the next ten years for accommodation and construction of buildings and settlements for migrants. That means enormous costs in the field of employment, social programmes, and funds that Macedonia does not have any resources for," stressed VMRO-DPMNE MP Vlatko Gjorčev, adding that Macedonia would be transformed from a transit country into a final destination for trefugees.[31] Furthermore, the VMRO-DPMNE pointed out that granting citizenship to tens of thousands of migrants and their permanent settlement would cause serious distortion of the labour market and significantly worsen the already difficult situation regarding the high unemployment, which has forced many Macedonian citizens to move to other countries in order to secure work and livelihood.[32]

The Government categorically disputed these accusations, claiming that VMRO-DPMNE was trying to halt reforms by unfounded accusations and false news. According to SDSM, the Strategy was based on international standards and the Convention on the Rights of Refugees, which Macedonia has ratified, as

30 "The perceptions on the migrant crisis", unpublished public opinion poll, Institute for Political Research Skopje (IPRS), November 2015, available at http://ipis.org.mk/

31 Dukovska, Jugoslava, Kontraspin: VMRO-DPMNE so dvojni standardi okolu begalcite, Vistinomer, 08/11/2017 http://vistinomer.mk/kontra-spin-vmro-dpmne-so-dvojni-standardi-okolu-begaltsite/ accessed on 03/25/2018

32 VMRO-DPMNE: Strategijata za migranti i begalci gi zagrozuva bezbednosniot i ekonomskiot sistem na državata, Press 24, 08/09/2017 http://press24.mk/vmro-dpmne-strategijata-za-migranti-i-begalci-gi-zagrozuva-bezbednosniot-i-ekonomskiot-sistem-na accessed on 03/25/2018

discussed above. The party said it had a document that serves as a road-map and contains no binding acts concerning any ministry or institution. According to SDSM, "The draft Strategy, which VMRO-DPMNE is abusing in its attempt to fuel fear and scare the citizens, is just a continuation of the same strategy for the period 2009-2015, adopted by the former government led by VMRO-DPMNE".[33] Furthermore, SDSM pointed out that the number of migrants interested in permanently settling on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia was negligible. Official statistics support this stance. Namely, the Helsinki Committee recently published a report stating that, in the Republic of Macedonia, in the period from 2015 to June 2017, a total of 2.243 requests for granting the right to asylum had been submitted by 2.717 persons, only five of which had been granted official refugee status, and only 11 subsidiary protection.[34] This shows that Macedonia is merely a transit country for refugees, and hardly a a country of final destination.

The public debate regarding the Strategy and the Action Plan instigated numerous instances of xenophobic hate speech towards refugees, and several civic initiatives organizing citizens petitions against migrants were set into motion. These civic groups were inspired and instrumentalised by political forces in their populist hunt for votes. Furthermore, following the deadline for submitting comments on the Strategy and the Action Plan, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy reported that it had received identical comments from several VMRO-DPMNE-led municipalities, stating that accepting refugees and foreigners in Macedonia "will destabilize the region and the country as a whole."[35]

The opposition's disapproval of the Strategy culminated when VMRO-DPMNE filed an interpellation motion against Minister of Labour and Social Policy Mila Carovska, who, according to VMRO-DPMNE, had consulted neither citizens nor municipalities when drafting the strategic documents.[36] The interpellation did not pass in the Assembly. Furthermore, as the local elections scheduled for 15 October 2017 were approaching, 12 VMRO-DPMNE-led municipalities announced their decisions to call for a referendum for the citizens to voice their opinion regarding a permanent settlement of migrants in their respective municipalities. The decisions of the municipalities to hold referendums was overthrown by the State Inspectorate for Local Self-Government Units.[37]

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33 SDSM: The refugee strategy is a continuation of the one that was adopted in 2008, Meta.mk, 08/07/2017 http://meta.mk/en/sdsm-the-refu-gee-strategy-is-a-continuation-of-the-one-that-was-adopted-in-2008/ accessed on 03/25/2018

34 Reaction to the xenophobia against refugees, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of Macedonia

35 Xenophobia and calls for a referendum from the municipalities on the strategy for refugees, Meta.mk News Agency, 08/09/2017 http://meta.mk/en/xenophobia-and-calls-for-a-referendum-from-the-municipalities-on-the-strategy-for-refugees/, accessed on 03/26/2018

