

Chapter 10

MACEDONIA: AN UNFINISHED STATE

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ABSTRACT

For a quarter of a century, Macedonia has been searching for a model of stable democracy. The liberal paradigm, having replaced Marxist ideology, has failed to meet the needs of multiethnicity in Macedonia. This is exacerbated by unfavorable global and regional circumstances which are redefining policies of multiculturalism in the face of current security threats. Between majoritarian and consociational democracy, Macedonia is seeking its own path to stable development.

Keywords: Multiculturalism, Macedonia, democracy, ethnicity

Following the break-up of Yugoslavia, Macedonia gained its independence without the conflicts that accompanied most of the other member states' struggles for independence. The withdrawal of the Yugoslav Army from the territory of Macedonia and the "dying out" of the federal state created a political space which, initially, seemed to be Macedonia's advantage in the democratic transition process.

Several "inherited" problems, however, not only slowed down this process but additionally burdened Macedonia, making it an "unfinished state" twenty-five years after gaining independence. Consequently, it is easy to conclude that

Macedonian society was not ready for a sudden transition, and that this led to changes in the political and constitutional systems which were incomplete and unsuitable for the new international position of the country and the nature of its society. In spite of how fairly quickly the new parliament was constituted, the government elected, the new constitution promulgated, and the national emblem and currency adopted, Macedonia remained burdened by the Yugoslav heritage.¹ The second problem was Macedonia's relations with a neighboring state: ever since Macedonia became independent, Greece has been disputing the name and thereby the identity of the state (Cowan, 2000; Škarić, 2008). This dispute, seen by many as another contribution to the Balkan history of a "narcissism of small differences," has blocked Macedonia's Euro-Atlantic integration processes. The third problem is the fear of a "Kosovization of Macedonia," that is, that Albanians in Macedonia could substitute for the concept of political autonomy a demand for the secession of territories traditionally inhabited by them in the western part of the country.² Closely connected to this is the fourth problem, the ethnic structure of the state, which has been an obstacle to the establishment of stable democracy in recent decades.

The tension caused by these issues strongly characterized the first quarter-century of the sovereign Macedonian state. Moreover, under the influence of open social and political questions, a specific political culture developed in Macedonia, one that may be described as "something in between." It would seem that this state of dividedness which is felt in political and social life became even deeper after the Ohrid Agreement, which preceded reform interventions in the constitutional and political system.

The Ohrid Agreement was signed on 13 August 2001 as a compromise between Macedonians, on the one side, and Albanians, on the other, whose conflict was leading the country into civil war. The Kosovo Liberation Army

¹ The fact that the first president of Macedonia, Kiro Gligorov, a Yugoslav Communist, participant in the anti-fascist movement and high-ranking functionary in the federal administration, was among the last defenders of Yugoslavia is not insignificant. Together with Alija Izetbegović, he advocated the model of an "asymmetrical federation" which allowed the Yugoslav republics to introduce, at various levels of authority, as much "sovereignty" as they found to be in their interest. According to Izetbegović's and Gligorov's proposal for constitutional reforms, the Yugoslav (con)federation would have been constituted around Serbia and Montenegro, with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia as constituent states with shared sovereignty, while Croatia and Slovenia would have retained full sovereignty in the proposed (con)federal system.

² These fears had surfaced as early as 1991, when it was believed that, following the demilitarization of Macedonia, a conflict could arise between Albanians and Macedonians, similar to the one intensifying between the Serbs and Albanians at that time.

(KLA) had provoked clashes in Tanuševci village near Tetovo in western Macedonia, aiming to internationalize and territorialize the “Albanian issue” in Macedonia, using a strategy similar to that of their compatriots in Kosovo. The conflict, which at one point involved about 7,000 KLA members and the Kosovo Protection Corps, which joined the clashes in the southern part of the country near Kumanovo, and 15,000 Macedonian military and police force members, was ended, with the mediation of the European Union and the USA, by the Ohrid Agreement, which resolved some of the issues of the political freedom and cultural autonomy of Albanians. “The Agreement enabled the survival of the Macedonian state through respect for the ethnic identity of each citizen of Macedonia and the development of civil society as its objectives. In this context, minority rights gained more space, particularly the rights of the Albanian minority. This is understandable if one bears in mind the ethnic character of the 2001 conflict in Macedonia, the size of the Albanian minority, and its marginalization in the actual life of the Macedonian state.” (Škarić, 2004).

