

FEATURES OF THE MACEDONIAN POWER-SHARING MODEL AND ITS FUTURE¹

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the Macedonian model of power sharing in all 25 years of Macedonian independence, democracy, and pluralism with the application of the descriptive and comparative methodological approach. During this time, the Macedonian political system went through two stages: the 1991-2001 period, when there was a parliamentary model of democracy, with symbolic inclusion of the Albanian political elite in the executive branches; as well as the period following the 2001 Conflict, which ended with the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, which, in turn, introduced a hybrid model, containing elements of Westminster (parliamentarian) and consensual (consociational) democracy. This hybrid character of the system still defines the Macedonian political model as ambivalent. It should not be ignored that in this entire period of the quarter of a century of Macedonian independence, there were some ideas of additional elements of consociation in Macedonian political system. Hence, one aspect under analysis in this paper is the many ideas for the future of the Macedonian model of power sharing.

Key words: power sharing, Westminster model, consociational model, Macedonian political system, grand coalition government.

¹ professional paper

INTRODUCTION

Republic of Macedonia celebrates 25 years of independence in 2016. The first decade of Macedonian independence was marked by the construction of institutions within the political system based on the west liberal democratic prototype. But such a liberal model, as some authors point out, created the potential for conflict in a “Macedonian society, with divisions running deep between the Macedonian majority and Albanian minority”², first of all “due to the politics of collective philosophy and ethno-nationalism, in which the individual rights had lower value in comparison to collective right.”³ The beginning of the second decade of Macedonian independence marked such conflict potential that escalated in 2001, which as a result brought about a change in the system, in order to adopt certain corrections within the system itself, in a manner that best meets the requirements of ‘deprivileged’ communities.

“Independent Macedonia went through two models so far: there is the model of parliamentary democracy and also the parliamentary model with consociational elements”⁴ After the conflict developments in 2001 and the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, and the amendment intervention in Macedonian Constitution, the Macedonian political model which was “directed towards the classical idea of Westminster democracy, with the Constitution, has now modified the structural settings into a consociation democracy, with specially determined rules.”⁵

International critics, ever since the country obtained its independence in 1991/92, pointed out the risk of imminent crises containing conflict potential.⁶ Despite such warnings, the Macedonian political system showed that it had a certain capacity to channel them because ever since the country became

² Флориан Бибер, “Поделбата на власта и спроведување на Охридскиот рамковен договор“ во Стефан Денерд и Ризван Сулејмани (ед.) *Поделбата на власта и спроведување на Охридскиот рамковен договор*, Скопје: Фондација Фридрих Еберт, (2008):19.

³ Билјана Ванковска, *Политички систем*, Скопје: Бомат (2007): 225.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 202.

⁵ Стефан Денерд и Ризван Сулејмани (ед.) *Поделбата на власта и спроведување на Охридскиот рамковен договор*, Скопје: Фондација Фридрих Еберт, (2008): 5-6.

⁶ Бибер, *op cit.*, 9.

independent, it was governed by informal grand coalition as a key component of the power-sharing model without an exception. The power-sharing model “can be defined as practice and institutions that produce largely positioned ruling coalitions. These coalitions are, generally speaking, inclusive of the largest ethnic groups in the society. This is a system that should probably reconcile contradicting principles, such as the right to national self-determination, on one hand and democracy, on the other.”⁷

The purpose of this paper is to chronologically review the manner in which the power-sharing arrangements, the grand coalition Government as primary consociation instrument, in the period before, and after adoption of OFA, were realized in the Republic of Macedonia. This paper will also review certain ideas that have emerged in recent years, which are in line with the promotion of different models of power-sharing arrangements in the country.

ELEMENTS OF POWER-SHARING BETWEEN 1991-2001

Ever since Macedonian independence and the beginning of the process of political pluralization and democratization of the Republic of Macedonia, an informal tradition of involving in the government parties from the second largest ethnic group in the country – Albanians, was created. This approach was due to purely pragmatic reasons, because it is always politically active to manage political processes, if there is a broader political support, even if it is achieved for the cost of reaching political compromise.⁸

These broad coalitions emerged from the so-called expert government in 1991-1992, which were, more or less, political determined.