36 VMRO-DPMNE files Interpellation motion Against Minister Carovska, MKToday, 09/11/2017 http://mktoday.mk/index.php/2012-12-21-14-28-05/7895-vmro-dpmne-files-interpellation-motion-against-minister-carovska, accessed on 03/26/2018

37 Referendum za migrantite nema da ima, ALFA TV, 09/29/2017 http://www.alfa.mk/News.aspx?id=124254#.Ws0vq_luapo, accessed on 03/26/2018

It is noteworthy to mention that, even though the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy initially planned for the Strategy for Integration of Refugees and Foreigners 2017-2027 and the National Action Plan for Integration of Refugees 2017-2027 to be adopted by the end of 2017, they have not been approved by the Assembly to this day.

PUBLIC OPINION IN THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA ON MIGRANT AND REFUGEE ISSUES

Although the refugee and migrant crisis remains a secondary political issue, its (ab)use by political opponents to attack eachother as part of their party strategies, which were aimed at gaining stronger popular support, had a significant impact on the public opinion in the country, as we can see from the surveys on these issues.

According to the Balkan Barometer 2017: Public Opinion Survey,[38] only 7% of the Macedonians viewed refugees as the most important problem that Sotheast Europe was facingat that moment. This is a significant drop, compared to the Balkan Barometer 2016: Public Opinion Survey,[39] according to which 18% of the Macedonians believed that refugees were the most important problem, which was more than four times more than the regional average of 4%. In general, the 2017 survey concludes that attitudes towards refugees are less hostile than before.

The regional average shows that the proportion of the population with a negative (40%) and a neutral (41%) attitude towards refugees is equal. Compared with 2015, when the problem of refugees was significantly more relevant, there has been a change in attitude towards them: the number of those who regard them as a threat to their economy has decreased (from 47% to 40%). Nevertheless, according to the 2017 survey, Macedonia was the only country where a majority of respondents found that refugees had a negative impact on the economy. In Macedonia, 57% of the population gave negative responses to the question "What do you think about refugees coming to live and work in your city? Is it good or bad for your economy?", compared to Albania with 29%, Kosovo with 17%, Bosnia and Herzegovina with 44%, Montenegro with 37%, Croatia with 43%, and Serbia with 47%. Only 8% believed that refugees are good for the economy, whereas 29% were neutral. In 2015, 66% had considered the arrival of migrants to be bad for the economy.

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38 Balkan Barometer 2017: Public Opinion Survey, Regional Cooperation Council, Sarajevo, 2017 https://www.rcc.int/seeds/files/RCC_BalkanBarometer_PublicOpinion_2017.pdf, accessed on 03/22/2018

39 Balkan Barometer 2016: Public Opinion Survey, Regional Cooperation Council, Sarajevo, 2016 https://www.rcc.int/seeds/files/RCC_BalkanBarometer_PublicOpinion_2016.pdf , accessed on 03/22/2018

Furthermore, the survey established respondents from Macedonia as the least supportive of affirmative government action in favour of displaced persons and refugees. Only 47% of the respondents from Macedonia agreed that the Government should provide affirmative measures to promote opportunities for equal access of displaced persons and refugees, whereas this number was 74% in Albania, 89% in Kosovo, 82% in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 75% in Montenegro, 67% in Croatia, and 71% in Serbia. Similarly, only 43% supported affirmative measures for displaced persons and refugees when applying for a public-sector job, compared to Albania with 68%, Kosovo with 79%, Bosnia and Herzegovina with 81%, Montenegro with 71%, Croatia with 54%, and Serbia with 64%. Furthermore, Macedonia had the lowest support for better housing conditions for displaced persons and refugees compared to the other countries of the region. Only 51% believed that the Government should do more in order to ensure better housing conditions, compared to Albania with 77%, Kosovo with 90%, Bosnia and Herzegovina with 84%, Montenegro with 72%, Croatia with 61%, and Serbia with 65%.

