MULTI-ETHNIC COALITION GOVERNMENTS AS PRECONDITION FOR MAINTENANCE OF POLITICAL STABILITY, THE EXAMPLE OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

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Abstract: The Republic of Macedonia is constantly facing the challenge to reach democratic standards; establish rule of law; keep peace and stability; lower interethnic tensions; to increase its economic growth and eventually become an EU member state. Macedonian society is multi-ethnic and multicultural. The main pillar of multi-ethnic Macedonia is the Ohrid Framework Agreement. The established political model is based on power-sharing and redistribution of public resources and political power. The system is not a typical consociationalism model but shares many of its characteristics. Ever since Macedonia has become an independent country, multi-ethnic coalitions are a regular occurrence on the Macedonian political stage. They are generally accepted as a factor that provides political stability of the society, although this practice is not legally based. In this paper the case of a shared form of governments in the Republic of Macedonia will be presented. It will be shown that although traditional multi-ethnic coalition governments are not considered to be stable, they are an important part and a necessity in multi-ethnic societies. The conclusions can serve as a ground for maintenance of peace and political stability especially in countries with less developed democratic traditions where more than one community coexist in one state.

Keywords: multiculturalism, power sharing, coalition governments, legal framework, integration

Introduction

Almost every modern democracy is utilizing one or more mechanisms to accommodate different ethnic and cultural groups living within the borders of a multicultural state and increase their political representation. The idea behind is based on the notion that a state can leave an impression of "neutrality" toward various national groups, but it can (and it usually does) in certain ways, systematically privilege the majority group. State decisions on various society issues can significantly reduce the political power and cultural representation of the minorities (Kymlicka, 2004). The model for assimilation of minorities, often used as a means for the nation and state building, has proven to be inadequate in the long run, because in many cases claims connected to the need to protect and promote separate identity were not repealed; on the contrary, the model only strengthened them. In view of this, if various requirements related to issues such as protection and promotion of separate ethnic or cultural features have already risen, political regimes have the option to respond timely and adequately through the processes of democratization and liberalization of the society (Birch, 1989). In these processes, numerous political and legal tools that are enhancing ethnic accommodation and increasing the representation in the decision-making process can be used on various government levels. This is a two-way process and needs to involve multiple engagements that are simultaneously protecting the identity and uniqueness of the group and are securing its position in the political processes i.e. make the group capable of influencing and maintaining control over concerning questions. Models which are typically used as tools for diminishing ethnic tensions in contested societies include proportional representation and disproportionate representation as consensual models (Heraclides, 1991), but the list does not end here. There can be a variety of options and hybrid models suitable for a certain political environment. Despite the advantages of these models, their application may cause many problems such as blocking the system or diminishing or even losing the quality of the processes. The models can even stimulate a creation of dual citizenship and instead of having positive effects they can create even deeper separation, causing the groups to exist on the political stages two parallels. Consequently, it is not an easy task to set balance, to ensure integration and greater representation and at the same time to establish and maintain social cohesion.

In this paper the case of the Republic of Macedonia will be presented, through the example of the current and past governments, established as multi-ethnic coalition governments - seen as a necessity for the Macedonian

society from a theoretical and practical point of view. Since there is neither a legal basis nor a binding act for creating a coalition arrangement, existing practices can serve as a good example on the one hand –they are in line with the practices of multiculturalism and power sharing– but on the other hand they show the shortcomings of the system promoted in democratic surroundings as a suitable model for societies where more than one group coexist and share common political space. The example will show that multiethnic government coalitions are preconditions but not the ultimate tool for cooperation, integration and peaceful coexistence in multi-ethnic societies. To fully achieve positive results from the power sharing systems, the established practice needs to be accompanied by more structured measures going beyond formal representation and simple division of political power.

Multiculturalism and power sharing policies

a) Concepts

Multiculturalism should first and foremost develop new models of democratic citizenship based on the ideals of human rights, and to replace former undemocratic relations of hierarchy and exclusion. More precisely, multiculturalism is constructing new civic and political relations to overcome the deeply rooted injustices that have survived after the abolition of formal discrimination. Multicultural policies include recognition of separate cultural traditions, economic redistribution, and political participation. In this regard, multiculturalism is a deep, targeted and transformative project for minorities and majorities. It requests engagement of the dominant historically subordinate groups in new practices, entering into new relationships and it embraces new concepts and new discourses (Kymlicka, 2012).