It is a fact that the 2001 Ohrid Agreement provided a way to allow Macedonia to survive as a multinational state and, despite the fact that it lacked general public support, created the conditions for a specific policy of multiculturalism in Macedonia. Fifteen years later, there are still dilemmas about the sustainability of this concept, i.e., whether the future of Macedonia is as a stable democracy developing in a multiethnic society with shared values, or whether real obstacles to democratic development will emerge from the “Potemkin village.” Contemporary policies of multiculturalism in the Balkan states offer an abundance of specific solutions based on the logic of conflict resolution and prevention, such as the one created in drafting the Ohrid Agreement. The Dayton Agreement is by no means an expression of the authentic need of the national and ethnic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina to regulate their mutual relations; neither are the over-regulated policies for the protection of national minority rights in Croatia and Serbia. It is characteristic of all these policies that they have not enabled social integration; that they were created by the direct intervention of international institutions; and that multiethnicity is accepted as a situation that nobody is happy about. Their aim was to put an end to ethnic conflicts, by intervention or else gradually, and to create the conditions for overcoming problems through political mechanisms.

However, such were not the start positions. The “end of history” in the Balkans, but also in Eastern Europe, meant meeting political, economic and legal requirements as an expression of the de-ideologization of post-communist societies, or, rather, of their willingness to accept “European

values” and create conditions for the development of stable democracy. The political requirements also included the exercise of human and national minority rights and their protection (Hillion, 2004). In this respect, European institutions – OSCE first among them – developed “soft-law” criteria for the protection of national minority rights,³ and these were subsequently standardized as minimum norms that must be taken into account in defining policies of multiculturalism.⁴ Within these vaguely defined standards of protection of national minority rights, the Balkan states were expected to regulate their multicultural policies, taking into account their specific national circumstances, and thus shape their democratic development. No Balkan state, some of which are EU members, has fully succeeded in achieving the set aims. The reasons are many, but without going into the roots of disputes among the Balkan peoples, or the often-mentioned “historical injustices” they have committed against one another, I shall point to several facts which, in spite of being obvious, are often overlooked when policies of multiculturalism are created, but which, in Macedonia, have strongly influenced the building of a stable and sustainable democracy.

Firstly, the liberal concept of citizenship is perceived as a heresy per se in Balkan countries. States’ identities are rooted in the ethnicity of majority communities, and a civic national identity has not developed in any of these states. The division of Macedonia along ethnic faultlines, of which the Macedonian-Albanian one is the most unstable, is not some characteristic of these peoples; rather, it is a transparent image of how the Balkan peoples’ identities are strongly rooted in a primordialism characterized by differences in language, religion and customs. The cultures of Balkan peoples do not attach a crucial importance to limitrophe identities and contacts with closely neighboring cultures. For instance, the closeness of the Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian cultures, traditions and languages in Bosnia and Herzegovina is stronger than that of the intercultural and ethnic connections between Albanians and Macedonians, but the gulfs between them are deeper and more difficult to bridge.

Secondly, during the creation of multicultural policies in the region it was forgotten that ethnic relations here act like interconnected vessels – as a rule, tensions from one part of the region tend to spill over to other parts. This is

³ The OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities issued recommendations on the education (1996), language rights (1998) and effective participation in public life (Lund, 1999) of national minorities.

⁴ The Council of Europe’s Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1994); the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992).

why, two decades after the conflicts between the “Yugoslav” peoples ended, the “Serbian,” “Albanian” and “Croatian” issues are still open.⁵ The aspiration to unite ethnic areas into national, ethnically homogenous states is no different than in the past, and membership in the EU does not mean that “pan-nationalism” is abandoned automatically. Many Marxist and liberal historians and philosophers saw the Balkan peoples as not being mature enough to be shaped into nations: “[I]n a century which naively assumed that all peoples were virtually nations there was hardly anything else left to the oppressed peoples of Austria-Hungary, Czarist Russia, or the Balkan countries, where no conditions existed for the realization of the Western national trinity of people-territory-state, where frontiers had changed constantly for many centuries and populations had been in a stage of more or less continuous migration. Here were masses who had not the slightest idea of the meaning of *patria* or patriotism, not the vaguest notion of responsibility for a common, limited community.” (Arendt, 1951).