CONCLUSIONS

According to the latest "Progress report on the Implementation of the European Agenda on Migration", the trend of relative stability along the Western Balkans route during 2017 was maintained in 2018.[40]

Data shows that Macedonia remains a transit country where migrants are not seeking permanent residence. According to the statistics of the Macedonian Ministry of Interior, only 200 migrants have applied for asylum. According to the report of the European Commission published in February 2018, since the drastic reduction of humanitarian caseload, only 50 to 70 refugees remain in Macedonia, hosted in camps.[41] On the other hand, Minister of Labour and Social Policy Mila Carovska reported in September 2017 that there are no migrant camps on the territory of Macedonia, only two transit centres hosting no more than 15 migrants, and one centre for asylum-seekers in Vizbegovo, which is nearly empty.[42] Furthermore, according to a statement by Svetlana Geleva, Deputy Director for Multilateral Affairs at the Macedonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, during the 68. Session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner for Refugees' Programme in Geneva in October 2017, "a total of 54 migrants/ asylum seekers have been staying in Macedonia. The centre for asylum-seekers in Vizbegovo accommodates 16 persons, two transit centres house 29, and five

40 Progress report on the Implementation of the European Agenda on Migration, European Commission, Brussels, 03/14/2018, pp.2 https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20180314_progress-report-progress-report-european-agenda-migration_en.pdf accessed on 03/30/2018

41 Report on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

42 Carovska: Nema stanovi za migranti, VMRO-DPMNE širi lažni vesti, 24 Vesti, 09/02/2017 https://www.24.mk/carovska-nema-stanovi-za-migranti-vmro-dpmne-shiri-lazhni-vesti accessed on 30/03/2018

persons are accommodated in the Safe House."[43] She also pointed out that in 2017, a total of 91 persons applied for asylum in Macedonia, while four gained international protection status. In conclusion, both domestic and international institutions agree that Macedonia is not a destination which migrants consider a permanent residence.

The "Progress report on the Implementation of the European Agenda on Migration" also states that "enhanced border controls and concerted cooperation between EU Member States, EU Agencies and the Western Balkan countries has continued to make irregular transit via the Western Balkan route more difficult", which was confirmed by EU border agency FRONTEX. The latter stated that, "although an effective closure of the Balkan route had been achieved in spring 2016, it did not stop migration completely".[44] Both officials and experts have warned that the Western Balkans route is still active. During a meeting of the Migration, Asylum and Regional Refugee Initiative (MARRI) in March 2018, Macedonian Minister of Interior Oliver Spasovski stated that "after the official closure of the route, a large number of migrant traffickers have appeared, who often abuse their migrant victims, some of which even end up as victims of human trafficking."[45] Similar warnings have been issued by international experts dealing with migration and refugee issues, including cultural anthropologist and expert on border regimes Sabine Hess, who insists that hundreds of refugees are still arriving in Central Europe every day via the old route through Macedonia and Serbia, or from Turkey via Bulgaria and Serbia, and that their journey is becoming "more difficult, more expensive and more dangerous".[46] In her statement in Geneva in October 2017, Geleva pointed out that after the closure of the Western Balkan route, "there has been an increase of varying intensity in attempts of illegal crossing of the Greek–Macedonian border. Between 1 January and 31 August 2017, a total number of 2.216 migrants attempted to illegally enter Macedonia. Between 1 January and 31 August 2017, the Macedonian police documented eight cases related to trafficking migrants, which involved more than 90 migrants."[47] According to UNHCR's Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Europe for January to December 2017, there are continuous attempts at irregular border crossings and an increased demand for trafficking services. Protection and border monitoring activities indicate daily attempts of

43 Sixty- eighth Session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioners' Programme, Statement by Svetlana Geleva, Deputy Director for Multilateral Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia, Geneva, October 2017 http://www.unhcr.org/59db2b617.pdf, accessed on 03/30/2018

44 Report on the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

45 Macedonia still transit country for migrants: minister, Xinhua News Agency

46 Dernbach, Andrea, Balkan migration route is 'not closed', Euroactiv, 03/14/2017 https://www.euractiv.com/section/justice-home-affairs/news/balkan-migration-route-is-not-closed/, accessed on 03/27/2018

47 Sixty- eighth Session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, Statement by Svetlana Geleva, Deputy Director for Multilateral Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia, Geneva, October 2017

refugees and migrants to enter the country with the aim to move onwards, with only a very small number seeking asylum.[48]

