

## **Minorities in Coalition-Building: the Case of the Republic of Macedonia**

Marina Andeva\*

*University American College Skopje*

While the Balkan countries and some European countries have had issues with recognizing and supporting the different ethnic communities living within their borders, Macedonia has, since its independence, recognized the existence of different communities as a given fact. Since gaining independence, it has constitutionally guaranteed all citizens freedom of association for the ‘accomplishment and protection of their political, economic, social, cultural and other rights and beliefs,’ (Article 20 of the Constitution from 1991), as well as free expression of national belonging (Article 8 of the Constitution). Many political parties were formed representing different minorities; some of those parties have won seats in the Parliament, local council and positions of Mayor in different municipalities, and a few of them have entered government coalitions. Many pre-election coalitions have included minority political parties and every government coalition has consisted of parties representing ethnic minorities. Until 2002 this mainly applied to the parties representing Albanians; from 2002 onwards, there have been coalitions formed of parties that represent practically all nationalities in the country. This paper illustrates how and to what extent minorities’ political parties have entered into electoral and government coalition-building in the Republic of Macedonia, as well as the coalition dynamics through the years and the main challenges encountered by minorities in ensuring an effective voice in politics.

**Keywords:** Republic of Macedonia; minorities; elections; coalition-building; government coalitions

The primary aim when accommodating ethnic group diversity is to design a state organization structure that is capable of accepting diversities through different mechanisms and instruments (Andeva & Marichikj, 2013: 172). In the process of doing so, the Republic of Macedonia was under a amount of pressure to develop a framework that would fit the needs and rights of its minorities. Following political changes in the early 1990’s, the country

\* Assistant Professor, School of Political Science, University American College Skopje. Email: [marina.andeva@uacs.edu.mk](mailto:marina.andeva@uacs.edu.mk).

entered a process of social transition, and as a newly independent state, faced a denial of its identity from without as well as amended identity definitions from within (Dodovski, 2012:92). Ethnic Macedonians, being the constituent nationality of the state, were living out a dream of a free and independent Macedonia. Through the years to come, the country faced a number of challenges in its transition from a mono-ethnic nation-state to a multicultural state in which ethnic Macedonians share the state with other constituent members.

As statistics confirm (Table 1), the Republic of Macedonia has an interethnic structure composed of one dominant group (the Macedonian ethnic community) and one large minority group (the Albanian national minority).<sup>1</sup> As such, the structure reflects a relationship between Macedonians and Albanians, and at many times through the years has shown signs of a relationship between the state and the Albanian national minority as the biggest minority group in the country (Frckoski, 2005). There is an evident cultural difference between these two nationalities, with Christian Orthodox religion and the Macedonian language on one side, and mostly Muslim religion and Albanian language on the other. A distinct line of conflict between these two groups was manifested through the struggle of cultural rights such as education in the mother tongue, use of symbols of the ethnic group, establishments of cultural groups, media in the mother tongue, etc. This cultural conflict does not occur independently, but rather hand in hand with political processes in the country. In such a context, minorities' political participation in Macedonia can be seen from two different angles: from one side, the nature and type of participation by the Albanian national minority, and from the other, the struggle of smaller minority groups for more effective involvement in the decision-making processes in the country.

Table 1. Population structure according to declared ethnic affiliation, by censuses.<sup>2</sup>

	<b>1961</b>	<b>1971</b>	<b>1981</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>2002</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	1406003	1647308	1909136	2033964	1945932	2022547
<b>Macedonians</b>	1000854	1142375	1279323	1328187	1295964	1297981
<b>Albanians</b>	183 108	279 871	377 208	447 987	441 104	509 083
<b>Turks</b>	131 484	108 552	86 591	77 080	78 019	77 959
<b>Serbs</b>	42 728	46 465	44 468	42 775	40 228	35 939
<b>Roma</b>	20 606	24 505	43 125	52 103	43 707	53 879
<b>Boshniaks</b>	-	-	-	-	9 829	17 018
<b>Vlachs</b>	8 046	7 190	6 384	7 764	8 601	9 695

Party coalition formation in the western democracies has been the subject of numerous studies, mainly focusing on government coalitions (Riker, 1962; Pridham, 1986; Laver and Schofield, 1998). In recent years, focus has been made also on pre-electoral coalition formation (Golder, 2006). Studies on party pre-election coalitions in the Republic of Macedonia have been carried out as well, analysing pre-electoral coalition formation and the factors influencing it with an emphasis on the ideological compatibility of the interested parties, their number (i.e. the size of their expected coalition), the electoral strength of the potential coalitional parties, the ideological polarization of the party system and the disproportionality of the electoral rules (Dimovski 2011; Dimovski, 2014)<sup>3</sup>. With specific relation to the case of Macedonia, Bieber (2008) contributes to the literature of minorities in electoral systems and in governments while comprehensively analysing the countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe, offering highlights from the Macedonian case. Friedman (2005) has also conducted an analysis of the minority representation and electoral system in Macedonia by examining the results of parliamentary elections from independence until 2002. More focused studies on the participation of minorities in the political life of Macedonia and specifically the concerns of political parties representing minorities has also been carried out by Taleski (2008: 136), and in a more comprehensive approach focusing on minority participation in Government by Robotin (2003).