It has long been said that the only way to accomplish "citizenship" is to impose a single, unified model for all individuals. Nevertheless, the ideas and policies of multiculturalism, which have arisen since the 1960s, are based on the assumption that complex history inevitably generates differential ethno–cultural group requirements. The key step to be taken here is not to suppress those diverse requirements, but to frame them with the language of human rights, civil liberties, and democratic accountability. Consequently, an increasing number of countries are accepting models that protect certain forms of cultural differences through special legal or constitutional measures, beyond the common citizens 'rights (Kymlicka, 2004). The accompanying measures tend to increase equality and integration and to overcome the socially disadvantaged position of a minority group. Such measures include: protecting the rights with the laws that prohibit discrimination in all spheres of the society; promoting measures for affirmation or positive discrimination to increase the level of group achievements; requesting from political parties to a have mixed ethnic composition; proportional representation in public services and other official bodies where decisions are taken, etc. (Deng, 2002). Adequate systems are the systems that are enabling integration without forced assimilation (Henrard, 2000).

The consensual model is part of the power sharing system and theoretically it is suitable for societies divided by deep ethnic, racial or religious dissimilarities. Power sharing is a term used to describe a system of governance in which all major segments of society are provided with a permanent share of power and it is often contrasted with government vs. opposition systems, in which the ruling coalitions from time to time rotate on the political stage.

The basic principles of power sharing are traditionally conceived as follows:

1. Big governmental coalition in which nearly all political parties are taking part;
2. Protection of minority rights;
3. Decentralization of power;
4. Decision making based on consensus.

The set of principles of the division of power can be summarized in five points: 1) the essential need for participation of "all relevant groups"; 2) giving a high degree of autonomy to all significant groups; 3) providing proportionality in the governance; 4) the right to veto that minorities have concerning issues that affecting their convictions and 5) lesser dominance of the majority (Lijphart, 1999). For these systems to function effectively it is mandatory to maintain law and order through a carefully designed constitutional framework and recognized safeguard mechanisms provided by an established neutral and fixed administration (Frckoski, 2012).

Although it has been much disputed, consensual democracy produces good results in the long run, not only in terms of accommodating the differences but also with regard to the general progress of society, by making - at least initially, the plural societies even more plural, transforming divisions into constructive elements (Lijphard, 1999). There is no guarantee for the prosperity of the system, but in order make it more effective, large cross-ethnic and cross-linguistic coalitions should find pragmatic measures that need to stretch beyond the elementary features based on blood, language or religion (Waterbury, 2002). However, it is important to point out that the"consociationalism" is a single form of power sharing options from the very broad range of political varieties for settling ethnic problems. The essence of the policy options can be exceptionally different in terms of aims, structures, and effects for promoting inter-group moderation and compromise. The goal is to make an optimal political participation of different society segments in the policy decision processes (Sisk, 2005).

b) Possible shortcomings

Apart from the positive effects on ethnic accommodation, multicultural policies and power sharing systems have many shortcomings. Furthermore, in some communities, multicultural efforts have failed and recently there has been a regressive trend in respect of their application. The obstacles for successful functioning of multicultural policies may be of a different nature. They can be real or anticipated, and are usually related to: security threats, weak state institutions, lack of liberal and democratic traditions in society, weak economies, traditions of discriminatory practices in various societal spheres and isolation of the country. All these elements are even more visible in societies going through a transition period, or in developing democracies, because of their inexperience and greed of the political elites who see nationalism as a winning combination for acquisition and maintenance of power (Kymlica, 2012).

Just as with multicultural policies, consensual democracy may not be able to put down roots if is not supported by a consensual political culture, i.e. if it is not based on institutional and cultural traditions (Lijphard, 1999). Some of the scholars point out that integrative power sharing is powerful in theory only and will fail to succeed the moment it faces deeper ethnic antagonisms (Sisk, 2005). Although it is a model that contributes towards national integration, many scholars note that it does not promote unified and influential leadership, coherent policies and efficient decisionmaking. Power sharing systems are also criticized as they are not applicable in environments with sharp ethnic divisions. Ultimately, the system is attractive for minorities, but not for the majority group. While many states are adopting modalities for power sharing, very few of them can truly and fully practice it especially in the creation of large coalitions and use of minority veto (Horowitz, 2003).

In addition, governments are not in favour of consensual democracy because powersharing engagements are expensive, time and energy consuming. On the other hand, there are not many alternatives for a modern democratic state, confronted with ethnic requirements and related tensions (Mullerson, 2003). In that sense, the ideal of multiculturalism, correlated policies, and political arrangements should remain as an important option among the tools in a diverse democratic society and is worth serious consideration by policy makers. Nonetheless, in order to deal with the reality of politics a link between social context and political arrangements needs to be established, one that reflects different levels of satisfaction of citizens' needs. In this regard, it is necessary to explore and apply various forms of participation, protection, power sharing and control to overcome the conflicting interests that exist among different society sectors (Nino, 1996).