Regardless of the fact that Macedonia is solely a transit country and that there are no indications that migrant flows would intensify in the near future, the government is making efforts for strengthening its position in terms of dealing with this issue. Minister Spasovski recently confirmed that Macedonia is working on laws for international and provisional protection, as well as on the law on foreigners, taking into account provisions of European legislation and best practices from EU Member States.[49] Macedonia has established intensive cooperation with the countries of the region on issues such as illegal migration and border control. Furthermore, according to the "Progress report on the Implementation of the European Agenda on Migration", the European Commission is negotiating an agreement with Macedonia similar to the agreement between the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and Albania initiated on 12 February 2018, which enables the Agency to provide assistance in the field of external border management as well as to swiftly deploy teams on Albanian territory in case of a sudden shift in migration flows. The Centre for Integration of Refugees and Foreigners established in 2009 continues to provide direct assistance to refugees and implement measures defined in the individual or family integration plans.[50] It remains to be seen whether the Strategy for Integration of Refugees and Foreigners 2017-2027 will be adopted.

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48 The regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for January to December 2017, available at http://www.unhcr.org/589497d07.pdf, accessed on 03/31/2018

49 Macedonia still transit country for migrants: minister, Xinhua News Agency

50 Sixty- eighth Session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, Statement by Svetlana Geleva

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POLITICAL AND PARTY ORGANISING IN MACEDONIA UNTIL THE END OF WORLD WAR II

INTRODUCTION

The knowledge about the Republic of Macedonia's party system will achieve its full meaning when taking into account the historical context, which is fundamental for understanding overall processes and conditions. Having this in mind, the present paper deals with the development of the party system of Macedonia at a time when the Macedonian people did not have a state of their own, i.e. when national tendencies to build an independent state were most distinct.

Macedonia's party system was shaped by the historical conditions linked to realising people's aspirations to form an independent state, as well as the overall historical processes of establishing the system of representative democracy in its modern sense.

From a legal point of view, the history of party organising in Macedonia can be divided into three periods:

- the first period until 1944, when Macedonia was not an independent state;
- the second period from 1944 to 1991, when Macedonia was starting to realise statehood as one of the republics of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY);
- the third period from 1991 to this day, with Macedonia being an independent democratic state.

From a political point of view, the event which marks the end of the first and the beginning of the second period was the first plenary session of the Anti-fascist Assembly for the National Liberation of Macedonia (ASNOM), held in the Prohor Pčinjski Monastery on 2 August 1944, when it was decided that Socialist Macedonia be founded and become part of the Yugoslav Federation. The second and third period are divided by the referendum of 8 September 1991, when national aspirations at organising the Republic of Macedonia as an independent state were realised.

The first period of party organisation in Macedonia corresponds with the global processes of establishing representative democracy in its modern sense by legal and political means, such as guaranteeing the general and equal right to vote for all citizens, regardless of their class, ethnicity, gender, or any other attribute or characteristic. During the second period, Macedonia was part of the socialist system of state organisation, in which, as opposed to political pluralism, a concept of political monism was implemented, i.e. one political party had the exclusive right to political organisation. Finally, today, in the third period, the Republic of Macedonia is implementing a true multi-party representative democracy according to the example of Western Europe.

Based on the aforementioned, this paper will give some examples, which will show that the Macedonian people has also used other than revolutionary political methods in order to achieve its national goals. This can be considered a significant experience with regard to the founding of Socialist Macedonia as a part of SFRY, which, as a collective memory, can be assumed to have contributed to shaping its new post-war constitutional and political system.

ON THE ORGANISATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN MACEDONIA UNTIL THE END OF WORLD WAR II

Macedonia's experience in organising political parties before 1944, when Socialist Macedonia was founded, was rather rich and diverse. First, the territory was part of the Ottoman Empire, and after the Balkan Wars in 1912 and 1913 and the Treaty of Bucharest, i.e. until the end of World War I and the Paris Peace

Conference, it was under Serbian, Bulgarian, and Greek rule. Hence, the forms of party organisation of the Macedonians were determined by at least four factors:

1. the dynamics of the modern representative democracy's development in the respective states: the historical process of the establishment, dispersion and synchronisation of the right to vote, which took place during the 19th and 20th century;

2. the organisation of power in these states, i.e. whether they were authoritarian or democratic systems;

3. the ways of organising of the subjugated Macedonian people, which was striving to realise its aspirations for freedom and independence not only by armed, but also political means;

4. the strategies of the ruling states concerning the ways of party organisation of the Macedonian people.