There is a lack of single studies specifically directed to the phenomenon of coalition-building and minorities' participation in such a process in the Republic of Macedonia in the existing body of literature. Consequently, this article attempts to give a first insight on the subject matter and to trigger interest in the topic for future research endeavors. It will attempt to give an insight into the minority rights framework in the country and focus specifically on minorities' political participation, by illustrating their participation in coalition-building and representation in the Macedonian parliament and government through the years. It begins with a general overview of the key historical facts related to the development of the legal framework for minorities' protection. In the second section of this article, minorities' participation in electoral coalition-building is presented, offering data and figures since the first parliamentary elections in the country; the focus on minorities entering into coalitions to form governments is made in the third section of this article. The concluding remarks underline the situation of the minorities and their expected options to enter into pre-election coalitions.

## 1. Minorities' protection before and after 2001

The history of Macedonia is characterized by gradual steps towards developing a multicultural model of democracy. With the Anti-fascist Assembly for the National Liberation of Macedonia (ASNOM), Macedonia has gained constituency as a Macedonian nation state. The French concept of nation state is present in the ASNOM documents (ASNOM, 2004: 41-52), viewing Macedonia as a democratic country for the people (*narod*) where the term *people* comprises all the citizens in its territory. According to some constitutional law scholars in Macedonia, the concept of nation state (*demos*) does not have its pure form as in France; rather, in ASNOM it comprises the category “national minorities”, which gives the minorities all the rights of free life in the state (Skaric, 2007: 249-263). In the context of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, ethnically plural Macedonia developed political, educational and cultural institutions, and enjoyed relatively free (although economically challenging) circumstances as a semi-ignored “step-child” republic (Reuter, 1993: 28-38). In this historical period, the beginning of the multicultural Republic of Macedonia was developed. The 1974 Yugoslav Constitution set up a three-tiered identification system for its member republics: the first was nations (*narod*); the second consisted of nationalities (*narodnosti*) with kin-states in the SFRY, and the third tier was comprised of ethnic groups with neither of these but who were considered ethnically distinct. Communist Yugoslavia resembled a state based on elite accommodation with elements of coercive consociationalism built into the system (Banac, 2009: 461-478). The new structure offered important symbolic satisfaction to the various ethnic groups in the newly constituted state (Schöpflin, 1993: 181). The Albanian community participated in Macedonian public, political and economic life, regardless of having no institutionally recognized autonomy within Macedonia; there were less public protests about the status of Albanians in Macedonia than was the case with Albanians in Kosovo and Serbia (Adamson and Jovic 2004, 297). According to Adamson and Jovic (2004), the context in which Macedonian and Albanian identities had been defined, however, changed with the rise of Slobodan Milošević in Serbia, and the crisis of the Yugoslav communist ideology throughout the country. In the Constitution of the federal Yugoslavia from 1974, all nationalities and communities had the right to use their own language in the Parliament, public administration and in judicial proceedings, and were free to express their nationality, race and religion.<sup>4</sup> The biggest ethnic community in the Socialist Federal Republic of Macedonia, the Albanian community, enjoyed self-representation rights

in terms of full participation in the Parliament and enjoyment of the language rights in certain areas (as stipulated in the federal constitution).

In September, 1991, a new independent Republic of Macedonia was formed<sup>5</sup> with a 'titular nation' emphasis in the civic constitution's preamble.<sup>6</sup> The Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet were declared the Republic's official language and no provisions were made for minority languages' use in Parliament, or for any group's right to political representation. The ethnic Albanian community and its leadership developed specific demands for equality in group terms: formal recognition of the Albanian language as the official language of public authorities in Albanian-settled regions and in the Assembly, and constitutive status for the Albanian community, with veto powers. They consistently called for a better definition of their position and their rights, resulting in political manifestos and calls for a referendum on the cultural and territorial autonomy of western Macedonia (Andeva, 2013:215)<sup>7</sup>. According to Frckoski (2002: 133-146) one of the crucial points for gaining independence was resolving the questions of identity dilemmas in creating a Macedonian nation of citizens with different ethnic identities, and the dynamics and dilemmas over the majority-minority relations and the Macedonian nation plan. After the establishment of independence, the international community and experts were actively involved in mediation efforts between the Macedonian and Albanian ethnic communities. One such example is the effort of the International Commission for inter-ethnic relations in forming a Working Group (led by Geert-Hinrich Ahrens) which had regular sessions between the representatives of the Macedonian government and the Albanian political parties, in which many questions<sup>8</sup> were discussed concerning the rights of the Albanian ethnic community in the country. Those same raised questions were later transformed into four main arguments and included in the Ohrid Framework Agreement in 2001.<sup>9</sup>