The example of the Republic of Macedonia

In the proposed theoretical framework, multi-ethnic coalition governments in the Republic of Macedonia will be observed, beginning from the country's independence up to the present day. The analysis will take into consideration the social and political context in the country, its population composition, and its tendencies towards EU integration. In the analysis special attention will be given to the legal framework that is the basis of the political processes in the country in order to understand the complexity of the entire political situation. The multi-ethnic coalition governments will be further analysed in the *discussion part* where findings will be elaborated on through the expectation of multiculturalism juxtaposed with everyday political affairs in the described social, political and legal environment.

a) Social and political context

Macedonian society is multi-ethnic and multicultural. It is composed of ethnic Macedonians, who are a majority in the country, referred to with the term *people* in the Constitution and the c*ommunities* (or *members of communities*), namely ethnic Albanians, Turks, Roma, Serbs, Vlachos, and Bosnians who represent around 36% of the population.[1] The country has been independent for 27 years and similar to the other states that became independent after the dissolution of SFRY and the fall of the iron curtain (former SFRY republics) is constantly facing the challenge to reach democratic standards; to establish rule of law; to keep the peace and stability; to lower inter-ethnic tensions; to increase economic growth and eventually become an EU member state. Facing an unfavourable economic situation - among the other challenges, the country is always under inside and outside pressure to accommodate different ethno - cultural groups, diminish the ethnic tensions and answer the ethno - nationalist needs in a democratic manner.

The Republic of Macedonia has been an EU candidate state since 2015, after signing the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union (Agreement, 2001) when it committed itself to fulfill the democratic principles and be integrated into the EU. The constitutive norm of the Union is explicitly prescribing that membership in the Union is open to all countries with a democratically elected government. Consequently, the country is determined to reach the democratic principles of the Union set as postulates that possess characteristics of legitimacy, legality and effectiveness such as: the right to choose and change governments through free and fair elections; division of power into legislative, executive and judicial; promotion and protection of fundamental rights and freedoms; protection of the freedom of expression, information, association and political organization; independence of judiciary; political and institutional pluralism; transparency and institutional integrity (Conclusions, 1993).

In this view, every year the European Union generates a progress report for the country, which contains all the steps, achievements, and shortcomings in the process, aimed to help and move the country forwards. Despite previous years' efforts for reforms and democratization, set as main priorities of all Macedonian governments, and the declaratory determination of all institutions in the Republic to establish an efficient and steady political system prepared to respond to the EU requirements - the progress is slow. Namely, the observations in the Progress reports of the country (developed by the European Union bodies) are emphasizing the fact that the political dialogue is in political stagnation at some points (Report, 2015). Despite the political crisis (that occurred in 2015 and lasted until 2017, followed by the intercepted phone conversation of the main political figures of the country), in the previous EU Progress reports, it was noted that there was a need to enhance political dialogue and take more specific measures for overcoming ethnic imbalances.

b) Legal framework

The Republic of Macedonia is a unitary state. The Constitution of the Republic of
Macedonia sets the basic provisions of the political system. The Republic of Macedonia was established as a civil and democratic state of the Macedonian people, as well as of the citizens living within its borders who are part of the Albanian people, Turkish people, Vlach people, Serbian people, Roma people, Bosniak people and others. The Republic of Macedonia is an independent, sovereign state, that is based on the rule of law, it guarantees human rights and civil liberties and provides peace and coexistence, social justice, economic prosperity and progress of the individual and the communities, represented through their representatives in the Parliament - elected at free and democratic elections. The Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia is a representative body of citizens and holds the legislative power. The organization and functioning of the Parliament are regulated with the Constitution and Rules of Procedures. Members of Parliament (MPs) are elected every four years. The mandates of MPs are verified by the Parliament. The mandate is given at the constitutive session of the Parliament held 20 days after the elections. The executive power resides with the

[1] *According to the census in 2002, the Republic of Macedonia has a population of just over two million people. Broken down into ethnic groups: 64.2% (or 1,297,981) are Macedonians, 25.2% (or 509,083) are Albanians, 3.9% are Turks, 2.7% are Roma, 1.8 % are Serbs, 0.8% are Bosnians, 0.5% are Vlachs, and 1.0 % are "others".*