Although some organisation forms of the Macedonian people cannot be considered classical forms of political party organisation as practised in representative democracies today,[1] given their actual activities, organisational structure and final goals, which were doubtlessly political and thoroughly national, they must be understood as political parties in the broader sense. As opposed to the these forms of organisation, as we will see, the Macedonian people was also organised in legal political entities (political parties) which were recognised by the governments of the states they were active in.

Historically, the beginning of Macedonia's party system is linked to the founding of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (IMRO; VMRO in Macedonian) in 1893,[2] a revolutionary liberation movement of the Macedonian people with the goal to gain political autonomy from the Ottoman Empire.

There are two main arguments that confirm this:

1. the first political parties in the formal sense of the word, as well as their founders – revolutionaries, politicians and members of parliament – were part of the VMRO, publicly appeared as such and endorsed their goals,

2. although the VMRO was not a political party in the traditional sense (but rather a revolutionary organisation), considering its overall activity, it undoubtedly had political goals, and its organisational form corresponded to the possibilities of the Macedonian people in the historical period when it was subjugated and disenfranchised.

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1 For most scholars, in order for an assembly of people to be considered a political party, it has to meet at leas three criteria: it should be a legal assembly, it should be united by common ideological or programmatic interests, and there should be a strong intention to take over state power in order to realise the latter (s. Savo Klimovski, Tanja Karakamisheva i Aleksandar Spasenovski, *Politički partii i interesovni grupi*, Fondacija „Konrad Adenauer" i Praven Fakultet „Justinian Prvi", 2016).

2 During different periods, different names were used for this organisation: Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (MRO), Secret Macedonian-Adrianople Revolutionary Organization (TMORO), Internal Macedonian-Adrianople Revolutionary Organisation (VMORO), Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (VMRO), etc. In popular as well as scientific literature, and also in this paper, the organisation is called VMRO (s. britannica.com, 25.9.2018).

While the founding of the VMRO in 1893 is identified as the beginnings of Macedonia's party system, the first political parties legally recognised by the state were formed in 1908. The Macedonian people was under Ottoman rule and thus shared the Empire's fate when, in that same year, the Young Turk Revolution began, a democratic mass movement greatly inspired by the French Revolution.[3] Put under pressure by this movement, in July 1908, the Sultan restored the Ottoman constitution of 1876, proclaimed *Hurriyet* (freedom) and announced general elections, which took place a few months later. Among the four elected Members of the Ottoman Parliament from Macedonia was the VMRO revolutionary Dimitar Vlahov.[4] From a historical point of view, this can be considered the beginning of the Macedonian people's institutionalised political activity in accordance with the rules of parliamentary democracy, the political and constitutional system which has prevailed until today.[5]

Another important political organisation of the Macedonian people was the Federal People's Party (NFL), lead by Dimitar Vlahov and Jane Sandanski. Founded in Salonica in 1909, it was a legal organisation in accordance with the jurisdiction of the Ottoman Empire. This party advocated the creation of an autonomous vilayet (district) of Macedonia within a reorganised Empire. It was banned only one year later, based on the Law on Associations introduced by the new Young Turk parliamentary majority.

A significant role in the political history of Macedonia before its division during the 1912/1913 Balkan Wars was played by the so-called socialist organisations that formed around Vasil Glavinov, Dimo Hadzhi-Dimov, and other outstanding Macedonian revolutionaries.[6] Ideologically positioned left to the centre, they organised a wide range of political and revolutionary activities based on social grounds, such as strikes and workers` protests.

Apart from the political parties mentioned, other political structures were active on the territory of Macedonia, too, during the given period. They were formed by the neighbouring countries with the aim to spread their state propaganda. Thus, there were legal political parties that advocated the national interests of Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece.

After Macedonia was divided during the Balkan Wars in 1912 and 1913, its people started to organise political parties in other, more typical ways, which we will describe in the following.

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3   Jusuf Hamza, *Mladoturskata revolucija vo Osmanskata imperija*, „Logos-A", Skopje, 1995, p.236.

4   Dimitar Vlahov was elected as a representative of the left wing of the Macedonian liberation movement (s. Dimitar Vlahov, *Memoari*, Skopje, 1970).

5   s. Gustav Vlahov, *Spomeni za tatko mi*, Radio-televizija Skopje.