The so-called expert government, as a representative of ethnic Albanians, included the Party for Democratic Prosperity (PDP). This political party was the coalition partner of SDSM in Governments between 1992-1998. Despite the fact that the Albanian party was part of the government during this time, according to Mirjana Maleska “there were no serious discussions of possible power-sharing because the power was concentrated in the hands of one political party (SDSM), which resulted in lack of willingness to engage in any

⁷ Mirjana Maleska, “What kind of political system did Macedonia get after Ohrid Peace Agreement” in *New Balkan Politics*, No. 9 (2005).

⁸ Ванковска, *op cit.*, 227.

political dialogue or compromise, harming the position of its coalition partner, the Albanian PDP.”⁹

This was one of the reasons why PDP lost the next elections, since the newly founded Albanian political party DPA was a coalition partner of the winner in Macedonian political block VMRO-DPMNE. Despite the fact that VMRO-DPMNE had parliament majority to form a government on its own, learning from errors made in the early 1990s and the refusal to enter into a coalition with any Albanian party at the time, now it decided to abandon such views and invited DPA to be part of the Government.

Despite this practice, other authors also believed that, the overall governing system in the Republic of Macedonia could not be considered as real power-sharing but as a symbolic attempt to include the Albanian political elite in the executive branches. Such inclusion was neither reliable, nor it significantly improved the position of the ethnic Albanians in the state institutions.¹⁰

ELEMENTS OF POWER-SHARING AFTER THE 2001 OHRID FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT

The conflict potential of the Macedonian political system escalated in 2001 with an armed conflict, which ended with constitutional changes the same year, arising from the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement. The new changes defined the Republic of Macedonia as a state of ethnic communities in such a way that the ethnicity was singled out from the sphere of identity, culture and language (as is the case in modern democracies), and directly transposed it in the sphere of politics, institutions and law.¹¹

Thus, the ethnicities were defined as collectivities from which the formal political power in the Macedonian consociational model after 2001 emanates. As Vankovska notes the OFA had institutionalized ethnicity to such a degree that there was no room left for any form of integration or common action

⁹Mirjana Maleska, *Multiethnic Democracy in Macedonia: Political Analysis and Emerging Scenarios*. New Balkan Politics, Issue 13 (2013): 4.

¹⁰ Биебер, *op cit.*, 21

¹¹ Analysis and Evaluation of the Legal Aspects of the Proposed Framework Agreement and the Annex with the Changes of the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, Skopje: Praven Fakultet (2001).

between the groups¹² and according to Siljanovska, the fundamental constitutional principle of citizens was replaced by collectivity¹³.

For Orlović, “The Ohrid Framework Agreement is a compromise, on one hand; it reflects the Macedonian position on Macedonia as a unitary state. On the other hand, it increased the Albanians influence in Parliament, the Government, and public administration, particularly at a local level. The solutions for these problems were found in measures between centralization and decentralization, between integration and prevention of disintegration“.¹⁴

It needs to be underlined that certain changes after the Conflict arose in both the party and electoral system of the country. Before the 2002 elections, a clean proportional electoral model was introduced because of the proportionality principle, introduced, in turn, by the OFA. “The proportional model is described as a more just system. Victory is divided between participants in the elections and it is translated into parliamentary seats“¹⁵. Additionally, Lijphart’s research shows that coalition governments in these cases can also be more efficient and more responsible.¹⁶ At the same time, the new Albanian political formation DUI emerged on the political scene. After the 2002 elections, this party became part of the power sharing, which was an all important aspect of the post-conflict peacebuilding in the Republic of Macedonia, since the political party emerged from the participants in that war conflict.

The first post-conflict Government (**2002-2006**) was headed by SDSM, and the newly founded DUI was also part. According to Maleska, the key challenge that stood before this coalition government was the implementation of the assumed liabilities from the signed OFA, which implied extension of the elements of power sharing in Macedonian political system, a not so popular solution in the name of peace, stability and prosperity of the country.¹⁷

But the biggest crisis of the Macedonian consociational model yet came after the 2006 elections, which was won by VMRO DPMNE. In the grand

¹² Biljana Vankovska, Nova Makedonija, 15.8.2011.

¹³ Gordana Siljanovska, Globalization, Democracy and Constitutional Engineering as Mechanism for Resolving Ethnic Conflict (2006).

¹⁴ Slaviša Orlović “Consociational experiments in the Western Balkans: Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia“ *New Balkan Politics* No. 17, (2015) 37-38.

¹⁵ Maleska, *op cit.*, (2013) : 6.

¹⁶ Arend Lijphart, *Democracies in Plural Societies* New Haven: Yale University Press (1977).