President of the country and the Government of the Republic - consisted of President of the Government and the ministers. The mandate for constituting the Government is given by the President of the Republic to the candidate of the party or the parties that have a majority in the Parliament. Within 20 days of being entrusted with the mandate of Parliament, the candidate submits a program and proposes a composition of the Government, upon which the Parliament elects the government with the majority of the votes.
Part of the Constitution are the declared Amendments IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XV, XVI, XVII and XVIII adopted by the Parliament, most of them following the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) in order to give effect of its provisions.
The main pillar of the multi-ethnic Macedonia is the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA) signed in 2001 with international mediation and support, after a short armed conflict between the two biggest ethnic groups (Macedonians and Albanians) for greater rights and bigger political representation. The idea of the OFA is ceasing the violent way of solving problems and establishing a framework that will articulate different political, ethnic and civil visions for the development of a democratic society, fully integrated into the EU and NATO. The OFA sets the basis of the political relations between the different communities in the country and provides guidelines for increasing respect among ethnic groups towards harmonious development of the society. The OFA acknowledges peaceful political solutions encouraged by a participatory process that promotes separate identities in a unitary sovereign state. The OFA encourages decentralization and an appropriate system of funding as possible tools for proper distribution of responsibilities, particularly in the areas of local economic development, culture, education, social and health care and public services. Among other things, the OFA establishes a framework that takes into account equitable representation, especially in public administration, police services and in other spheres of public life and public funding (OFA, 2001). In addition to the abovementioned legal documents, laws regulating the position of the other no – majority ethnic groups include the Law on local self- government (Law, 5/2009);[2] Law for use of languages that are spoken at least 20% by the citizens of the Republic of the Macedonia in the local self-government units (Law,101/2008) and other sub legal acts.

c) Multi-ethnic coalition governments

In the previous years, in the Republic of Macedonia different modalities were used for the accommodation of separate ethnic and minority groups as a way to secure coexistence of the Macedonian multi-ethnic society. The political model established with the OFA is based on power-sharing options, redistribution of the public resources and political power. Despite having many characteristics of the political model of consociationalism, the tendency for establishing consociational democracy is not part of the constitutional provisions; it is not stressed in the OFA and it is not predefined in any political or legal act. At the same time, the Republic of Macedonia is following a continental legal tradition, where all authorities come from and can be restricted with legally written, binding documents. The Constitution does not set the obligation for forming a multi-ethnic coalition government, and neither do the other documents that establish, promote and enforce multicultural policies.
Since the independence, nine parliamentary elections have been held in the Republic of Macedonia. After each election, formation of the government, one of coalition and multi-ethnic, was carried efficiently by all political parties, with no exceptions at all. Namely, the winning political party that was almost always from the Macedonian political block (supported by the majority of the voters in the country) formed a coalition with the political party from the Albanian political block (with few exceptions - with the political party that had the majority of the votes among the Albanian ethnic group), sometimes involving other political parties that were representing different political options or different ethnic groups (such as Roma, Turks, etc).

The situation was as follows:

[2] *In order to ensure equitable representation and to resolve issues affecting ethnic communities, one of the mechanisms is establishment of the Committees for Inter- Communities Relations in the municipalities where at least 20% of the citizens are from an ethnic origin different than the majority population. However, as it is the case with many others, this instrument does not function in practice due to unclear regulations related with appointments, functioning, budgeting and lack of clearly assigned authorities, see Policy Brief,*
Committees for Inter- community relations, Community Development Institute, 2011

No of elections	Period	Governmental Coalitions	No. of gained MPs seats
1.	1991-1992	Experts government	(following the independence of the country in 1991)
	1992-1994	SDSM and PDP	VMRO 37, SDSM 30, PDP 16
2.	1994-1998	SDSM, PDP	SDSM 63; PDP 13
3.	1998 – 2002	VMRO, Democratic alternative, Democratic party of the Albanians	VMRO 45; DPA 10; DA 3; DUI – PDP 17
4.	2002 – 2006	SDSM, DUI, LDP	SDSM 36; DUI 15; LDP 9
5.	2006 – 2008	VMRO, NSDP, LPM, DPA, PDT	VMRO 45; NSDP 7; DPA 9; PDT 1
6.	2008-2011	VMRO, DUI, DPTM, SPM	VMRO 63; DUI 18; DPTM 1;
7.	2011 - 2014	VMRO, DUI	VMRO 55; DUI 14
8.	2014 - 2016	VMRO, DUI, SRM	VMRO 61; DUI 19; NDP 1
9.	2016-	SDSM, DUI, BESA	VMRO 51; SDSM 49; DUI 10; BESA 5; Alliance for Albanians 3; DPA 2[3]

It is obvious that after all the elections held in the Republic of Macedonia, there was a clear limitation of the political power - gained through the election process (even before the signing of the OFA) and since its restriction does not reside in any legal document it is a matter of good will and political estimation in a certain political context.