6   s. Nadezhda Cvetkovska, *Gragjanskite partii vo Vardarskiot del na Makedonija (1935-1941)*, Institut za nacionalna istorija, Skopje, 1996, p. 10.

When Vardar Macedonia was under the rule of the Kingdom of Serbia and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, many parties of the Serbs also addressed the Macedonian people: the Radical Party,[7] the Democratic Party,[8] the Republican Party,[9] and the „Dzhemiet" Party.[10]

The breakthrough of the Serbian political parties during that period is linked to the fact that the law did not allow the Macedonian people to found parties that would stand for and advocate its interests, especially when it comes to its independence and autonomy.

Quite the contrary, all the Serbian political parties denied the autonomy of the Macedonian people, so that there was no significant support on this issue whatsoever.[11] A trial by Macedonian members of the parliament of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes from the Democratic Party to form the so-called Macedonian Party was prevented by the authorities.[12] The only political organisation that enjoyed noteworthy support among the Macedonian people during this historical period was the Socialist Labour Party of Yugoslavia (Communists) (SPRJ), which showed some understanding for their aspirations. Founded in Belgrade in 1919, the SPRJ was renamed Communist Party of Yugoslavia (KPJ) in 1920. In the same year, the first parliamentary and local elections were held in Vardar Macedonia, where the KPJ achieved considerable success, in opposition to the Serbian parties with their endeavours.

The Communists won the cities of Skopje, Veles, Kumanovo and Kavadarci, where they formed their municipal authorities, and which became commonly known as „red municipalities". After the invasion of Yugoslavia in 1941, the KPJ lead the resistance against the occupants, which was crowned with the formation of the SFRY in 1945, a socialist state with a one-party system.

Let us now look at another significant political organisation of the Macedonians: the Macedonian National Movement (MANAPO). Based on anti-fascist and communist ideology, it was founded by Macedonian students at the universities of Belgrade and Zagreb in 1936. The political platform of MANAPO was adopted in Ohrid in 1936, with the main goals to „awaken the national awareness of the Macedonian people, adopt the national language, fight against Greater Serbian

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7   The Radical Party (RP) was the first legal political party in Serbia. It was founded in 1881 under the name Radical People's Party. One of their main representatives was Nikola Pašič. The centre-right RP advocated Greater Serbian hegemonism. Their voters were mainly villagers and farmers.

8   The Democratic Party (DP) was founded in 1919 in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the Yugoslav Democratic Party, a fusion of four political parties: the Progress Party, the Independent Radical Party, the People's Party and the Democratic Statehood Party. The DP was a centre-right party that endorsed Greater Serbian interests, with a voter base among the petty and middle bourgeoisie.

9   The Republican Party (RP) was founded in 1920 by Serbian intellectuals who advocated political liberalism. The RP supported republican ideas and believed that Yugoslavia should be organised as a federation of equal constituents. Due to these liberal ideas, the RP was popular with a part of Vardar Macedonia`s population, who, nevertheless, did not significantly support them at the elections.

10 „Dzhemiet" was a political organisation in Turkey before the Balkan Wars, which afterwards continued to exist in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and enjoyed the support of Muslims in Macedonia.

11 s. Nadezhda Cvetkovska, *Gragjanskite partii vo Vardarskiot del na Makedonija (1935-1941)*, op. cit., p. 11.

12 Ibid., p.12.

hegemonism, install democracy, and solve the Macedonian national question".[13] Due to their political activities, MANAPO gained popularity and influence in Vardar Macedonia and was therefore banned by the state authorities.[14]

Another significant political organisation of the Macedonian people during the interwar period was VMRO-Autonomous, which was concentrated on the territory of Pirin Macedonia, which was part of the Bulgarian state. This political organisation was building up a true political and military base in that part of Macedonia (a state within the state). The VMRO defined Pirin Macedonia as „a part of the territory of free and United Macedonia" with all „freedoms: cultural, economic and political, and the entire population has to be ideologically and morally dedicated to the Organisation and to prepare for the liberation of Macedonia". The VMRO had prohibited the activities of other citizens` parties on the territory of Pirin Macedonia, so that it held the exclusive right to political organising. In the Bulgarian parliament, the Macedonians' interests were represented by the so-called Macedonian parliamentary group, which consisted of the elected members from that part of the state, who were under VMRO's direct political command. The members of this group publicly declared that they advocate the interests of the Pirin Macedonian population, as well as those of the Macedonian refugees from Vardar Macedonia and Aegean Macedoina.[15]