¹⁷ Maleska, *op cit.*, (2013) : 12.

coalition government (2006-2008), instead of inviting the leading Albanian political party at the time DUI, the leading Macedonian party invited the second-placed Albanian party DPA, as a VMRO-DPMNE's traditional partner (the 1998-2001 coalition experience). DUI considered this an act of violation of OFA and the principles set forth by the international community, despite the fact that OFA did not formalize the way in which composition of the government was to be determined. That is why DUI insisted that all future governments should be formed between the winning parties of the two parliamentary blocks, without making the decision on which Albanian party to include into the government dependent on the will of the party leader or the future prime minister. These controversies were partially due to the different interpretation of the elements of parliamentary democracy, where parliamentary majority decides on the composition of the future government, and consociational democracy, where participation of the most relevant political representatives of each segment into the government is implied. After 2008, the Republic of Macedonia saw a sequence of three early parliamentary elections (in 2008, 2011 and 2014). After each electoral cycle, the winning party, VMRO-DPMNE, anticipated the DUI's position of unquestionable participation as a political winner in the Albanian party space when arranging the sharing of power.

IDEAS FOR PROMOTING MACEDONIAN POWER-SHARING PLANS

Throughout the quarter of a century of Macedonian independence, the dilemma of the future of the Macedonian model of power sharing remains, including the ideas for its promotion and development using the well-known and established Swiss or Belgian models for example.

The seven membered Swiss *Conseil federal*, has been mentioned in consociational theory as being the most paradigmatic example of a grand coalition government in a deeply divided society, although some authors consider that "Switzerland, despite the diversity of nations, religions, languages, has never been considered a divided society."¹⁸ The Federal Council is the holder of executive and directorial power in the country, and the seven Council seats are filled by representatives of the four Swiss parties that have always had a specific weight on the domestic political scene – the Social Democrats, the

¹⁸ Ванковска, *op cit.*, 162.

Swiss National Party, the Liberal Radicals, and the Christian Democrats, in a ratio of 2:2:2:1 (the so-called *magic formula*).

During the historical development of the idea for the founding of Macedonia as a contemporary state on the Balkans, there have been certain platforms that considered Macedonia to be the Switzerland of the Balkans. In the course of these different historical contexts and ordeals, Macedonia was proclaimed as the Switzerland of the Balkans. It was this proclamation that actually implied the foundation of a political system, which would imply certain elements of consociation because the Swiss system was, basically, consociational.

Arend Lijphart, as the leading theorist of consociation, considered it to be the most applicable in countries that are small by territory, where there is multiple balance of the segments, where such segments are separated and where such lines of separation intersect.¹⁹ If we compare Switzerland with the Republic of Macedonia, many similarities can be noted through this prism: (1) the percentage of similarity of German-speaking people (63.5%), French-speaking people (22.5%), Italian-speaking people (8.1%) and Romansh-speaking people (0.5%) in Switzerland is similar to the percentage ratio of Macedonians (64%), Albanians (25%) and other smaller ethnic communities in Macedonia (10%), according to the last census from 2002; (2) Globally, both countries are small by territory (Switzerland is number 135, and Macedonia is number 148 in the world); (3) all segments live a compact and homogenous life in certain parts of the countries – the Albanians are in the northwest of Macedonia, whereas the French-speaking community is the dominant one in Romandie, the German-speaking community is in the center of Switzerland, the Italians are the absolute majority in the Ticino Canton, and they also have significant presence in the Graubünden Canton, alongside the Romansh-speaking community.

Preceding from the abovementioned social-demographic and political similarities to Switzerland, it is believed that such kind of collective executive model would be well suited for Macedonia.

The undoubted analytical advance of the Swiss model can be seen in its ability to generate technocratic executives, which create perspective for reducing the partitocratic elements in the political system, guarantee bigger autonomy of the centers, which in their essence should be independent. This refers to administration, the judiciary, prosecution, etc. by reducing the pressure on them.

¹⁹ Аренд Липхарт, *Демократија во плуралните општества*, ПНИД Степ (1994).