In the 2001 ethnic conflict, self-determination versus human rights emerged as the critical dichotomy. 'Human rights' were presented as basic requirements, shifting the main discourse towards demands for collective/ethnic rights and an ethnically-based power-sharing settlement for the Albanian national minority. The Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) (as 2001 conflict-resolution document) brought to light a new model of minority protection in Macedonia. The framework was composed of the OFA and the subsequent constitutional amendments and laws which brought significant changes:

- 1) ended an ethnic conflict;
- 2) changed the minority rights legal corpus (introduced equitable representation of persons belonging to all communities in state organs and in other public bodies at all levels and language rights)<sup>10</sup>;
- 3) development of a decentralized Government and revised municipalities' boundaries (significant increase of competences of municipalities for the purpose, mainly, of increasing the level of autonomy of ethnic communities which are in majority in such municipalities);
- 4) introduced special parliamentary procedures (double-majority voting or right to veto for the minority communities in the Parliament); and
- 5) reformed education and use of minority languages.

Amendments to the constitution included an explicit acknowledgement of the country's Albanian, Turkish, Vlach, Serbian, Roma, and Boshniak minorities in the Preamble, replacing the term "nationalities" with "peoples". The constitutional amendments furthermore guaranteed free expression of identity extended to free use of symbols, guaranteed protection of ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity to all communities, establishment of institutions, associations for expression, and development of identity.<sup>11</sup>

## **2. Minorities in electoral coalition-building**

Coalition-building in Macedonia can be subject to many forms of analysis. It can be analyzed through pre-electoral coalitions, coalition-building during the formation of the government, coalition formation during the functioning of the established government, and coalitions at the end of the term (Dimovski, 2011). Such an analysis, specifically as concerns minorities' participation, requires a detailed and comprehensive study. This article narrows the subject matter down to pre-election coalition-building (in parliamentary elections) and government coalitions. However when arguing about the modalities of political participation of minorities in Macedonia, a distinction should be made not only between participation in pre-electoral coalition-building or government coalitions, but also between political participation of the Albanian political parties and the political parties of the smaller minority groups in the country (Roma, Turks, Serbs and Boshniaks). In the Macedonian case, the political

participation of smaller-in-size minorities in the parliament was always guaranteed through the pre-elections coalitions. As pre-electoral coalition formation literature points out, single parties often are facing the inability to command a majority of support (this is the case with small political parties, thus in the Macedonian case with the political parties formed by small minority groups); consequently if they want to exercise executive power they are forced to enter in different forms of coalition (Golder, 2006: 193). Political parties can either enter into pre-electoral coalitions, or compete alone in elections and subsequently form coalitions to enter into government.

Coalitions of political parties were present at the first multi-party elections and in the formation of the first plural Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia, and it later became a common practice. Developments in the field of coalition-building in the country in the past 20 years have largely conformed to the majority of the features of party coalitions inherent in the developed western parliamentary democracies (Dimovski, 2011), however with certain particularities, such as the frequent changes to the electoral system in short time periods. Since gaining independence, Macedonia has had eight cycles of Parliamentary elections. In 1991 and 1994 the parliamentary elections were organized in a two-round majority system, while in 1998 there was a mixed system featuring two-round majority and proportional voting, and from 2002 a system of proportional voting with six electoral units was established. D'Hondt proportional representation electoral system was introduced as early as 1996, both for the election of the Parliament and of the Councils of the municipalities, and it was a part of mixed majority-proportional system for parliamentary elections of 1998, becoming the sole base for parliamentary elections in 2002.<sup>12</sup> The arguments in favor of the OFA and 'power-sharing' were mainly critical of a majoritarian model as insensitive and even unjust toward minorities.(Maleski 2005). Maleska (2013) fairly points out that in assessing any power-sharing transformation it is essential to compare it to its alternatives. The question of what alternatives there were for Macedonia after the 2001 conflict remained. Smaller minority parties (of Turks, Roma, Serbs and Boshniak) pushed for greater proportionality. This mixed (majoritarian/proportional) model was changed to a purely proportional one before the 2002 elections, as a result of the principle of proportionality in the Ohrid Framework Agreement (Maleska, 2014). Consequently, there was a significant increase in the number of competing parties<sup>13</sup>, as well as the MPs belonging to the Albanian, Turk, Roma and other communities.