Discussion points - policies of multiculturalism and power sharing vs. multiethnic coalition governments in the Republic of Macedonia

Considering the established practices of multi-ethnic coalition governments that that have been existing for 27 years on the diverse political stage in the Republic of Macedonia, it can be said that the applied political model is an example of a power sharing model that supports the development of multicultural society. This would be, however, only a formal and superficial observation. A simple analysis of daily political happenings in the

[3] *The biggest political parties in Macedonia are VMRO - DPMNE, DUI, DPA, and SDSM. Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity - VMRO-DPMNE, is one of the two major Macedonian parties. The party has proclaimed itself as Christian Democratic party. It is an anti – communist, conservative party and center right wing political party that from time to time shifts to the extreme nationalistic causes. Nevertheless, in recent years the party formed multiple coalition governments with ethnic minority parties; Social Democratic Union of Macedonia- SDSM is a center-left positioned political party with social democratic ideology. It has shown a moderate and reconciliatory attitude towards ethnic minorities in Macedonia. The main ideology and the main support are towards social democracy and social liberalism; the Democratic Union for Integration – DUI is the largest Albanian political party in the Republic of Macedonia and the third largest political party in Macedonia. It was formed immediately after the country's 2001 conflict between the National Liberation Army (NLA) and Macedonian Security Forces. It supports the social conservatism, although its political position is center right and highly supports the Albanians nationalist causes; The Democratic Party of Albanians – DPA is a political party of the ethnic Albanians in the Republic of Macedonia. It is right wing political party and the main ideology is Albanian nationalism; Besa Movement is a relatively new political party in the Republic of Macedonia. It was formed in 2014 and its ideology is social conservatism.*

country, analysed through the parameters supporting the goals and aims of multiculturalism, can clearly show the defects of the system. Namely, it appears that the coalition governments are supporting the dialogue as a democratic way of overcoming the problems; they are ensuring involvement of different communities in the public life of the country; they are clearly expressing the diversity of the society and in that way serve as role model for the acceptance of the other non - majority groups; they tend to secure balanced distribution as a condition for overcoming the presumption of inequality- but in any case - they are not using their full potential for inter- ethnic integration. Examples supporting that claim can be found in the events that had taken place prior to sign in the OFA, after that, and up to the present. Namely, although coalition governments existed before the OFA they did not secure coexistence, dialogue, or meaningful representation, nor did they prohibit the violence that occurred later. Before signing the OFA, after that and presently, the coalition governments only represent the ethnic structures existing as separate political blocks. Coalition partners are only functioning in their own sphere of interest, they are rarely harmonized in their views on what constitutes the state interests, especially how to provide a stable multi-ethnic society. Instead of promoting openness and acceptance, nationalistic rhetoric is common during election campaigns and analysis of the political parties' programs (the ones that form government coalitions later) can show that the tendencies for multiculturalism and integration exist only provisionally and political declarations are really followed with focused measures (Shikova, 2015).The political parties and multi-ethnic coalition governments are the main drives of the political life, but Macedonian society is far from creating a common identity beyond the ethnic lines of division, which is necessary for securing cohesiveness of the political unit. Usage of separate symbols of identification in all segments of societal life such as: the use of flags; the use of the official language/s (ongoing debate); remembrance days; different collective memories; even separate education programs and educational institutions (Study, 2009); are one of the many indicative examples of standard policies and practices.

Conclusion

Creating multi-ethnic coalition governments in the Republic of Macedonia is not mandatory, but it is considered a good practice and in essence, it is in line with policies of multiculturalism and modalities of power sharing. The Macedonian example shows that even if the country follows continental legal tradition, power sharing options can exist as soft law and allow for flexibility which written documents cannot do. Although traditionally coalition governments are perceived as unstable forms of governments, with many shortcomings, they are necessary in multi-ethnic and multicultural societies such as the Macedonian. However, multiethnic coalition governments are only the basis. They should serve as an integrative rather than a divisive point. The accepted power sharing model alone is not enough to secure steadiness of multi-ethnic societies. Instead of making progress towards more integrated society, previous and current multi-ethnic coalition governments in the Republic of Macedonia have been enforcing two separate lines of policies. They only share the political power at a certain political moment and do not promote multicultural goals. Policies of multiculturalism require greater society involvement going beyond simple political grouping under the label of power sharing. For these reasons, the recognized political arrangements need to be followed with more structured measures that will secure coexistence, will lead to greater societal integration and will ensure social cohesiveness.

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