By incorporating the most relevant political parties in the grand coalition government, the frustrations of the permanent opposition and losing positions in the political sphere are being abandoned; however, on the other side as noted by Vasović, this would undoubtedly lead to “kartell blockade of political competition” which can potentially create “frozen party system” as is anticipated by Lipset and Rokkan.²⁰

Despite the Swiss model, incidentally in Macedonia, there were some ideas, especially from the representatives of the Albanian community, for a reorganization of the Macedonian consociational model using the Belgian example as “a multilevel heterogenic community ploughed with numerous divisions (...) which in its constitutional history had undergone some difficult times, from the unitary and centralized state to the federal state”.²¹ When the Albanian community requests for such forming of the Macedonian political system, they partly derive from what Boshler pointed out about Macedonia as a country with a small majority (Macedonian) and a large minority (Albanian),²² which is only partly similar to the share of the Flemish (relative majority 57%) and Walloon (far from being the minority community 42%) citizens in the total Belgian population.

As noted by Vasović, the Belgian system demonstrated a large capacity for experimentation and flexibility in building constitutional arrangements for sharing power, although Belgium remains a very fragile political creation. The Belgian experience can only partly be instructive and inspiring for the future of the Macedonian consociative model, especially in terms of how to reduce negative consequences of disagreement, how to bridge the lack of compromise and how to gradually, but in a controlled manner, incorporate the national requirements, primarily of the Albanians in politics and institutions.²³ Belgium further remains a *test case* for the validity of the consociational model of democracy in terms of national division since the “Belgian experience is one that should show whether it is worth investing great economic, political and psychological energy in reconciling disputes and conflicts. (...) Part of the answer to this question may be found in the fact that, despite the rather fragile

²⁰ See in: Vuićna Vasović, *Savremene demokratije*, Tom II, JP Službeni glasnik: Beograd, 2007.

²¹ Vasović, op cit. 168.

²² Daniel Boshler, “Electoral Rules and the Representation of Ethnic Minorities in Post-Communist Democracies“. *European Yearbook of Minority Issues*, 2007/08 7:153-80.

²³ Vasović, op cit. 168.

and fragmented political structure, the Belgian system, retained and incorporated some integrative and stabilizing levers and principles²⁴ in its political order.”²⁵

However, it remains to be the legitimate claim of some authors who consider that, „Macedonia has the capacity to accept certain ideas, but its readiness to change the entire system should be considered long-term. The change of political system is a serious issue and should not be left in the stage of experimenting.“²⁶

CONCLUSION

From the analysis above, we can conclude that the Macedonian model is still a weak arrangement of power sharing, whose goal is to accommodate ethnic diversities.²⁷ According to Florian Bieber, Macedonia is a “minimalist consociational system“²⁸, because the grand coalition government, in the whole period of independence, was less formal due to the absence of strict quotas, and most of the time, it was ethnic and post-electoral. The international community still considers the power-sharing model to be the permanent solution for the conflict between Albanians and Macedonians, at the same time neglecting the fact that such asymmetry of power sharing leaves out the smaller ethnic communities, thereby creating only ethnicization perspectives for Macedonian political life, instead of supporting real consociational political system.²⁹ That is why “the smaller minorities are not satisfied. They consider themselves to be

²⁴These include the constitutional reform of 1970, which determined that "with the exemption of the prime minister, the government comprises equal numbers of ministers belonging to the French-speaking and Dutch-speaking communities of the country's population" (Article 86 from Belgian Constitution), and the political agreement of 2011, following which, after almost 32 years, the head of the government was again an elected prime minister from the minor community – Walloon, which is quite similar to the ideas of the Albanian political elite in Macedonia, one of the three key positions in the country - the speaker, prime minister and president belong to this community.

²⁵ Vasović, *op cit.*, 168-169.

²⁶"Швајцарска" Македонија, луѓето опозиција!? Diversity Media Production Different views for different news 7 ноември 2011

²⁷ Orlović, *op cit.*, 48

²⁸ Bieber, *op cit.*, 13.

²⁹ Orlović, *op cit.*, 39, 43

underrepresented and that such power sharing plans turn Macedonian into a bi-national country.³⁰The Macedonian model of power-sharing, according to Binder, did not succeed completely in finding the best formula for successful national integration through the creation of extensive cultural and ideological consensus.³¹ Modern political science will evaluate Macedonia as a successful multicultural democracy only if it builds an authentic consociational model of power sharing, which will not copy ready-made theoretic and empirical solutions, but will be generated from, and comply with, social, structural, cultural, linguistic, and religious features of Macedonian society.

³⁰ Maleska, *op cit.*, (2013): 19.

³¹ Leonard Binder, "National integration and Political development"*American Political Science Review* 58, No.3 (September 1964), 630.

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