In the first parliamentary elections in 1990, 18 political parties, one social organization, 43 independent candidates and six coalitions involving nine political parties

were present (Dimovski, 2011). Few minority political parties entered into more than one pre-election coalition (in various electoral units).<sup>14</sup> At the second parliamentary elections (1994), also by majority representation, six election coalitions were formed from nine parties. Two minority parties were involved in coalitions: the Party for Democratic Action (Muslim) and the Democratic Party of the Turks. In the third parliamentary elections, held in 1998, MPs were elected under a mixed majority-proportional system and 85 seats were won by majority and 35 by the proportional system. In an election under the majoritarian system 21 political parties acted independently and 14 political parties formed five coalitions. Minority parties involved in those coalitions were the Party for Full Emancipation of Roma, Democratic Party of Turks, the Democratic Progressive Party of the Roma in Macedonia and the Party for Democratic Prosperity of the Albanians. Five coalitions also took part in the elections which were held under the proportional system, with a total of 15 political parties. Here, in addition to the four previously mentioned coalitions, a coalition was formed with the Party for Democratic Prosperity of Albanians as minority political party. These elections had 10 electoral coalitions, with a total of 29 political parties. The pre-election coalition of VMRO-DPMNE won absolute majority and was able to form a government. The government coalition was joined by the Albanian political block PDPA-NDP, later renamed as DPA.

In the 2002 parliamentary elections, conducted under the pure proportional system without legal threshold, the Republic of Macedonia was divided into six districts with an approximately equal number of voters registered in each constituency; 20 MPs from each district were elected. Seven election coalitions were formed in which several minority parties were included: the Democratic League of Boshniaks, the United Party of Roma, the Democratic party of Serbs, Democratic party of Turks, Democratic Union of Vlachs, the Party of the Vlachs in Macedonia, the Democratic Union of Serbs in Macedonia, the Democratic Muslim Party, the Party for Democratic Movement of the Egyptians in Macedonia, as well as the Democratic Party for Orthodox Unity of Serbs and Macedonians. The government was formed from the biggest coalition and the newly formed Albanian block, the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI). In the next elections in 2006 the election model was kept, and six pre-election coalitions were formed. The Democratic Party of the Turks, the Union of Roma, and the Democratic Union of Vlachs entered into the coalition named “For Macedonia together”. The Party for the Movements of Turks in Macedonia, the Union of Roma, the Party of Vlachs, the Boshniaks Democratic Party, the Party for Democratic Forces of Roma in Macedonia and the Party for Integration of Roma entered into the coalition “VMRO-

DPMNE”. The Albanian political parties, the Democratic Alliance of Albanians and New Democratic Forces, formed their own coalition, as well as the Democratic Union for Integration with the Party of Democratic Prosperity. In the sixth parliamentary elections (first early parliamentary elections), two election coalitions were present:

1) “Sun-Coalition for Europe” (with the Democratic Union of Vlachs as a minority political party entering in the coalition); and

2) A coalition led by VMRO-DPMNE with more minority parties included.<sup>15</sup>

The second coalition led by VMRO-DPMNE won the majority of seats in Parliament (63), and formed a coalition government with one Albanian political party (DUI), a party which was not included in the pre-electoral coalition. In the seventh parliamentary elections in 2011, two coalitions were formed by 37 political parties (out of 53 running the elections) (Dimovski, 2014:68). The first was led by VMRO-DPMNE and called “For better Macedonia”,<sup>16</sup> and the second was led by the political party SDUM (Social-democratic Union of Macedonia) and called “For your future”.<sup>17</sup> Both coalitions included several minority political parties. The first coalition formed a government with one Albanian political party (DUI), which was not included in the pre-electoral coalition.

In the last parliamentary elections in 2014 (second early parliamentary elections), two great coalitions and two small coalitions were formed. The first big coalition was led by SDUM, and the other by VMRO-DPMNE. In the first, five minority political parties were included (exactly the same composition of the coalition as in the 2011 elections),<sup>18</sup> whereas in the second coalition ten minority political parties were included (with the majority from the Roma national minority).<sup>19</sup> One small coalition (called “GROM”) included the Serbian Progressive Party of Macedonia. Albanian minority political parties acted independently at the elections.<sup>20</sup> In the Parliamentary elections (2014-2018) the Coalition VMRO-DPMNE, composed of several parties representing ethnic communities in the country,<sup>21</sup> won 61 seats and its government coalition partner from the Albanian national minority was DUI. The coalition led by SDUM won 34 seats. Table 3 gives an overview of number of seats won by parties of minority communities in the parliament in all parliamentary elections in Macedonia.