Thirdly, the implosion, not only of the Yugoslav state, but also of the notion of Yugoslavism as the basis for building the Yugoslav nation, halted any wider integration processes for a long time. The Yugoslav nation had strong opponents in Serbian and Croatian nationalism, but it also had latent allies among peoples and ethnic groups who were building security and prosperity, for various reasons, within the supranational Yugoslav identity. Both the differences and similarities of this concept with the efforts of the European Union to form a minimum common cultural space are obvious. Yugoslav identity, which was first shaped under the conditions of the country’s liberal rise following World War One, and continued in a Marxist-reoriented state after World War Two, did not survive the “end of history” in the late 20th century. The collapse of Yugoslavism strongly influenced the rise of nationalisms, and the consequences of this policy are firmly imbedded in the contemporary political systems of the countries that formed in post-Yugoslav territory. Support for the dissolution of Yugoslavia, without any real attempt at giving it a chance to survive, is a discouraging example for contemporary attempts at national and regional integration. Moreover, few Balkan states are approaching integration in the EU with the aim of truly

⁵ For example, democracy in the Republic of Croatia, an EU member since 2013, is based, *inter alia*, on an electoral system which rests on the right of the diaspora, which includes overseas emigrant diasporas and Croatians living in Herzegovina and parts of southwestern Bosnia, to vote in parliamentary and presidential elections. In a stable liberal democracy, this right would not be unusual as such, nor is it rare in electoral practice. However, in fragile Balkan democracies it is rightfully perceived as a threat to strengthening democracy in Croatia and creating conditions for the democratic development of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

accepting the values of the EU and liberal democracy. The practice in these countries' political systems, be they EU members or in various stages of accession, clearly shows that European integration processes are seen as embodying their chance for a better life and improved security. Integration based on a culture of disintegration and fear of differences, which is increasingly present in other parts of Europe (*Der Multikulturalismus ist tot*), is an extremely difficult process requiring not only consensus on changed values in the Balkan countries, but also a consensus in power centers outside the Balkans that a "rose garden which will not tolerate other flowers for the sake of its own beauty" should be replaced with a "garden of diverse flowers, blooming all year round."

Finally, in the "case of Macedonia," and all others who are striving to build stability through integration policies which have not authentically originated from the groups that are the subject of this integration, it is important to bear in mind that multicultural policies are often a screen for the realization of wider political plans. This is not illegitimate in itself, and in stable democracies, where basic liberal values are respected, the demands that multicultural policies put on political agendas are not as dramatic as in societies where democracy is not so robust. Discussions on issues regarding the status of Quebec, Catalonia, or Scotland in the multinational, complex states they belong to end in a referendum of citizens in whom there is an awareness of both the state and the nation. In the Balkans, similar issues are much more sensitive, and citizens, when they have a chance to express their position on an issue regarding the right to self-determination, will most often only regard the interest of the nation solely embodied in the state.

Strengthening democracy in Macedonia should be based on eliminating the aforementioned risks, but also on revitalizing two key principles – trust and solidarity, which do not always go "hand in hand" with liberal ideology. Strengthening civic equality enables each and every one to pursue their own happiness, but in reality this benefits those who have better access to resources. The starting point in our "pursuit of happiness" is important, because it is conditioned not only by our personal capabilities, but also by our heritage, our social and political environment, and a range of circumstances which need not be encouraging. It is similar with peoples and ethnic groups. In the process of building a state, members of the majority nation – which has at its disposal the mechanisms of political power, and can impose its language and culture as the dominant ones – are in a more favorable situation. Reaching a balance at the individual and collective levels is possible via the legal and political instruments of contemporary liberal democracy. Interventions are also

possible to mitigate the discrepancies brought about by thorough application of the principle of majoritarian democracy. However, sustainable changes and the establishment of integrative multiculturalism are only possible if members of different ethnic groups are willing to waive the sovereign control of resources for the sake of solidarity, and transfer them to national institutions. This transfer from primordial ethnicity towards a civic nation is only possible in an atmosphere of social trust, without misgivings regarding the exercise of human rights.