In Aegean Macedonia, which was part of the Greek state, the Macedonian people mostly supported the Communist Party of Greece (KPG), the oldest political organisation in the country, during the interwar period. Since its founding, the KPG had fought for the rights of the working masses, and it was the only party in Greece that stood up for the rights of ethnic minorities. Hence, the KPG was the only party to advocate the rights of the ethnic Macedonians in Aegean Macedonia to self-determination and to speaking their mother tongue, as well as other cultural rights that they were denied by the Greek state authorities.

Another significant political organisation in Aegean Macedonia was the VMRO (United), which was founded as a result of the unsuccessful unification of Macedonian organisations with the May Manifesto in 1924. The VMRO (United) was influenced by the Balkan Communist Federation and supported by the Comintern and the Macedonian communists. Its main aim was to fight for a free and independent Macedonian state, which would be an equal member in a future Balkan federation. Furthermore, it should turn into a mass people's movement, closely related to all „national revolutionary and social revolutionary parties and organisations, which advocate the principle of self-determination

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13 s. Mihajlo Apostolski, *Istorija makedonskog naroda, Knjiga treća. Period između dva svetska rata i narodna revolucija (1918-1945)*, Institut za nacionalnu istoriju – Skoplje, 1970, pp. 88-103.

14 Mihajlo Apostolski, op.cit.

15 s. Dimitar Tjulekov, *Obrečeno roboljubie. VMRO v Pirinsko 1919-1934* (promacedonia.org, 10.12.2018).

of the peoples and are prepared to help Macedonia to become an independent state"."[16]

Yet another, no less significant political organisation of the Macedonian people during the interwar period was the Macedonian Patriotic Organisation (MPO). It was founded outside of the territory of Macedonia, i.e. in the United Sates of America, in 1922, as a result of the unification of several organisations of Macedonian emigrants. Paragraph 2 of the MPO's Constitution quoted the following goal of this political organisation: „to fight with legal means for Macedonia to be proclaimed an independent republic within its geographical and economic boundaries". The MPO was prepared to establish forms of close cooperation with other organisations of oppressed Balkan peoples in support of a Balkan confederation, which Macedonia would be an equal member of. A special feature of the MPO was that it set up its own news agency, which informed the American and global public about the problems and challenges of the Macedonian people.

We end this chronological overview with the League of Communists of Macedonia (SKM), which we can define as both an illegal and legal political organisation (political party) of the Macedonian people, active on the territory of Vardar Macedonia as a part of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (SKJ). It organised and lead the struggle for national liberation of the Macedonian people and the citizens of Macedonia before, during, and after World War II. The decision to found a Macedonian communist party was taken by the SKJ in 1934, but it was not formed until nine years later, in 1943, when its first plenary session was held in Tetovo.

The SKM was founded as the Communist Party of Macedonia and renamed League of Communists of Macedonia in 1953. In 1990, it was renamed SKM-Party for Democratic Transformation.

The activities of the SKM resulted in the creation of the Macedonian state, which entered the SFRY, on 2 August 1944.

CONCLUSION

From the examples discussed, we can conclude that political organising of the Macedonian people during the first historical period took place on four levels:

1. in the VMRO, the organisations that originated from it and the ones that referred to its legacy,
2. within the communist movement,

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[16] s. Ivan Katardzhiev, *Vo vrvcite na makedonskata istorija*, Kultura, Skopje, 1986.

3. as separate political organisations which were basedon the legacy, the goals and the commitments of both the VMRO and the communist movement,

4. in the framework of legal organisations in the Ottoman Empire, i.e., after 1913 and 1919, respectively, in Bulgaria, Serbia, and Greece, which the territory of Macedonia was divided among.

The examples given show us that the subjugated Macedonian people did not only use revolutionary, but also political methods in order to reach its national goals, whenever this was allowed by the states that it was part of. This, in turn, proves that the Macedonian people set out for Socialist Macedonia, a part of the SFRY, with a broad experience in party politics (but also in revolution), which, as a collective memory, can be assumed to have contributed to setting up the new Macedonian post-war socialist and constitutional political system.