Table 3. Distribution of minorities' mandates in the Assembly (1991 – 2018)<sup>22</sup>

Parties	1991-1994	1994-1998	1998-2002	2002-2006	2006-2008	2008 - 2011	2011-2014	2014-2018
PDP - Party for Democratic Prosperity (Albanian)	17	13	10	2	3			
DPA – Democratic Party of the Albanians		4	10	7	11	5	8	7
NDP – Peoples Democratic Party (later National Democratic Revival) (Albanian)	5*+1			1			2***	
PCER - Party for Full Emancipation of the Roma	1	1					1	
Democratic Union Of Albanians		1						
SR – Union of Roma			1		1	1	1	1
DPT - Democratic Party Of Turks In Macedonia		1		3	2	1	1	1
DPS - Democratic Party Of Serbs In Macedonia				1	1	1	1	1
DUI - Democratic Union For Integration (Albanians)				15	13	18	14	20
Democratic League of Boshniaks				1			1	
OPE – United Party of Roma				1				
PEI - Party For European Future**					1	1	3	
PDTM - Party for the movement of Turks in Macedonia				1	1		1	
SDAM - Party for Democratic Action in Macedonia (Boshniaks)						1	1	1
SRPM – Serbian Progressive Party							1	
PDAM – Party of Democratic Action (Boshniak)							1	
New Democratic Forces (Albanian)				1				
United Party for Emancipation (Roma)					1			

Democratic forces of Roma					1			
New Democracy (Albanian)						4		
Movement for National Unity of Roma							1	

\* shared seats between PDPM - Party for Democratic Prosperity in Macedonia and NDP

\*\* founded as multiethnic party however MP representative declared as Torbesh.

\*\*\* when renamed in National Democratic Revival

In most of the parliamentary elections, Albanians were elected mostly from the list of ethnic Albanian parties acting independently in the elections. Members of other minority communities entered into the parliament either as members (leaders) of ethnic parties placed on a list of established pre-electoral coalitions with Macedonian parties or on the lists of basically Macedonian parties as party-members. Otherwise, there was no guaranteed representation of the smaller communities in the parliament and there is no possibility for their parties to win a seat acting individually, which reduces their relative importance in the political life and makes their representation dependent on the strategies of other political actors. Attempts have been made to open a procedure to amend the legislation in order to guarantee 10 seats in the parliament for smaller communities, but both failed,<sup>23</sup> revealing that the issue of major concern is the preservation of the decisive position and relative strength of ethnic Albanian MP-s in cases of double majority voting (Spirovski, 2012: 6). This indicates that smaller communities were not supposed to be a factor in the overall structure of power sharing arrangements, despite the “multi-ethnic” Framework Agreement. The new, post-conflict constitutional design, although formally intended to serve multi-ethnic purposes, reduces itself to the creation of two political entities along ethnic lines, namely Macedonians and Albanians, which are predetermined by the size of the ethnic communities.

### **3. Minorities’ coalition-building in governments**

Recognizing that it is crucial to include minorities to ensure state stability is a distinctive mark of Macedonian politics. Since the first democratic multiparty elections in 1990, the participation of political parties representing the Albanians in Macedonia has been maintained in the government (Frckoski 1998: 74). All governments elected by the Macedonian Parliament since independence have been coalition governments, in which one of the parties of the Albanian community acted as a coalition partner. Other ethnic groups (10% in total) do

not participate in such power sharing arrangements, although they do find their place in the over-size government coalitions frequently; thus, this “voluntary” executive power-sharing is perceived as a feature of integrationist theories and it could be accepted as such in Macedonia until 2001 (Spirovski, 2012:4). According to Spirovski (2012:3), in Macedonia three out of four elements of the original Lijphart’s consociationalism are evident:

- 1) segmental autonomy, although at the level of municipal self-government;
- 2) proportionality, both in the electoral system (PR d’Hondt) and in representation in public bodies and; and
- 3) veto right<sup>24</sup>.

There is no mandatory constitutional requirement for executive grand coalition and there have not been “grand” coalitions in Macedonia, since not all significant parties of all significant minority groups were represented. The only grand coalition, including opposition parties at that time, was created in 2001 during the conflict and lasted only for a couple of months (13 May – 23 November) (Spirovski, 2012). In theory, grand coalitions are not necessary in an ethnically diverse society, as the inclusion of minorities can be insured through other means, such as a combination of proportional representation and strong veto rights and super-majorities on certain issues (Bieber & Keil, 2009).

Executive coalitions formed on a basis of proportional representation of ethnic segments appeared as a top issue, both political and constitutional, after the election in 2006. There is, however, no constitutional guarantee for such an action. When, for example, in 2006, the winning (Macedonian) party formed a Government with an Albanian party that did not win the largest number of votes among Albanian parties, this issue was seriously put into question. By the close of July 2006, President Branko Crvenkovski had given Nikola Gruevski a mandate to form a new government. In order to accomplish that, Gruevski had to commence the process of coalition-building, presumably with one of the ethnic Albanian parties. The Albanian Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), which was part of the outgoing government, was eager to remain in government as a coalition partner of the new regime. However, the Democratic Party of the Albanians (DPA), which had once been part of a ruling coalition exiled in 2001, made clear that it was the natural partner instead (Former Yugoslav Rep. of Macedonia Review, 2010).