For more than a decade, the liberal multiculturalism that was institutionalized by the Ohrid Agreement and the constitutional amendments that stemmed from it have been safeguarding a fragile political and social stability; but it is a fact that ethnic Albanians and Macedonians do not have a common space in which to build trust based on solidarity. Nothing more is expected of them than to accept and tolerate differences. The principle of multicultural citizenship (Kymlicka, 1996) has not yielded in the Balkans those results offered by the Canadian experience (Kymlicka, Opalski, 2001).

Left-oriented liberals point to the fact that the future of multiculturalism lies in returning to authentic liberal values. The most effective manner of reconciling cultural differences is equality before the law. Consistent application of the principle of equality and full institutional distancing from ethnic and religious identities ensure the latter's authenticity and protect them from being assimilated. Only a liberal state so organized is able to reach every single individual and ensure his full freedom. Unlike multiculturalists who support the self-governance of minorities in the domain of cultural autonomy, i.e., minority cultures regulating certain issues of their cultural life in accordance with the rules of their community, liberal monoculturalists support the thesis of universal human rights within the unified legal order of a liberal state (Barry, 2001). However, can the conditions of liberal equality ensure a fundamental equality of citizens based on a trust which is built, *inter alia*, on recognizing both social rights and collective identities? More specifically, is it possible only through the mechanism of civic equality to establish a social space where free individuals build trust and create various non-institutional forms to satisfy the need for realization and preservation of their identity? Finally, has the contemporary liberal state not abandoned multicultural policies based on ethno-cultural justice and opted for a "muscular" liberalism whose primary focus is on protection against terrorism and controlling forced migration (Bašić, 2016)?

The answers to these questions determine the answer to the basic question of this paper – whether the political and constitutional system in Macedonia,

based on the notion of liberal multiculturalism, has a chance to survive, that is, can the creation of the modern Macedonian state be completed? The solution would, indeed, have to be sought in a decentralized public administration system and shared accountability. The model of consociational democracy requires the engagement of citizens in making political decisions and the skills of negotiating and reaching compromises (Lijphart, 1997). In pluralistic societies, which are mostly divided along ethnic, cultural, language and religious lines, it is necessary to adapt political agendas to the interests of minorities as well. At first glance, consociation is adaptable to the Macedonian type of multiethnicity, but the establishment of such a model of democracy requires favorable conditions – above all, consensus and motivation on the part of the political elites to implement it, followed by a social atmosphere characterized by a clear preference for consociational over majoritarian democracy, which is easy prey for those who are prone to use majorization to stir up discontent and conflicts.⁶ However, consociation requires responsible management and leadership, which is able to recognize in time those instances when this model of democracy yields to the seductive authority of a partocracy. According to Lijphart, for a plural society to be defined as a consociational democracy, four key elements must be incorporated into its political system: a grand coalition, proportionality, mutual veto and segmental autonomy (Lijphart, 1977).

The process of building a stable democracy in Macedonia, but also in other countries in the region, is taking place under unfavorable global and fragile regional circumstances. The foundations of the Macedonian nation do not contain the connective tissue for establishing trust among ethnic groups, and the fact that neighboring countries are contesting the state's identity, or occasionally recalling the ethnic and historical rights of their compatriots, is not beneficial to the process of building a democracy which will ensure not only the survival of the state, but also the security and happiness of its citizens. Finally, the political elites do not have the necessary common platform for overcoming the identity crisis, which contributes to the strengthening of a segregative multiculturalism, and this, in turn, facilitates further fragmentation and instability.

⁶ “The necessary condition for a happy functioning of a consociational democracy is a ‘cooperation of the elites’ who are resolute in their decision to fight against the disintegrating tendencies of their societies; but this necessary and indeed decisive condition disappears in the definition of consensual democracy...” (Sartori, 1997; *translated from Serbian*).

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