Ever since 1992, apparently, closer links between certain Albanian and Macedonian parties have been established, that could hint at possible coalitions. It has been a matter of political strategy involving mutual interests in deciding the question of whether the government must be formed by the winning Macedonian and winning Albanian parties, as representing the two ethnic entities.. During the term 2002-2006, the Macedonian party Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDUM) formed a coalition government with DUI (party emerging after the armed conflict) (Dimeski, 2014:27). The Democratic Party of Albanians and VMRO-DPMNE, as coalition partners in the government in the previous term (1998 – 2002), remained in opposition. According Spirovski (2012: 12) since 2002 VMRO-DPMNE has been overtly challenging the legitimacy of DUI as emerging from and comprising of members of the paramilitary KLA, so that a coalition with its traditional partner among Albanian parties, DPA (11 seats) in 2006 was not a surprise. Nevertheless, DUI claiming to be the true representative of the Albanians by winning 18 seats in the parliament, made a request to be included in the government. Consequently, in 2007, negotiations took place between VMRO-DPMNE with DUI, resulting in the so-called “May Agreement”, after the dissolution of the Parliament and the first premature elections in 2008 took place.. Spirovski (2012: 13) notes that such arrangements and developments having a dualistic nature where evidently a third segment is missing enter in the consociational logic and validity of dualistic executive coalitions, such as is the case with Northern Ireland and Belgium. Then as well for instance, such executive coalitions are also to be found in the Italian autonomous province of South Tyrol (Andeva, 2013).

Bieber (2008), points out that a clear majority-minority relationship in coalitions means that the impact of minority parties on government policies can be limited, with minority parties often controlling less important, non-sensitive ministries. In the case of Macedonia, this could be the case only for the political parties of smaller minority groups. Important and but not very sensitive ministries (such as security) have been offered to the Albanian political parties for obvious reasons, especially after 2001. In reference to the departments of the Government, the distribution follows certain proportional quota, including for the deputy-ministries. Shasivari (2001: 33) points out that besides the fact that in the period between 1991 and 2001, the Albanian parties participated in the five Macedonian governments, the systems do not take the form of power-sharing but rather an attempt to include the Albanian elite. In 1991, from 23 ministerial posts, the main Albanian party (PDP) held the posts of deputy prime minister, labour ministry and a minister without portfolio. In

the period 1992-1998, there were five Albanian ministers holding portfolios for economy, labour, development, culture, transport and finance (with no security or internal affairs portfolios). In the period 1998-2002, five Albanian ministers (VMRO-DPMNE in coalition with DPA) were assigned in less important ministerial posts than in the previous government. For the government from 2002 to 2006, in a government of 18 members, five ministerial portfolios, including health, justice, communication and education (SDUM and DUI coalition) were assigned to minority communities. In the period 2006-2008, 4 ministerial portfolios for health, education, culture and ecology were given to the PDA party from the VMRO-DPMNE and PDA coalition. In 2008-2011, four ministerial portfolios for economy, labour, health, local self-government, ecology and one deputy prime minister (OFA implementation) were assigned to the DUI political party (VMRO-DPMNE and DUI coalition). In the past government for the period 2011-2014, five ministerial posts for defense, justice, economy, local self-government, and environment and physical planning, and two vice president posts for implementation of OFA and European Affairs were given to the Albanian coalition partner (DUI), and two ministry posts without portfolios were given to the Turks and Roma community. The representation for minorities in the current government (2014-2018) is composed of eight ministerial posts assigned to Albanian minority, one position as minister without portfolio for Turks and a position as minister without portfolio for Roma. Deputy ministry positions were assigned to four Albanians and one to Roma. Needless to say, ministers assigned to minorities (in the case of Albanians) are accountable to their party leaders, rather than to the Prime Minister.

## **Conclusions**

Koinova (2011) argues that Macedonia advanced minimally in the area of respect for human and minority rights despite high EU involvement in the country after 2001. Nevertheless, the power sharing arrangements of 2001, and the subsequent developments in the political life in Macedonia, succeeded in conserving peace. The implementation of the OFA and the development of the model for minority protection requires less attention to be given to the dialogue between the two ethnic communities, and more to the small minority groups. Smaller minorities remain dependent on pre-election coalition pacts with the two larger Macedonian parties. The absence of strict representative quotas for communities in the government or parliament allows greater freedom for non-institutionalized, but nonetheless cooperative politics. The Republic of Macedonia has survived on its way to independence and, despite

many rises and falls, has managed to keep a balance in the distribution of political power established by OFA. According to Sulejmani (2011: 65) the agreement has changed the context and the concept of the state, from a state which addressed the historical injustices to Macedonian people and the creation of a national state of the Macedonian people into a multiethnic state, where communities primarily Albanian, will play a key role in its survival.

Before every parliamentary election in Macedonia, the political discussions are focused towards interethnic coalitions and why the major parties never perform the same way before elections as they do afterwards. Experts point out that this is an unsustainable situation that must be changed in order for the state to go in the right direction, towards political, democratic, economic and social progress. Anything else, they say, will contribute only to increasing radicalization of the political scene (Trpkovski, 2014). According to Pickering (2009: 571) in ethnic party systems that lack multi-ethnic parties, as is the case in Macedonia, cross-ethnic cooperation is most likely to emerge from ethnic parties willing to cooperate across ethnic lines. Different forms of interests' advocating and political representation have been created mostly along existing ethnic cleavage lines, and that is characteristic for the Macedonian society (Jovevska, 2001).

There is always a winning party of Macedonian ethnicity and a winning party from the ethnic Albanian bloc, as there are two winners in the elections. Thus there is a segregation of the electorate, along ethnic lines, parallel battles as the Macedonian and Albanian parties argue among themselves,. There is also a moderate hypocrisy among voters who in public opinion polls always state that they are not interested in ethnopolitics but rather in economic prosperity and growth, however at elections they vote by pulling out the “ethnic card” (Trpkovski, 2014). Pre-election coalition-building has been exercised mostly by smaller (minority) political parties in the case of the Republic of Macedonia; before each election, political parties of smaller minority groups form coalitions with the biggest political parties VMRO-DPMNE or SDUM, on one side, while on the other the two biggest Albanian political parties run the elections separately. Pre-election coalition should be seen as a fair offer to the voters, and a possibility for them to choose if they want to accept it or not, while the post-election (government coalitions) depends entirely on the will of the parties to agree, and not on the will of the electorate. According to Golder (2006:194), pre-electoral coalitions can have positive effects in elections with a proportional representation model, because they can allow voters to identify government alternatives at election time, increasing democratic transparency; this also increases the legitimacy of the coalition governments and makes their

policy mandates stronger. As Golder (2006) points out, (as in the case of smaller minority groups in Macedonia), pre-electoral coalitions have a significant impact on the election outcomes, increasing their success in respect to those acting independently, however they could easily fail due to weak coordination of their common programs and policies before the electorate, leaving them with no choice but to follow the programs and policies of the political party leading their chosen coalition.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> According to the last census in 2002, alongside ethnic Macedonians, the Albanian nationality as a community constituted 25.17 % of the total population of the Republic of Macedonia. The Turkish community in the last census reported 3.85 %, the Roma 2.66%, Vlachs 0.48%, Serbs 1.78%, Boshniaks 0.84% and other nationalities 1.04% of the total population. See State Statistical Office of the Republic of Macedonia at [http://www.stat.gov.mk/OblastOpsto\\_en.aspx?id=31](http://www.stat.gov.mk/OblastOpsto_en.aspx?id=31).

<sup>2</sup> Data retrieved from Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Macedonia, 2009, Republic of Macedonia State Statistical Office, Census 2002, at <http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/godisnik2009/03.%20Naselenie.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Dimovski's work focuses mainly on the factors influencing the pre-electoral coalitions formation, with an emphasis on the ideological compatibility of the interested parties, their number, i.e. their size of the expected coalition, the electoral strength of the potential coalitional parties, the ideological polarization of the party system and the disproportionality of the electoral rules

<sup>4</sup> Art. 154 of the Constitution from 1974 deems equal all citizens of the federation no matter their nationality, race, religion and language. Arts 170 and 171, Art. 214, Arts. 243, 246 and 246 give language rights for all nationalities within the federation. It is guaranteed the use of language in the Parliament, public administration and judicial proceedings.

<sup>5</sup> In April 1992, it became a member of the United Nations under the provisional name of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM).

<sup>6</sup> The 1991 Constitution, as a first pillar, established Macedonia as a unitary and civil state. The provisions that at that time provided protection for minorities/nationalities are Article 7 (use of nationalities' language in the units of local self-government), Article 8 (free expression of nationality) and Article 48 (nationalities' rights). The Constitutional Preamble asserted

"...the historical fact that Macedonia is established as a national state of the Macedonian people, in which full equality as citizens and permanent co-existence with the Macedonian people is provided for Albanians, Turks, Vlachs, Romas and other *nationalities* living in the Republic of Macedonia."

<sup>7</sup> See also more about the calls for autonomy in Bugajski, J. *Ethnic politics in Eastern Europe: a Guide to Nationality Policies, Organizations, and Parties*. New York: Centre for Strategic and International studies, 1995.

<sup>8</sup> The so-called mission was actually composed of series of (International Commission on former Yugoslavia-sponsored) talks with government representatives and political parties both from the Macedonian and Albanian ethnic communities. The idea behind it was to work out on recommendations for improvement on concrete issues pending between the two ethnic communities (sides). These same recommendations would be taken up by the government and found acceptable by the Cabinet, put into practice in conformity with legal procedures and provisions. Talks were held between 1992 and 1996 with strong emphasis on the several issues achieved: Albanian language secondary school classes; agreement on census in 1994 and establishment of an international expert group; one TV channel broadcasting in minority language; use of Albanian alphabet in ID cards and registration; increased participation of Albanians in government and other state institutions (police). Met with many difficulties on the way, the Working Group led by Ahrens tried to defuse the situation at that time, acting on two fronts: the Macedonian-Albania and the intra-Albanian conflict (1993) (Ahrens, 2007: 427-453). In 1996 the Working Group lost its momentum, due to the entire international mediation effort directed toward Bosnia and Hercegovina.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with Prof. Ljubomir Danailov Frckoski, conducted in May 2011. Prof. Frckoski was actively involved in the sessions.

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<sup>10</sup> The Albanian language (spoken by at least 20% of the population) also became an official state language, in accordance with law. Amendments also introduced several provisions for the use of the Albanian language, such as in personal identity documents and in local self-government units by the public authorities. (Amendment V of Const. Art. 7)

<sup>11</sup> The Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia guarantees to all citizens the freedom of association for ‘accomplishment and protection of their political, economic, social, cultural and other rights and beliefs’, as well as the free expression of the national belonging. (Amendment VIII of Const. Art. 48).

<sup>12</sup> The country has a closed party list system without threshold with six multi-member constituencies.

<sup>13</sup> From 19, in the first round in 1990 to 23 in 1998; in 2002 there were 55 competing political parties.

<sup>14</sup> Roma minority with the Party for Full Emancipation of the Roma (PCER) entered into a coalition with the Socialist party of Macedonia and PDP - Party for Democratic Prosperity (Albanian) with the Peoples’ Democratic Party (Albanian).

<sup>15</sup> The following parties entered in this coalition: Democratic Party of Turks, Democratic Party of Serbs, Union of Roma, Party of the Vlachs of Macedonia, Party for Full Emancipation of Roma, Party for Integration of Roma, Boshniaks Democratic Party, Democratic Union of Roma.

<sup>16</sup> Democratic Party of the Turks, Democratic Party of the Serbs, Union of Roma of Macedonia, Party of the Vlachs of Macedonia, and the Party for Integration of Roma.

<sup>17</sup> Movement for National Unity of Turks in Macedonia, Serbian Progressive Party in Macedonia, Party for full Emancipation of Roma, Party for Movements of Turks in Macedonia, Democratic Union of Serbs in Macedonia, Democratic Union of Vlachs in Macedonia and PEI (Party for European Future declared as multiethnic party with strong support of the Torbesh ethnic community).

<sup>18</sup> Party for Movement of the Turks in Macedonia (PMTM), Party for the Full Emancipation of Roma (PFER), Serbian Stranka in Macedonia (SSM) Democratic Union of Vlachs in Macedonia (DMVM), and Sandzak Ligue (SL)

<sup>19</sup> The parties were the following: Democratic Party of the Serbs in Macedonia, Union of Roma of Macedonia, Party of the Vlachs from Macedonia, Party for Integration of Roma, Democratic Party of the Turks of Macedonia, Democratic Forces of Roma, Democratic Boshniaks Party, United Party for Equality for Roma, Democratic Party of Roma and United Roma from Macedonia.

<sup>20</sup> Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA), Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) and National Democratic Revival – NDP.

<sup>21</sup> Democratic Party of Serbs in Macedonia, Union of Roma of Macedonia, Party of the Vlachs in Macedonia, Party on Integration of Roma, Democratic Party of the Turks in Macedonia, Democratic Forces of Roma, Democratic Boshniak party, Democratic Party of Roma, United Roma from Macedonia.

<sup>22</sup> Data retrieved from the published mandates of each parliament available on the official web site of the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia at <http://sobranie.mk/>.

<sup>23</sup> Propositions to amend the Constitution in favour of introducing guaranteed seats in the Parliament for smaller minorities in Macedonia were blocked by Albanian political parties (DUI and New Democracy). These parties argued that these propositions are in contradiction with the principles of OFA agreement, the Badinter principle and the ethnic balance and representation in the Parliament. See Markovski, Gradmir. “ДУИ и НД газат по европски правила” [DUI and ND against European rules], *Vecer*, May 16 2010, Makedonija at <http://vecer.mk/makedonija/dui-i-nd-gazat-po-evrofskite-pravila>

<sup>24</sup> Minorities do not enjoy full veto rights; however they have a right for a double voting on laws that concern their interests. Parliamentary adoption of laws relating directly to minorities must follow this principle, requiring a majority vote of deputies representing ethnic minorities. The aim of this principle is to protect ethnic minorities in parliamentary decision-making, meaning that laws with a significant impact on ethnic minority communities may not be adopted by a simple majority but require a ‘double’ majority, including a majority among political representatives of the minority. The Badinter majority or principle is used also for adopting legislative acts in the units of local self-government.

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